

When Do Politicians Grandstand?

Measuring Message Politics in Committee Hearings

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Abstract

While congressional committee members sometimes hold hearings to collect and transmit specialized information to the floor, they also use hearings as venues to send political messages by framing an issue or a party to the public which I refer to as “grandstanding.” However, we lack clear understanding of when they strategically engage in grandstanding. I argue that when committee members have limited legislative power they resort to making grandstanding speeches in hearings to please their target audience. Using 12,820 House committee hearing transcripts from the 105th to 114th Congresses and employing a crowd-sourced supervised learning method, I measure a “grandstanding score” for each statement that committee members make. Findings suggest that grandstanding efforts are made more commonly among minority members under a unified government, and non-chair members of powerful committees, and in committees with jurisdiction over policies that the president wields primary power, such as foreign affairs and national security.

Keywords: congressional committees, hearings, grandstanding, message politics, text analysis

Additional notes: Supplementary materials will be available in an online appendix. Replication files are available in the JOP Data Archive on Dataverse (<http://thedata.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/jop>).

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While congressional committee hearings are designed to collect and transmit policy relevant information to the floor (Krehbiel 1992), committee members sometimes use hearings as opportunities to send political messages by taking positions on policy issues or framing the image of a party or the administration (DeGregorio 1992; Del Sesto 1980; Esterling 2004; Farnsworth 1961; Huitt 1954; Park 2017), a set of behaviors I refer to collectively as “grandstanding.” When members grandstand in hearings, would the statements they make merely be spontaneous reactions to witnesses’ testimonies, or would there be any systematic reason for them to do so? Previous studies find that what members say in hearings influences public opinion (DeGregorio 1992; Kriner and Schikler 2014) and is rewarded by special interests (Esterling 2007; Ray 2018). Yet, despite the increased political salience of congressional hearings in recent years, we do not have clear understanding of when and why committee members use hearings to send political messages or grandstand.

There are a handful of previous works that directly or indirectly address this question. Extant literature finds that members tend to grandstand and promote their predetermined views in hearings when committee members’ policy preferences are polarized (Huitt 1954; Park 2017) or when political benefits of grandstanding is likely to be large – e.g. when the issue is salient (DeGregorio 1992; Park 2017). Although not directly referring to committee hearings, Fenno (1973) argues that while conducting committee activities members can achieve their reelection goals by taking positions in a way to represent and protect their constituents’ interests. Further, the literature on message politics hints a similar story but emphasizes partisan competition for winning the majority control in a chamber as a major reason for position-taking (Evans and Oleszek 2001; Lee 2011, 2016). However, these electoral accounts have been neither explicitly argued nor tested in a committee hearing setting.

In this study, I propose a new theoretical explanation and argue that committee members tend to grandstand as an electoral campaign strategy especially when they lack institutional power to pursue their policy agenda. That is because when they have limited opportunities to please voters by making policies representing their interests, members will resort to making speeches to please them. Specifically, I identify three such conditions in which members have limited legislative power within a committee: being a member of a minority and opposition party, a non-chair member of a prestige committee, or a member of a committee with jurisdiction over issue areas that the president dominates such as foreign and national security policies.

To test this theoretical claim, I construct an original dataset of committee hearing transcripts on 12,820 House hearings from the 105th to 114th Congresses and measure a “grandstanding score” for each individual statement made by committee members utilizing a crowd-sourced supervised learning method. Then, I aggregate the score by individual member in each Congress to conduct a member-level analysis. Taking advantage of the panel structure of the member-level data, I estimate within-individual effects of members’ minority and opposition party status. By additionally conducting a statement-level analysis and exact matching, I test whether the same member tends to grandstand more in prestige committees or in committees dealing with foreign or national security policy issues than in other committees.

The key findings are as follows. First, minority members are more likely to grandstand than majority members in order to offset their lack of institutional power to advance legislation, particularly under a unified government. Second, grandstanding statements are more frequently made by non-chair members of prestige committees (Appropriations, Budget, Rules, Ways and Means) in which committee leaders propose most of the bills. Third, members of Congress are more likely to grandstand in hearings before the committees dealing with policies where the

president plays a primary role, such as foreign affairs and national security. These findings suggest that committee members grandstand in hearings not just spontaneously but rather for a more systematic reason: to compensate their lack of ability to affect policy and to verbally appeal to their target audience. In addition, it further implies that grandstanding, which is often considered wasteful, can be a useful political tool for politicians to communicate issue frames to voters or any other external audience and thus can change the electoral climate in favor of themselves and their party.

More broadly, it also contributes to the literature on message politics. Message politics refers to the practice by party leadership encouraging its members to repeatedly advertise the party's themes and policy stances to the public to enhance party image while tainting the public standing of the other party or the president (Evans and Oleszek 2001), and it is increasingly employed as a party-level campaign strategy as a result of intensified partisan competition (Lee 2011, 2016). In light of this literature, findings of this study suggest that messaging activities are exerted even in committee hearings, which is a novel addition to the existent literature.

Furthermore, this article provides a new insight to the classic discussion on show-horses versus work-horses (Matthew 1959; Payne 1980). Previous studies demonstrate that show horses focus on fostering their public recognition and are relatively less ambitious about policy-making whereas work horses emphasize their legislative activity more than public perception and that individual members tend to be classified as either type. However, the finding that the same member grandstands if situated in a committee environment with less legislative opportunities but does not otherwise implies that members' role choices may not be a deterministic feature of individuals such as personality as commonly believed (Payne 1980) but rather a strategic choice made under varying contexts.

Theory

Members of Congress are known to be single-minded reelection seekers (Mayhew 1974). In order to achieve this goal, they are incentivized to use their limited time and resources in a way to maximize their chances of reelection. While in D.C., they spend over 35% of their time on legislative and policy work which usually happens in committees,¹ and individual committees spend significant time on holding public hearings. This suggests that committee activities including hearings may reward members electorally (Fenno 1973). This section explains how committee members can utilize their participation in public hearings to enhance their reelection prospects and which institutional constraints may affect members' strategic behaviors.

Once a committee member decides to participate and talk in a hearing, I assume that he can utilize his chance to talk in two different ways to maximize the odds of reelection: One is to ask witnesses for policy relevant information and have constructive discussion on a policy issue with an intention to make a policy benefiting his constituents; the other is to give a political statement with an intention to take positions on policies along with his supporters and even give them a guidance of how to view -in other words, frame- an issue, a party or the President and his administration, which can be further used to formulate campaign messages (Park 2017).² Note

¹ From "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective" which is a report produced by the Congressional Management Foundation and the Society for Human Resource Management.

² It is possible for a member's speech to do some of both, but it is also possible to place members' statements on a continuum depending on the intensity of one style over the other. In order to simplify the theoretical reasoning, I assume that a statement can be characterized as either one of the two participation styles represented by these two extreme poles on a continuum.

that in a hearing, each member can request a chair for a chance to give an opening statement and ask questions of witnesses in a Q&A session with a time-limit of five minutes, which works as a budget constraint so that a member should strategically optimize the allocation of their time on either of the participation styles.

