Committee Hierarchy and Assignments in the U.S. Congress: Testing Theories of Legislative Organization, 1789-1946

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This paper examines the evolution of committee hierarchies in the U.S. House and Senate and attempts to explain variation in the quality of member's committee assignments within a given Congress and over time. Understanding these topics is important for many reasons. Recent congressional scholarship has emphasized the agenda-setting power of committees in legislative action. Understanding how committees were composed, assuming they were not constructed randomly, is the first step in beginning to understand how the formal institutions of the House and Senate may have influenced policy making throughout its history. For example, although the Senate is known for its informal rules of procedure, we also know that heat was periodically generated in senatorial politics in the nineteenth century over the institutional design of the Senate. Weingast (1998) has argued, for instance, that the "balance rule" was designed to institutionalize a deal between northern and southern interests over the handling of slavery. If so, was that deal continued at the committee level? Did the shift from balloting on the floor to party lists as the means for determining committee assignments in the Senate have any impact on the determinants of committee portfolios? What impact did the change from making assignments every session to making them once per Congress have on the hierarchy of the committee system in the House and Senate?

While it is important to establish these historical details, the greater payoff of this research is in testing various theories of legislative organization. This view of the historical study of the Congress puts us in the category of "history for hypothesis testing" (Aldrich 1997, 18). While valuing the other two approaches noted by Aldrich ("history as comparative politics" and "history as history"), we believe that general theories of legislatures can only be built with the broadest possible historical data. While care must be exercised in making generalizations across historical eras, the great institutional and behavioral variation presented by a 150-year sweep of history present wonderful opportunities for hypothesis testing. Consider, for example, the evolution of the committee assignment process: the current method of appointment is most consistent with the requirements of the distributive theory (self-selection by high demand preference outliers), the party list method is obviously most consistent with party-based theories, and the early methods of balloting by the floor would be most likely to produce committees that are close to the median floor voters, which is consistent with majoritarian theories of Congress.

The modern theoretical advances that have constituted the neo-institutional approach to Congress have, at its core, been about the optimal organization of legislatures, conditional on the goals of legislators. The series of stylized facts and theoretical insights that have emerged from this line of work have mostly focused on a period of congressional history Shepsle (1988) has phrased the "textbook Congress" of the mid-twentieth century. The textbook Congress is one that, even under the most expansive of reforms, changes only incrementally, guided by an understanding of how "institutional primitives" that have been developed over two centuries of experience operate. This paper will examine the "pre-textbook Congresses" to judge the portability of our modern theories of Congressional organization. One other contribution of this paper is the comparative analysis of House and Senate committee assignments. Far too often these institutions are examined in isolation, which undermines our ability to generalize about institutional organization and to build theories of Congress.

This paper is organized as follows. After providing an overview of the committee assignment process in the House and Senate in the 19th century, we will outline the process we will use to explain the value of members' committee portfolios. This section will briefly explain the nature of the dependent variable and each of the independent variables. The time periods will be broken down according to the different methods of committee selection that have been employed throughout the history of the House and Senate. In addition to employing variables to test the majoritarian and partisan theories of congressional organization, we will include controls for members' political experience, ideology, and region. We conclude with a discussion of our central findings.

Committee Assignments in Congress, 1789–1946

The committee assignment process, at least on paper, was much more fluid in the Senate than the House for its first 150 years. The Senate cycled through several methods of making committee assignments, from balloting on the floor, to the Vice President playing a key role (briefly under John Calhoun), to balloting again, to party lists, and eventually the Committee on Committees (see Canon and Stewart, 2002 for a detailed discussion). The House, on the other hand, has only had two primary methods of appointing committees (with some variation within those basic methods). Although the original House Rules provided that its committees would be appointed by balloting, the practice proved so cumbersome that the rule was changed within a year, to provide for the appointment of committees by the Speaker, "unless otherwise specially directed by the House" (*House Journal* (1-4): 140, Jan. 13, 1790). This arrangement lasted until 1910, when the revolt against Speaker Cannon stripped the office of committee appointment power. From that point on, appointments were made by party committees, with chairmanships determined by a nearly inviolate seniority rule, until the 1970s.