Members' statements they strategically make in hearings can be rewarded through the increase in their reelection prospects, but the reward mechanism may depend on the legislative constraints under which individual members are situated.³ For example, those who are institutionally endowed with the authority and power to move their bills forward successfully can be benefited more by focusing on learning about the policy issue through hearings, and thus, their statements are likely characterized as information-seeking. On the other hand, those who lack such power can hardly gain electoral rewards by appealing to voters based on their legislative achievements, and thus their relative payoffs from grandstanding increases. In the following subsections, I identify individual members' minority and opposition party status and committee environments as institutional constraints placed on their legislative potent.

Minority Status and Divided Government

In contemporary Congress, the majority party wields disproportionately more control over legislative processes and resources than the minority (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005). It is easier for the majority to set the agenda and pass preferred legislation so long as it enjoys

³ However, of course, the chances that voters are directly exposed to conversation going on in each public hearing are low except the ones on highly salient issues that the media intensely report. Rather, members are assumed to communicate what they said in hearings through other channels such as newsletters, press releases or social media (Slapin et al. 2018).

sufficient internal agreement. Thus, majority members are known to be more effective in legislation (Volden and Wiseman 2014). In contrast, minority members possess little power over legislative processes, and as a result they focus on achieving their goals by sending political messages (Lee 2011). The messages may blame the majority party for bypassing the minority's views or blocking passage of bills that the minority supports and call for a change in party control in the next election. Thus, Lee (2011) argues that while majority members use their institutional power to make policies, minority members focus on grandstanding and message politics. Therefore, I expect minority members to make more grandstanding statements in public committee hearings (*Hypothesis 1A*).

Additionally, given that most hearings are intended for overseeing the executive branch, committee members of the opposite party as the president likely see hearings as opportunities to deploy political messages critical of the president. Therefore, under a unified government, minority party committee members are doubly incentivized to use committee hearings to highlight policy failures of the government in order to degrade public support for their partisan opponents in Congress and in the White House. Consequently, I expect that minority party committee members are more likely to grandstand under a unified government (*Hypothesis 1B*).

Powerful Committees

Some committees tend to provide their members with relatively little legislative opportunities for various reasons that are unique to each individual committee. This study identifies two such types of committee environments.⁴ The first is powerful committees.

⁴ However, I acknowledge that these are not a complete set of categories of the committee environments restricting legislative power of their members. Rather, there can be other types that

The House Committees on Appropriations, Budget, Rules, and Ways and Means are often referred to as the powerful or prestige committees due to their ability to influence almost everyone and every bill in the House (Smith and Deering 1997). The Rules Committee determines a special rule under which each bill will reach the floor. Appropriations and Budget Committees pass spending bills, and because virtually almost all legislation addresses budgetary issue, these committees enjoy jurisdiction over most legislative matters. With authority over all tax bills, as well as the most nationally salient issues, the Ways and Means Committee commands exceptionally broad jurisdiction.

However, while these committees may exercise outsized influence in the chamber, non-chair members of these committees have few opportunities to initiate legislative action because high-priority bills are often introduced by the chair rather than by the members. Indeed, Volden and Wiseman (2014) find that non-chair members of powerful committees tend to have lower legislative effectiveness scores.

In addition, much of their committee work concerns bills that fall under the jurisdiction of other committees.⁵ As a result, powerful committee members have low motivation to seek information through public hearings on these bills, and members may focus on using hearings as opportunities to conduct message politics. Thus, I expect that non-chair members of powerful committees are more likely to grandstand in powerful committee hearings (*Hypothesis 2*).

are not necessarily mutually exclusive. One alternative category can be select committees for their lack of authority to legislate bills, and another can be oversight-oriented committees.

⁵ However, note that the Ways and Means Committee has a unique policy-oriented jurisdiction (e.g. social welfare programs) just as do other non-prestige committees.

Jurisdiction with the President's Dominance

Compared with the president and the Senate, the House possesses relatively weak authority over foreign and national security policy than on other domestic public policies.⁶ For example, the Constitution gives the president the exclusive power to negotiate treaties, appoint ambassadors, and command the nation's armed forces, and endows the Senate exclusively with the Advice and Consent Power. Though war declarations require approval in both houses of Congress, the president dominates war decisions in practice (Johnson 2013).

This presidential dominance over foreign and national security policy may incentivize members of committees with jurisdiction over these policy areas to engage in message politics for at least two reasons. First, given their relatively weak legislative powers in these policy areas, messaging is a more impactful legislative tool than it is for members of other committees. Second, more power means more responsibility. Thus, when performing oversight on these policy areas, committee members can find more opportunities to speak critical of the president who holds primary responsibility on these issues. Thus, I expect committee members to engage in grandstanding more often when participating in hearings held by committees with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or national security policy (*Hypothesis 3*). During the period I analyze, I identify four such committees: The Committees on Foreign Affairs and Armed Services, the Select Committee on Benghazi, and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

⁶ This is not to say that the House wields no power over foreign and military policy, as its budgetary and investigatory powers enable it to influence policy in these areas. However, because the House lacks the formal powers over these policy areas that the president and the Senate enjoy, they wield relatively less power.

Data and Methods

To examine committee members' political messaging behavior, I use 12,820 House committee hearing transcripts from the 105th to the 114th Congresses to construct a unique variable which measures an individual member's relative propensity to grandstand in committee hearings.⁷

Unlike more commonly used floor speech data, the format of these hearing transcripts varies across committees and Congresses with much irregularity in labeling of the chair, adding witness information to the transcript, and including documented testimonies in the middle of statements.

In order to deal with these challenges and to correctly identify committee names, committee chairs, committee members, and witnesses and remove texts that are not spoken, I utilized both Python to implement an automated scraping and parsing method and performed extensive manual clean-up.⁸

⁷ The transcripts were downloaded from the Government Publishing Office (GPO). The original data I constructed include both the House and Senate hearing transcripts, but this study focuses only on the House since committee activities are emphasized more in the House than in the Senate (Aldrich and Rohde 2009), and the House has larger membership with more variations to explore. Before the 105th Congress, each Congress includes only a handful number of hearing files that are not representative of the hearings held in the Congress. Also, hearing files of less than 20KB do not contain any statements. Thus, I exclude these hearings from the analysis. The number of representatives and statements in each Congress is in Table A1 in the online appendix.

⁸ In order to identify the names, members, chairs and ranking members of committee, I referred to and cross-checked with the committee membership data provided by Govtrack.com

(<https://github.com/unitedstates/congress-legislators>) and by Stewart III and Woon.

This study utilizes 1,026,677 statements made by committee members during public hearings which account for slightly less than a half of all committee hearing statements. Each statement is labeled with speaker-level information such as the speaker's first and last names and a unique member identification code, a "Govtrack" number, as well as hearing-level information such as a committee code, date and hearing title.⁹

To measure the intensity of grandstanding of each statement, I use a supervised learning method, which is preferred to an unsupervised learning method when there is a preset categorization to be applied. Supervised learning methods require a subset of data to be manually classified by human coders. Following recent studies which demonstrate that crowd-sourced human-coders perform better as a group than several trained coders in terms of consistency and reproducibility of the codes (Benoit et al. 2016, Montgomery and Carlson 2017), I employed online workers at Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurkers, in short) using SentimentIt.

⁹ The remainder of the committee hearing statements consist of witness testimony and procedural statements. Witness testimony is excluded based on the identifying speaker-level information that does not correspond to a member of Congress. Procedural statements are excluded by removing the first and last statements of a hearing if they contain 80 words or less, statements coming right before the first witness' opening statement since they tend to introduce the profiles of witnesses, statements that include "come to order", "recognize", "expired", "yield", "adjourn" or "recess" and contain 80 words or less, and those including both "thank you" and "yield" and containing 50 words or less, etc. However, I keep statements containing procedural remarks that are longer than 80 words because such a long statement may contain non-procedural contents which should be included in the analysis.

SentimentIt is a software developed by Montgomery and Carlson (2017) to facilitate posting, collecting and analyzing text-coding tasks for MTurkers as well as evaluating the job performance of individual workers and screening out those whose choices are deviant relative to other workers. Unlike the conventional method of manually classifying each text into one of the binary or multiple categories predefined by a researcher, SentimentIt promotes measuring the relative intensity of one concept through repeated pair-wise comparisons of randomly paired texts in the sample. As a result, SentimentIt yields a continuous measurement of a unidimensional concept in each unit of text and places texts on a continuum.¹⁰

The procedure to construct the grandstanding score is as follows. First, in order to select training texts, I conducted sampling twice: Once only from the 114th Congress and then from the 105th through 114th Congresses after the study expanded to cover a broader range of time period. In each phase, I randomly chose a subset of hearings, decomposed long statements into paragraphs, and merged them back with adjacent short paragraphs if they are too short for workers to make decisions on them. Among these preprocessed statements, which I will now refer to as paragraphs, I sampled 1000 of them that contain from 50 to 120 words in the first sampling phase and 2000 in the second.¹¹

¹⁰ Because this method of measurement measures legislators' relative tendency to grandstand or the relative intensity of grandstanding of each statement it does not allow measuring the overall prevalence of grandstanding statements in the entire corpus. Their overall prevalence can be measured through binary coding of the concept in future research.

¹¹ Note that the second sampling excluded the hearings that were chosen in the first, and larger training set generally helps prediction performance of the learning models. Therefore, I use the

Second, in each unique task assigned to a worker, I presented two randomly paired statements drawn from the sample and asked workers to indicate which one would be better described as opinionized or grandstanding as opposed to fact-based or information-seeking. Although I am measuring the relative intensity of grandstanding in each statement, in order to give coders a clearer definition of what is not grandstanding I conveniently label the opposite end of the spectrum as “factual or information-seeking”. In the instructions, I define a grandstanding statement as a statement that does one of the following: 1) denounces or praises a person or an institution (e.g. a party, its members, the president, a government agency, a witness or others); 2) takes a position on a policy (which includes subjective interpretation of a policy-relevant situation); 3) asks questions meant to embarrass or attack a witness.¹² I also specified that a statement is factual or information-seeking if it 1) offers an objective description of a policy-relevant situation, or 2) asks a witness a question in purpose of fact-finding or seeking expert opinion. Then, I present illustrative examples of statement drawn from the data corresponding to each case. The full instructions are in the online appendix.¹³

samples obtained from both sampling procedures with weights applied to learners. The sampling procedure for the training set and calculation of the weights are detailed in the online appendix.

¹² Further justification for this definition is provided in the online appendix.

¹³ I acknowledge that a grandstanding statement in a hearing can also be stated as a question as if the speaker seeks for information. To give MTurkers a clear guidance about how to deal with this type of statements, in the instructions I emphasized that “not all questions are information-seeking but can be part of grandstanding depending on what is being asked and how.”

Third, I set SentimentIt to compare each paragraph to 20 other randomly paired paragraphs. This setup generated 30,000 comparison tasks which were divided into multiple batches. Workers received \$0.08 for completing each task.¹⁴

Fourth, I trained potential workers using a Qualtrics survey in which I provided detailed instructions about the task, a coding scheme, and examples of statements which can be clearly categorized as grandstanding statements and non-grandstanding statements. The survey consists of five unscored practice questions and six scored test questions. Each of the eleven questions is followed by the correct answer and justifying explanations. Only workers who submitted correct answers to five of the six test questions are granted a qualification to work on this task. Among 387 volunteers, only 169 workers attained qualification and worked on the task.

Fifth, after collecting data from each batch, I identified those whose task results are too deviant from other workers by fitting a Stan model, a built-in function of the SentimentIt package.¹⁵ Below presents one of the practice questions used to train workers, and the correct answer for this is Statement A:

¹⁴ For the texts that are easier to comprehend, SentimentIt recommends 10 paired comparisons and \$0.04 per comparison. However, given the high level of complexity of the hearing statements, I set the bar higher and paid more as specified above.

¹⁵ See Montgomery and Carlson (2017) for a more detailed explanation of the Stan model that estimates the SentimentIt score (or the grandstanding score in this study).

Table 1. An Example Practice Question Used to Train Workers via Qualtrics Survey

Practice Question #1.