Despite these differences in procedures, there are strong similarities between the evolution of the committee systems of the House and Senate. While the House established standing committees before the Senate, the Senate actually beat the House in completely embracing standing committees (in 1816). By the 1820s both chambers had shifted from select committees to standing committees as the primary vehicle for bringing legislation to the floor and by the 1830s most members served on at least one standing committee (see Canon and Stewart, 2001). The Senate is typically characterized as an individualistic, personality-driven institution, but 19th century observers described a committee assignment process that while certainly not formulaic, exhibited certain patterns that were similar to those of the House. McConachie describes a process that would sound familiar to the Committee on Committees of a century later:

> Seniority usually makes the assignment of chairmanships easy, but the other
> positions must be filled after lively competition among self-avowed candidates.
> New members clamor for speedy assignment, and the chairmen of the committees
> that pass upon Executive nominations cannot brook delay. Sometimes the

Committee on Committees summon the discontented to a hearing. Again, its members go upon the floor to consult the other Senators as to their desires, and to reconcile them, if possible, to its proposed appointments (McConachie 1898, 342–43).

While the modern Senate may be more willing to "brook delay" of presidential appointments than its 19th century counterpart, the process of accommodating member requests rings as true today as it did at the turn of the previous century. Sen. Robert Byrd provides an example of campaigning for committee assignments at the turn of the 20th century in his history of the Senate. In describing a Senate that was tightly controlled by Nelson Aldrich and William Allison, Byrd recounts the experience of Albert Beveridge who had been labeled the "genus mugwump." "Frantic that, if the impression was not corrected, he would not receive favorable committee assignments, Beveridge began a campaign to polish his tarnished image and win Allison's favor." This campaign included detailed descriptions of Beveridge's qualifications and his assurances of "personal loyalty and subservience" (Byrd 1988, vol. 1, 365).

Fifty years earlier, the committee assignment process was already a complex process with identifiable general patterns. Senator James Bayard described the assignment process of the mid-19th century in the following fashion:

There are too many considerations which must necessarily enter into the organization of committees, even in one's own party, to make it possible to reduce them to strict and tangible rules. Personal considerations enter into it; the duration of service enters into it. Since the Senate has been organized, they have always looked to the importance of securing that degree of knowledge which is possessed by those who have remained permanently in the body, and occupied positions in it; and they have never displaced members from important positions as long as they remained in the Senate, unless there was some reason for doing so. That consideration must control the organization of committees, and it necessarily had its bearing in the construction of the committees as now presented to the Senate (*Congressional Globe* 35-1, 40, cited in Robinson 1954, 137).

This quote indicates that property rights to committee assignments were evident long before the electoral incentive may have prompted members to claim their piece of committee turf (Katz and Sala 1996). The quote from Sen. Bayard also implies an informational motivation in making committee assignments "since the Senate has been organized." By the late 1860s, the majority party dominated the committee system by a variety of measures for both the House and the Senate (proportion of committees with the chair from the majority party, proportion of committees that had a majority of party members ranked above the minority members, and proportion of committees with a majority from the majority party; Canon and Stewart, 2002, Figure 1; Stewart et al. 1995, Figures 7 and 8).

These anecdotes are instructive, but systematic analysis is required to understand who got the best committee assignments in the early Congresses and why. This analysis will also provide a lens into observing the distribution of power in each era. Our review of the history and literature suggests that committee assignments were made based on a combination of personal, institutional, and partisan considerations. The next section outlines our specification of those variables.

Estimating Committee Hierarchies and Portfolios

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in our analysis is based on the "Grosewart" estimate of the hierarchical structure of the House and Senate committee system for the pre-1946 period (Stewart and Groseclose 1998; Groseclose and Stewart 1999). Central to this method is an assumption that there are property rights in committee seats. In this context a "property right" in a committee seat means that once a seat is occupied by a senator, he cannot be evicted from it against his will. In those rare cases where eviction is mandated (like when party control of the Senate changes), something akin to eminent domain proceedings take place, where due compensation is provided for involuntary takings. It is in the antebellum era when this assumption is the most clearly problematic.