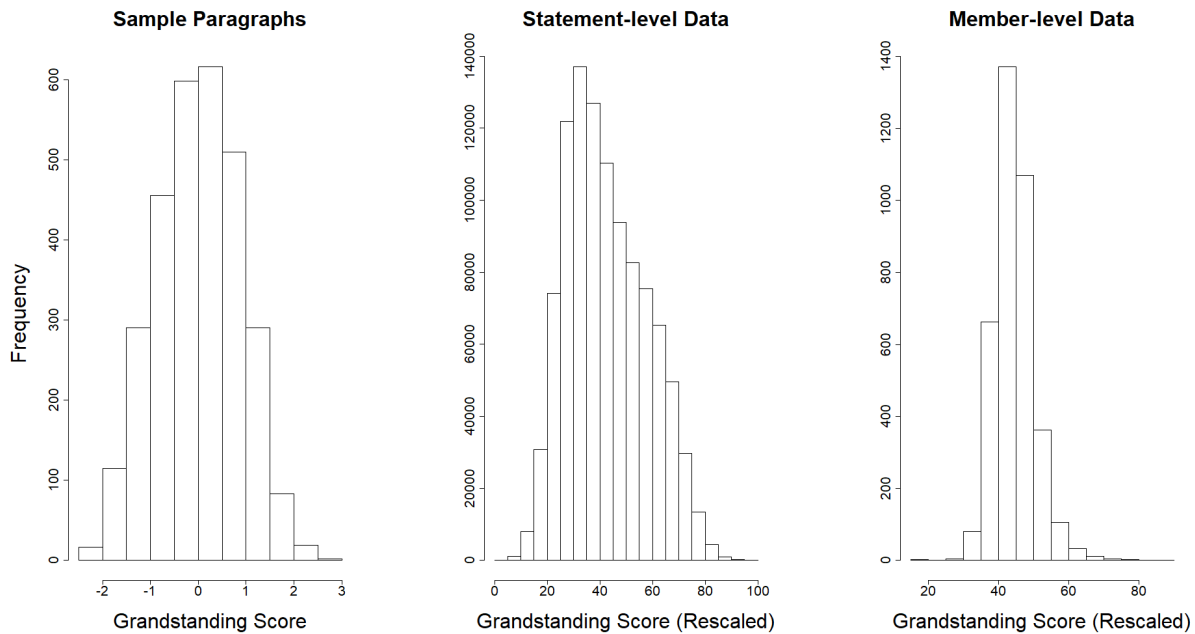
Please read two statements below and click on the button that corresponds with the statement that is relatively *more opinionized/grandstanding* or *less factual/information-seeking*.

A statement is more opinionized or grandstanding if it denounces or praises an institution or a person, or expresses subjective views on a policy or a situation more explicitly and strongly. A statement is factual or information-seeking if it gives objective description of a situation or asking witnesses for information or their opinion. **Which of the two statements below is more opinionized/grandstanding or less factual/information-seeking?**

Statement A: That is an extraordinarily important program that the committee strongly supports. I am very passionate about it, and could you talk to us about why you proposed cutting that program by nearly 40 percent? I hope that is not something that you intend to do. I would hope you will be as strong a supporter of that program as this committee is.

Statement B: And, finally, what can we do to ensure the Military Health System has trained and ready providers to support the readiness of the force and provide a valued health benefit to our beneficiaries?

Figure 1. Distribution of Grandstanding Score



Note: The grandstanding scores for the statements in the entire dataset are rescaled to run from 0 to 100 and are reflected in the last two graphs. The scores are aggregated by each member in each Congress in the member-level data.

Sixth, through the repeated pairwise comparisons of paragraphs, the SentimentIt package provides “a grandstanding score” for each paragraph. It ranges from -2.4 to 2.6 with almost normal distribution. The first graph in Figure 1 presents its distribution for the 3000 sampled paragraphs.

Next, I preprocess the entire corpus by tokenizing, stemming, lower-casing and removing punctuations and stop words and then construct three different document matrices: a doc2vec matrix and two document term matrices with either a plain bag of words approach or the term frequency-inverse document frequency application. Further details on the choice of key parameters used for each document matrix are discussed in the online appendix.

For the purpose of cross validating the final model’s out-of-sample prediction performance, I randomly chose 300 paragraphs from the sample and set them aside. Using the values in each of the three document matrices for the remaining 2700 sample paragraphs as independent variables and their corresponding grandstanding scores as a dependent variable, I fit 13 different learners: Random Forest, Lasso, Support Vector Machine, Gradient Boosting Machine, Discrete Bayesian Additive Regression Tree sampler, Bayesian Generalized Linear Model and Linear regression with varying parameters for the first four models, which results in 39 model predictions for each paragraph in total. Then, I fit an Ensemble Bayesian Model Averaging model which assigned non-zero weights to 9 of the 39 models and combined them.¹⁶

The use of the ensemble method in combination with three different document-level matrices significantly improved the out-of-sample prediction of the grandstanding score. By

¹⁶ This ensemble method tends to better perform in predictions than any individual learning algorithm can do alone (Montgomery et al. 2012; Opitz and Maclin 1999, Rokach 2010).

predicting the 300 virgin paragraphs using the ensemble model, I measure the root-mean-squared-error (RMSE), and it is 0.613. Compare it to the RMSE from the best single learning algorithm, Support Vector Machine of the Kernlab package using the doc2vec matrix, which is 0.63 and to those from the other models ranging from 0.631 to 1.391. The Pearson's correlation coefficient between the SentimentIt scores and the predicted scores of the ensemble model is 0.703 while the same best performing single model produced the correlation of 0.673.¹⁷

Finally, I rescale the grandstanding score to run from 0 to 100. Then, I aggregate the score by member and Congress, and the score runs between 17.65 and 85.78. The pooled member-level standard deviation across time is 4.34.¹⁸ The distributions of these rescaled measures are presented in the second and third graphs of Figure 1, respectively.

In order to substantively validate the grandstanding score, I analyze the most frequent words of the statements in the bottom quartile and those in the top quartile. The full list of these words and detailed analysis are in the online appendix. The analysis suggests that the grandstanding statements in the top quartile are featured by making “point”(-s) on “problem”(-s) and “concern”(-s) on the most salient, divisive issues such as “secur”-(ity), “tax”, “health” “care” and “drug” frequently mentioning the “presid”(-ent), “administr”(-ation) and emphasizing

¹⁷ In order to further validate the measurement statistically, I also tried the “Word score” model, which is widely used in the political science literature (Laver et al. 2003), and predicted the virgin paragraphs. However, its prediction is significantly worse than my model: The RMSE is .808 and the correlation is .597. These were computed using the plain document term matrix with 6000 words which is the size of the matrix at which the word score model performed best.

¹⁸ The formula is provided in the online appendix along with descriptive statistics.

adjectives and adverbs. On the other hand, the non-grandstanding statements tend to refer to the words relevant to information-seeking: “inform”(-ation), “expla(i)n”(-ation), “report”(-s), “record”(-s), “research”, “data”, “studi”, “estim”(-ates), “assess”(-ment), “percent(-ages)” and “rate”(-s).

Furthermore, I analyzed the top 30 and bottom 30 statements which I present in the online appendix. The most grandstanding statements tend to promote members’ opinions on policies, criticize a head person of an executive body or grill a witness while the least grandstanding statements tend to delve into details on a policy issue and ask of witnesses’ expectation on policy consequences, etc. These substantive analyses confirm that the grandstanding score successfully captures key characteristics of grandstanding statements and distinguishes them from those not.

Figure 2. Average Grandstanding Score Over Time

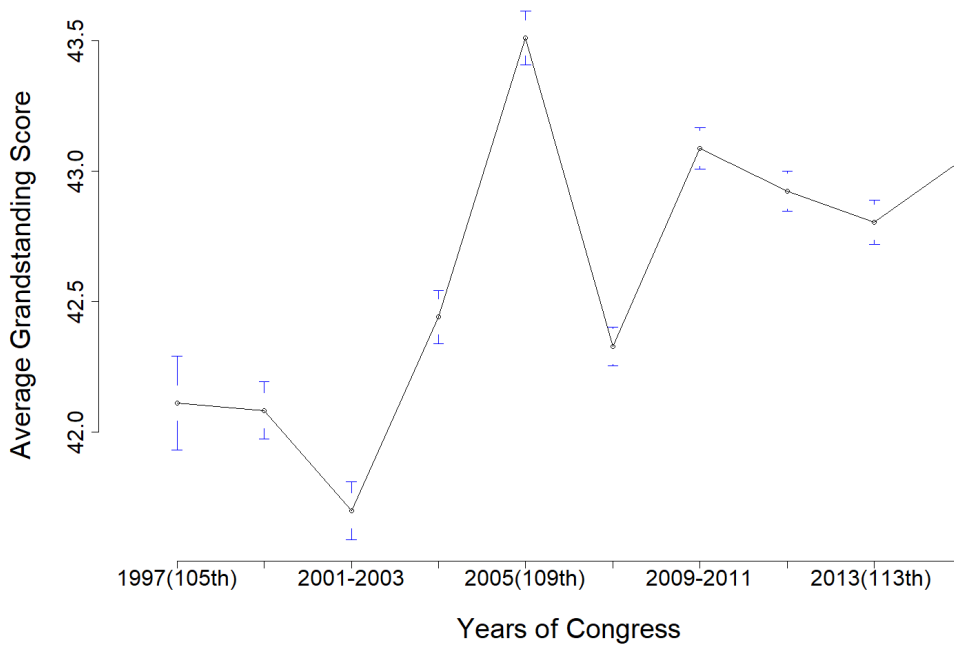


Figure 2 displays the changes in the grandstanding score over time. Each dot represents the average grandstanding score in each Congress with bars indicating 95% confidence intervals. It seems that legislators grandstand more over time, but the size of the increase is trivial.

Figure 3. Partisan Difference in Grandstanding Scores Across Congresses

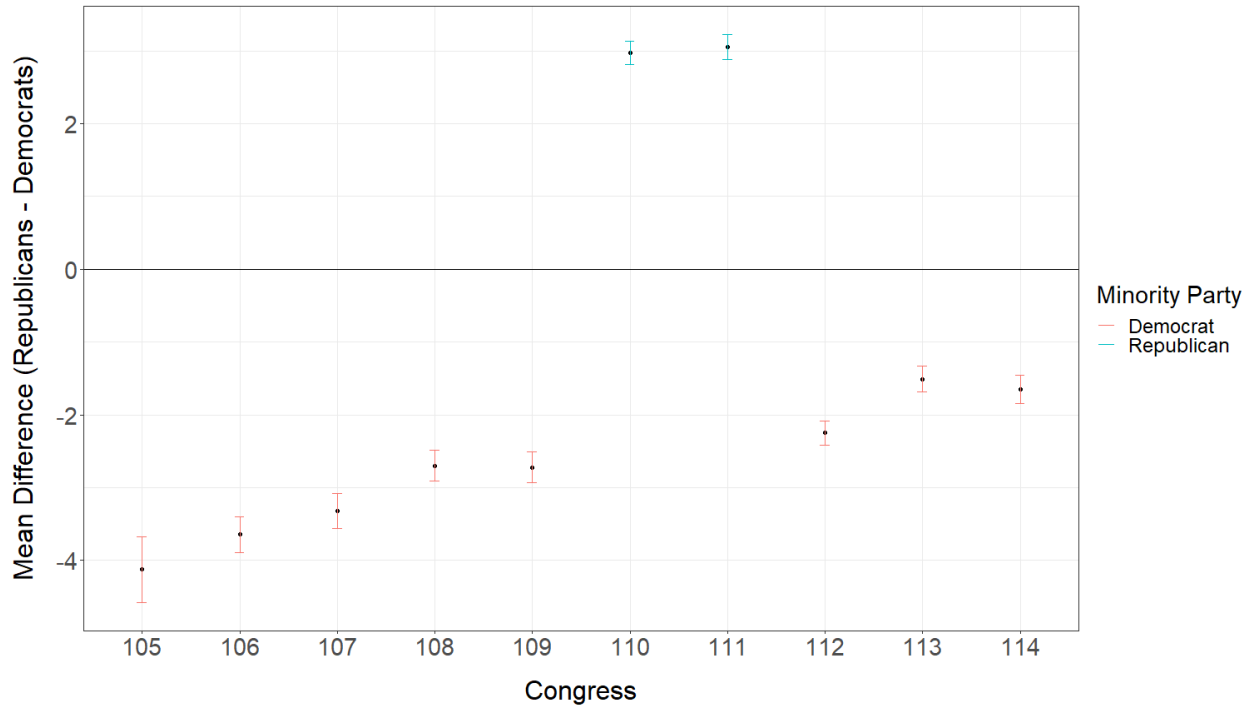


Figure 3 on the mean difference between Democrats and Republicans across the ten Congresses with 95% confidence intervals shows a more informative, interesting pattern: In eight Congresses in which Democrats were the House minority they grandstanded more than Republicans on average whereas in two Congresses, 110th and 111th, where Republicans held the minority status Republicans grandstanded more. This result provides preliminary evidence in support of the first hypothesis on the minority members' behavior.

Figure 4 plots the distribution of the grandstanding score for the 114th Congress by the DW-Nominate score including the names of outliers. Those who made less than ten statements

are colored in grey to reflect the relative reliability of the scores. For example, Paul Ryan who served as the Speaker of the House made only one statement. Except those with too few statements, Walter Jones (R-NC), who served on the Armed Services Committee, has the highest grandstanding score among all House members. Charles Rangel (D-NY) who served on the Ways and Means Committee ranks the second. The third place goes to Adam Schiff (D-CA) who served as a minority member of the Select Committees on Intelligence and Benghazi Terrorist Attacks, which further validates the measure because both committees were notorious for members' grandstanding and partisan fight in hearings during the 114th Congress. On the other hand, the least grandstanding representative is Alex Mooney (R-WV) who served on the Natural Resources Committee classified as a constituency-committee (Smith and Deering 1997).¹⁹