The Grosewart method differs from other attempts to estimate the pyramidal structure of the committee system through the use of transfer information. It uses an explicit choice theoretic model of the transfer process to motivate statistical estimation of the relative average value of serving on each committee. The coefficients produced by this technique can be interpreted substantively and have cardinal properties. In addition, because the method is imbedded in an explicit statistical model, we can compute standard errors of the coefficients and apply standard statistical tests.

The details of the Grosewart method are provided in Stewart and Groseclose (1998) and Groseclose and Stewart (1999). For the purpose of this paper, we need to underscore one important feature of that method: the coefficients that are estimated have cardinal properties. In other words, we can give natural meaning to a coefficient of zero,[1] we know what a one-unit

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[1]In interpreting the Grosewart coefficients, it is important to keep in mind that the choice theoretic model starts with a memeber's committee portfolio in Congress t and then examines additions to and subtractions from that members's collection of committee assignments during the inter-session (or inter-Congress) period, which then produces his committee portfolio in Congress $t+1$. Under an assumption that the new portfolio *as a whole* will be more valued by that member than the old portfolio *as a whole,* we can then interpret the coefficients.

Now consider a random member, S, who has a committee portfolio at time t that we will write P_t^S. If one of those committees in P_t^S has a Grosewart value of exactly zero, that means

change in a coefficient means, and we can sum up coefficients to estimate the value of an individual member's "committee portfolio." This last feature will be critical for the analysis in this paper because we use these coefficients to create our dependent variable–the relative value of committee *portfolios* held by individual members–rather than doing the more traditional analysis of predicting appointment to individual committees, one committee at a time.

Our dependent variable, then, is simply the sum of the estimated values of the committees a member served on in a given Congress, based on the committee hierarchy values described above. The logic and statistical justification behind this is presented in Stewart and Groseclose (1998). For the period prior to the 49th Congress, when committees were appointed by session, we calculated the committee portfolio value of each senator for each session, and then averaged across all the sessions of a Congress. Before moving to a discussion of the independent variables, one other issue must be addressed: estimating the hierarchy of the committee system over time in each chamber.

Grosewart scores must be estimated across a long stretch of time, simply to accumulate a reasonable number of transfers among the various committees. However, if the time period is too long, then we run into two problems. The first is simply that over time the number of committees grew, meaning that the opportunity structure represented by the committee system was slowly evolving over time–sometimes changing significantly all at once. The second is that the relative value of some committees certainly changed over time, as political, social, and economic realities facing House members changed. Therefore, we need to include as many Congresses as possible in the estimation of relative committee values, to ensure precise estimates, but we do not want to include committee assignments across "different eras," or else the estimated values may be invalid.

We performed this analysis after dividing the whole time period into shorter eras for both the House and the Senate. For the Senate, the periods are: (a) the 14th–48th Congress, (b) the 49th–66th Congress, and (c) the 67th–79th Congress. This periodization breaks the analysis at the most important formal changes in the Senate committee system before the 1946 Legislative

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he is exactly indifferent between keeping or dropping that assignment at time t+1. Likewise, if the committee with a Grosewart value of exactly zero is *not* in P_t^S, the member would be exactly indifferent between adding it to his collection of committee assignments at time t+1 or not.

If a committee has a *negative* Grosewart value, Stewart and Groseclose term that committee a *burden committee.* In this example, if P_t^S contains a burden committee, then the value of *S*'s portfolio at time t+1 will increase if he is allowed to drop the burden committee.

On the whole, then, members are more likely to endure "uncompensated" transfers off of committees with negative Grosewart values than committees with positive Grosewart values. Likewise, members are more likely simply to acquire a single new assignment on committees with positive Grosewart values (foregoing no other assignments) than committees with negative coefficients.

Reorganization Act (LRA). When the Senate established its standing committee system in the 14th Congress (1816), the rules provided for the appointment of committees *by session.* For most of its early history the Senate in fact took advantage of this provision, turning over an average of about 25% of its committee assignments between sessions before the Civil War and 15% afterwards (Canon and Stewart 1998, p. 23, Figure 5). In other words, committee turnover was about as frequent *within* Congresses as it currently is *between* Congresses. Because a committee seat acquired under a session-by-session appointment rule may be valued differently than a seat acquired under a Congress-by-Congress appointment rule, we choose to make the first major break in the analysis between the 48th and 49th Congresses, when the Senate adopted its current rule of appointing committees for an entire Congress.