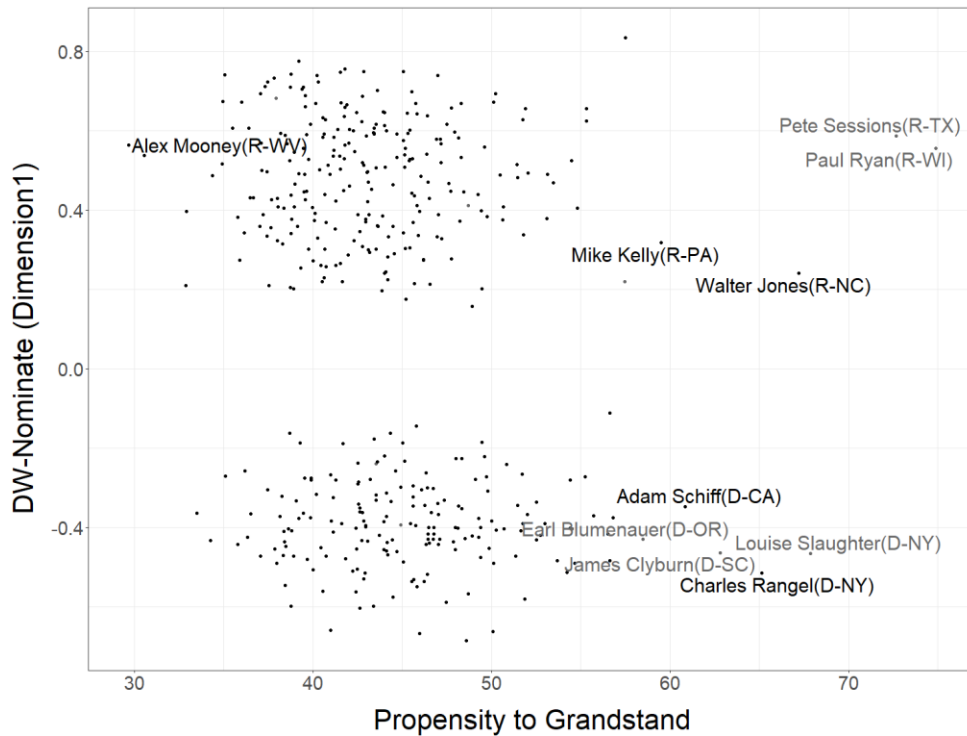
In order to establish a better causal relationship proposed in the hypotheses, this study estimates the within-individual effect of the key explanatory variables. To test the first hypothesis on member's minority status and its effect under unified government, I utilize the member-level data and binary indicators for the minority status and unified government. In the member-level regression model, I include fixed effects for member and Congress with clustered standard errors by member.²⁰ Including the member-fixed effects leverages the panel structure of the data given members' repeated observations over time, which allows estimation of within-

¹⁹ He also served at the Budget Committee, but there is no statement he made in this committee.

²⁰ Multilevel modeling literature argues that random effects for a level with too few groups may bias the group-level variance components as well as the group-level fixed effect estimates (Bryan & Jenkins 2016; Maas & Hox 2005). Thus, in all models, I choose to include Congress fixed effects, not random effects.

individual variations and facilitates making causal claims. The estimators indicate whether a change in a covariate makes the same member behave differently while controlling for any individual-specific unobservable, static confounders such as personality. In addition, Congress fixed effects account for any trends in grandstanding specific to each Congress.

Figure 4. The Grandstanding Score by DW-Nominate Scores for the 114th Congress



Despite the advantage of the member-level analysis in estimating within-individual estimators, the hypotheses on committee variations has to be tested using the statement-level data because some members sit on multiple committees so that using the member-level data it is impossible to tease out and compare members' statements made in certain committees from those made in other committees. Thus, using the statement-level data, I conduct exact matching to compare grandstanding scores of the same member in the same Congress inside and outside of power committees, and I do the same for committees with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or

national security. The simple mean difference using a matched data set will provide a within-individual effect of committees. Additionally, in order to test the effect of individual committees separately instead of collectively, I also present a regression model with committee fixed effects along with Congress fixed effects and random intercepts for members and hearings. However, note that the committee fixed effects will not serve as within-individual estimators.

In the regression analysis, the following set of control variables are included to account for potential confounders. First, because those more loyal to the party may endeavor to send partisan messages during hearings more than those less so, I include an indicator for party leaders and the individual members' party unity score which measures the frequency of voting with the party median on party unity votes.

Second, electorally insecure members may benefit more by appealing to moderates while in contrast for secure members are less likely hurt but rather benefited by sending position-taking messages to their core supporters. Thus, I account for members' electoral security by including the percentage of the votes that a member won in the previous election. Also, given the first-past-the-post electoral system, the effect of members' electoral security may not increase linearly with their messaging effort. Therefore, I also include the percentage of the vote squared.

Third, because senior members enjoy more power and influence and are likely to have accumulated more expertise in their committee's jurisdiction, they are in a good position to raise their voices and send partisan messages during hearings. However, as with electoral security, the effect of additional terms served may not have a linear effect on grandstanding. Therefore, I include the number of terms served by a member as well as its squared term.

Fourth, given the previous finding that polarized policy preferences among committee members leads members to grandstand (Huitt 1954; Park 2017), in the statement-level analysis I

control for the level of polarization within each full committee measured by the distance between party means of the DW-NOMINATE scores following the practice in McCarty et al. (2006). I use the level of polarization for a full committee for subcommittees under it.

Fifth, because members may have stronger motivation to grandstand on salient issues with broader audience, in the statement-level analysis I control for the number of members who spoke in each hearing as a proxy for the level of attention given to each hearing. Note that issue salience can also be measured by counting the number of times an issue is mentioned in news media, but this type of variable may suffer from endogeneity with the grandstanding score.

In addition, I include the absolute value of the first dimension of each member's DW-NOMINATE score and indicators for partisan affiliation, female members and freshmen. In the member-level analysis I include indicators for chairs of committees or subcommittees, but in the statement-level analysis I include indicators for chair's statements and ranking members' statements, respectively. Also, I control for the frequency of statement of each member in each Congress in the member-level analysis but not in the statement-level analysis because it is unlikely to affect the intensity of grandstanding of each statement theoretically. I retrieved the party support scores from Voteview.com, but most of the individual-level variables are retrieved from the Legislative Effectiveness Score dataset constructed by Volden and Wiseman (2014).²¹

²¹ I do not control for the legislative effectiveness score (LES) because members choose their strategy- either grandstanding or legislating- in a hearing based on institutional constraints, and thus controlling for the LES may introduce post-treatment bias. However, including it in the model does not change the results. Similar logic may apply to the party unity score as well, but including or excluding this variable in the model does not change the results, either.

In order to compare effect sizes across the covariates, I rescaled some variables to range from 0 to 1 if they do not. These variables include ideological intensity, legislative effectiveness score, vote percentages, and seniority. Descriptive statistics are in the online appendix.

Also note that in the current article, I include select committees such as the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, the Select Committee on Benghazi and the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming because their hearings merit analysis. However, for fair comparison only among the standing committees, I additionally present the same set of analysis and its results excluding these select committees in the online appendix. The results barely change, and their substantive interpretations remain the same.

Individual-level Analysis

The first two models in Table 2 present results using member-level data with fixed effects for Congresses as well as members rendering the coefficients within-individual estimators. The dependent variable is the individual member's grandstanding score in each Congress. Recall that the pooled member-level standard deviation across time is 4.34. The first model includes only the minimum number of control variables to show the reliability of the results presented in the second model which includes the full set of controls. In both models, minority status and its interaction with the unified government indicator are positive and statistically significant, which supports the first hypothesis. Specifically, based on the second model, under divided government a minority member is more likely to grandstand than he would as a majority member by .608 point which constitutes about one seventh of the within-individual standard deviation of the grandstanding score. In addition, under unified government a minority member is more likely to grandstand by 1.286 points accounting for about one third of the within-individual standard

deviation than he would as a majority member. Therefore, under both government types the same member is more likely to grandstand when he is of the minority party, but the gap is greater under unified government as expected. Furthermore, a majority member is more likely to grandstand under divided government by 1.35 points than under unified government. Thus, both majority and minority members tend to grandstand more under divided government.

Table 2. Regression Results

Model description	Member-level		Statement-level	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Minority	.527** (.254)	.608** (.263)	.949*** (.059)	.964*** (.065)
Unified	-.101 (.510)	-1.350 (.922)	.357 (.263)	-.381 (.291)
Minority*Unified	.636** (.305)	.678** (.338)	.138* (.081)	.125 (.090)
Party support		.516 (2.765)		-.567 (.595)
Vote share (%)		6.569 (7.285)		7.023*** (1.849)
Vote share squared		-.048 (.047)		-.045*** (.012)
Seniority		.685 (4.146)		1.517* (.815)
Seniority squared		.082* (.044)		-.047*** (.011)
Ideological intensity		-3.213* (1.690)		-.849* (.448)
Democrat		-6.449 (6.562)		.248 (.253)
Freshman		-.900*** (.248)		-.428*** (.080)
Female		-		-.425 (.326)
Chair	-1.212** (.481)	-1.141** (.483)		
Subcommittee chair	-1.487*** (.240)	-1.510*** (.239)		
Chair's statements			-4.334*** (.048)	-4.363*** (.049)
Ranking member's statement			-.879*** (.074)	-.942*** (.075)
Party leader	1.109* (.567)	1.226** (.552)	.172 (.145)	.083 (.146)
Statement frequency	-14.899*** (1.212)	-14.610*** (1.220)		
Number of speakers			4.203*** (.308)	4.161*** (.309)
Polarization within committee			-.924** (.457)	-.946** (.458)
Constant	40.918***	38.970***	43.507***	41.885***

	(.236)	(3.471)	(.357)	(.889)
Member effect	Fixed	Fixed	Random	Random
Hearing effect	-	-	Random	Random
Committee effect	-	-	Fixed	Fixed
Congress effect	Fixed	Fixed	Fixed	Fixed
Observations	3,708	3,637	999,666	987,808

Standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

The dependent variable is grandstanding score.

Note: The coefficient for the female variable in Model 2 was not estimated due to collinearity.

Here, it is interesting but also counterintuitive to note that when a member becomes a minority member he grandstands more when his party controls the White House than he would when his party does not control neither the White House nor the House of the Congress. This is probably because under unified government the majority has less motivation to send critical messages against the administration so that committee chairs are less likely to hold hearings which may potentially provide minority members with opportunities to grandstand; however, under divided government chairs may more actively hold hearings on partisan issues in which majority members can send partisan messages, and as a result minority members end up grandstanding more to counteract majority members' messaging effort.

Statement-level Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses on committee effects, I utilize statement-level data and exact matching on members in a given Congress. Grandstanding behavior measured at the statement-level is more appropriate to test the committee effects, given that each statement can be nested within its specific committee of origin, but the statement-level regression models do not facilitate within-individual estimators. As an alternative solution, I isolate members of Congress who served on both a powerful committee or a committee with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or

national security policy as well as at least one additional committee in the same Congress and then aggregate these members' statement-level data by member, Congress and whether a statement was made in one of the committees of interest or not in order to exact-match the aggregated data based on this information. The procedure is as follows.

First, I measure the average grandstanding score for each member inside and outside of the four powerful committees in each Congress and do the same with regards to the four committees with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or national security policy. There are 564 non-chair members who have served in at least one powerful committee and at least one non-power committee in the same Congress, and 758 members who have served on at least one committee with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or national security policy and at least one other committee without jurisdiction over those types of policies. I treat these two samples of members as separate samples in the remainder of the analysis using matching.

Second, using only the data on these samples of members of Congress, which constitutes my matched data sets, I compare the average grandstanding scores of their statements made during hearings held by the committees of interest to those made during hearings held by other committees. In the first sample of 564 members who served on at least one powerful committee and other committee in the same Congress, the average grandstanding scores for their statements made during hearings held by those committees are 47.913 and 45.428, respectively. The size of the gap is a little more than a half of the pooled within-individual standard deviation of the grandstanding score. In the second sample of 758 members who served on at least one committee with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or national security policy and one other committee in the same Congress, the average grandstanding scores for their statements made during hearings held

by those committees are 46.606 and 44.556, respectively. The difference accounts for .472 times the pooled within-individual standard deviation.

Table 3. Difference in Means Using the Matched Dataset to Test Committee Effects

Treatment Committees	Powerful	Foreign & Security
In these committees	47.913	46.606
In other committees	45.428	44.556
Difference (in times of s.d.)	2.485 (.573)	2.050 (.472)
P-value from a t-test	.000	.000
Number of members	564	758

Note: To test the effect of powerful committees, all chairs' statements were excluded from the analysis.

Third, using t-tests, I find that members grandstand more in hearings held before powerful committees and committees with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or national security policy than they do in hearings held by other committees (p-value < .001 in both tests). The results are summarized in Table 3. These results using matching provide within-individual effects of committees and empirical support for the second and third hypotheses. For the purpose of robustness checks, I further conducted regression analysis using the matched datasets with the treatment variable and the same set of controls included in Model 2 in Table 2. The coefficients on the treatment variable barely change from the size of differences between the treated and controlled groups presented in Table 3. The full regression results are in the online appendix.

While the results using matching showed the collective effects of certain types of committees, it is worth measuring the effects of individual committees and check if there is any variation among powerful committees and among the committees with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or national security policy. To this end, Models 3 and 4 in Table 2 present regression models using the statement-level data with committee fixed effects along with fixed effects for Congresses and random effects for members and hearings to account for group-level variance. The dependent variable is the grandstanding score of each statement. Model 3 includes only the

minimum set of controls, and Model 4 presents the full set of control variables. However, note that the effects estimated in these models are not within-individual estimators.

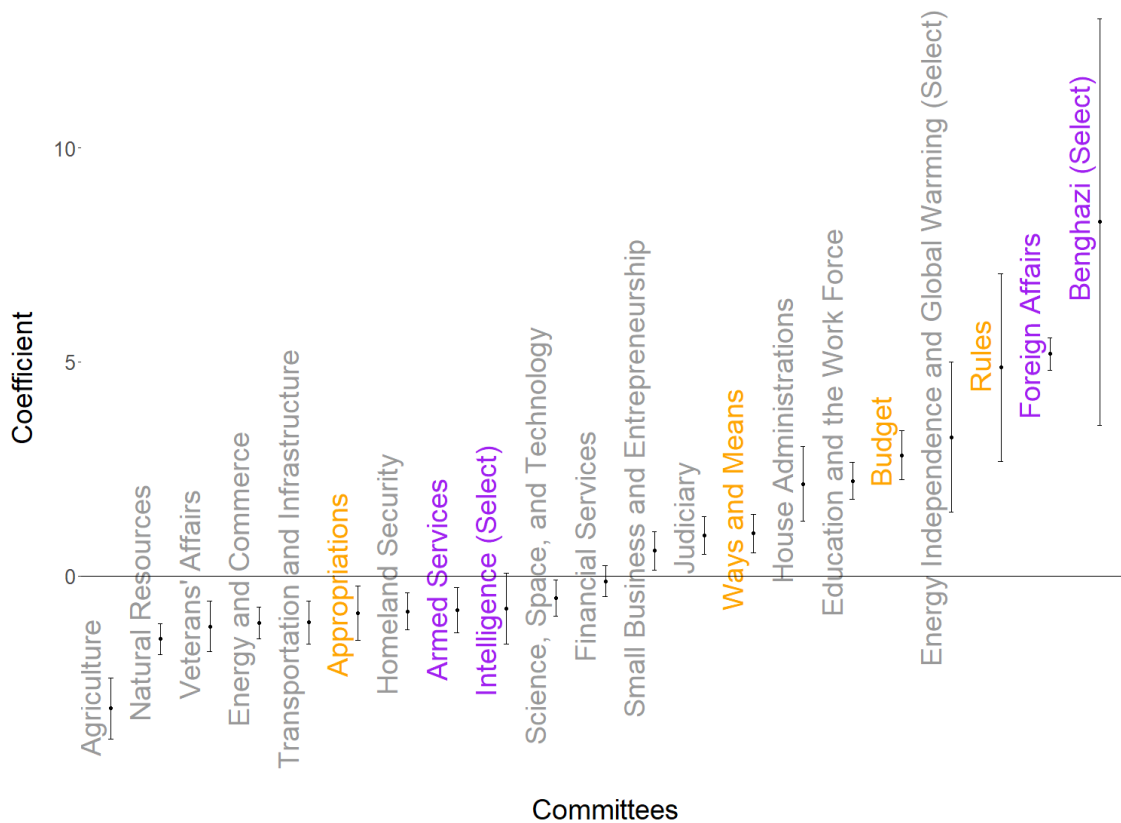
The key finding of this statement-level regression analysis is the coefficients on the fixed effects for individual committees which facilitate comparison of the relative levels of grandstanding across committees. These coefficients in Model 4 are presented in Figure 5 with 95% confidence interval.²² The names of powerful committees are in orange, and the names of committees with jurisdiction on foreign affairs or national security are in purple. The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is set as the baseline category in the model because its average grandstanding score is close to the mean grandstanding score of all statements in the data. Note that there are 22 unique committees, and the coefficient of the baseline group is not measured.

It is interesting that there are some variations within each set of committees of interest. However, all powerful committees except the Appropriations committee have positive and statistically significant coefficients corroborating the results in support of the second hypothesis. Two of the committees with jurisdiction on foreign affairs or national security policy ranks the top two committees mainly contributing for the empirical support of the third hypothesis. However, the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence scores low with statistically insignificant coefficient, which may be because it holds most of the major hearings in closed-door sessions so that it is hard to capture the true characteristics of their hearings. The Committee on Armed Services ranks low as well, which is probably because although it deals

²² Table A5 in the online appendix presents the coefficients on committee fixed effects as well as the average grandstanding score of statements made in hearings before each committee.

with security issues that the President dominates it has to debate and consider the defense authorization bill annually which keeps the committee busy with legislative activities in the early months of a year.

Figure 5. Coefficients on Individual Committees in Model 4 with 95% CI



The names of the powerful committee are in orange, and those of the foreign or national security committees in purple. The baseline committee is the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Therefore, no coefficient is estimated for this committee.

In summary, my results demonstrate within-individual effects supportive of all the hypotheses presented in this article through panel data analysis and exact matching. First, minority members are more likely to engage in grandstanding behavior in general than they do when they were majority members, and this is particularly more so during periods of unified

government. Additionally, the finding that both majority and minority members tend to grandstand more under divided government suggests that oversight is one of the major sources of grandstanding and emphasizes committee chairs' power to gatekeep issues to be considered in hearings in a way to facilitate majority members' grandstanding while blocking that of minority members. It further implies that net grandstanding activities is likely be larger under divided government than under unified government.

Second, the same member tends to engage in more grandstanding behavior in hearings held by powerful committees than he does in hearings held by other committees. This suggests that characteristics of powerful committees such as leadership-centered legislative procedures may incentivize ordinary members to focus on position-taking during public hearings.

Third, members of Congress are more likely to grandstand during hearings held by committees with jurisdiction over foreign affairs or national security policy. The President has more power and responsibility over these policy areas so that members of Congress are relatively more interested in sending political messages during hearings held by these committees as compared to hearings held in other venues.

However, these findings should be interpreted as providing descriptive evidence in favor of the hypotheses rather than definitive evidence due to the observational nature of the data.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that congressional committee members tend to grandstand in committee hearings when they have limited legislative opportunities to pursue their own policy agenda using original data and a new measurement, the grandstanding score. This finding further

implies that members resort to making statements favorable to themselves or their party in order to appeal to voters if they cannot effectively appeal by making policies representing their target audience. Therefore, members' grandstanding behavior in committee hearings may be a part of their electoral campaign strategy deliberately chosen rather than spontaneous reaction to the discourse occurring in hearings. Especially given the previous findings that public hearings affect the president's approval rating and solicit campaign contributions (DeGregorio 1992; Esterling 2007; Kriner and Schikler 2014), this electoral explanation of members' grandstanding behavior in hearings gains power. Further, this explanation illuminates the role of committee hearings as a communication channel between members of Congress and the public which has been discussed in classic literature on congressional committees (Fenno 1973; Huitt 1954) but received less attention in recent studies. Therefore, this article contributes to the study of congressional committees. More broadly, it also makes a novel empirical contribution to the literature on message politics by finding that messaging activities manifest even in committee hearings.

Given that committee hearings continue in Congress at an unabated rate despite the waning influence of committees in the legislative process under the strong party government (Aldrich and Rohde 2009, Rohde 1991), it is important and timely to study committee members' political motivation to hold and participate in hearings other than conducting committee business. This article addressed one mechanism: to send political messages to the public. Although this analysis did not find much variation across time in committee members' messaging efforts in hearings because it only looked at the period in which the transition from committee government to party government was already settled, future research utilizing hearing

data extended to earlier Congresses to test whether this messaging trend increased over time as the legislative role of congressional committees diminished will be productive.

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