Another important formal change in the committee system occurred at the start of the 67th Congress when the Senate abolished 41 of its 75 committees, weeding out ones that had become inactive and which had existed primarily for the purpose of granting senior senators a clerk. This consolidation also may have resulted in a different appointment dynamic which shifted the relative value of committee service. Thus we also break our analysis between the 66th and 67th Congresses. Finally, we end our analysis with the 79th Congress, which was the last Congress before 1946 LRA took effect.

While these breaks capture the major transition points in the Senate committee system, we may be running afoul the problem of pooling together periods in Senate history which should be analyzed separately, due to changes in political (or other) circumstances associated with committee appointments. For instance, the demise of balloting after the 29th Congress may have allowed a previously fluid hierarchy to solidify. If so, we might observe an especially weak hierarchy before the 29th Congress, but a firmer one afterwards. Or, the Civil War party realignment may have had organizational ramifications for the Senate in the same way that the House was affected (see Stewart 1999). If so, then the pre-war hierarchy might be quite different from the post-war hierarchy. To address these possible problems, we further subdivided the pre-1885 time period. First, to test whether the hierarchy changed as a consequence of the demise of balloting, we broke the pre-1885 period at the 29th Congress. Second, to examine whether the Civil War may have affected the hierarchy, we further broke the analysis at the 37th Congress. These subperiods will be examined in the models explaining patterns of committee portfolios.

We divided House history before the 1947 into five major periods. In our previous research (Stewart, et al., 1995), we showed that the ubiquity of House standing committee assignments grew gradually in the first four decades of the House's history. By the 23rd Congress (1833-1835) all House members could pretty much count on receiving at least one standing committee assignment. Therefore, the first period is the 1st through 22nd Congress. The second period is from the 23rd through 35th Congress (1857-1859). Starting in the 36th Congress, the House discontinued its practice of appointing committees anew each session, and therefore committee service may have had a more short-term character than in subsequent periods when committees appointments were held across sessions of Congress. This also

captures virtually all of the pre-Civil War history and the relative fluid partisan systems that characterized national politics at the time.

The third period runs from the 36th Congress to the 50th Congress (1887-1889). This marks the beginning of persistent two-party organization of the House. It was still a period that predates the rise of the seniority system as modern students of congressional politics understand that norm (Stewart 1992; Katz and Sala 1996). The fourth period, from the 51st Congress to the 61st Congress (1909-1911), constitutes the period when the era of strong Speakers coincided with a relatively settled seniority practice. The fifth period, which runs until the Legislative Reorganization Act significantly reformed the committee system at the end of the 79th Congress (1945-1947), represented the first half of the strong committee/weak speaker system that characterized the era of the "Textbook Congress" (Shepsle 1989).

We report the results of out estimates of committee hierarchy in the Senate and House in Tables 1 and 2. The committee hierarchy for the Senate is discussed in some detail in Canon and Stewart (2002), so it will not be repeated here. Briefly, the further back in time we go, the weaker the hierarchy we observe. The earliest period is one in which the committee hierarchy—to the degree it existed—was still fairly flat and under-developed. The most highly-ranked committees still have relatively small coefficients, suggesting a lack of consensus among senators about what constituted attractive and unattractive committees. However, once balloting ceased, a hierarchical structure slowly emerged. The hierarchy was elongated (as measured by the range of the committee value coefficients) and consolidated (as measured by the overall goodness of fit of the statistical models to the data and the increased precision of the estimates, which is indicated by the relative size of the standard errors). In addition, the hierarchies were relatively persistent from period-to-period, with room for evolution.

The patterns for the House are similar, with one important exception. While the structure was also underdeveloped in the early period in the House (as shown by the relatively small coefficients for the top committees and the tight range of the coefficients), the individual committee estimates are actually more precise than the ones in the later period. This is explained by the more frequent "churning" of committee assignments in the earlier period, especially because committee assignments often changed between sessions of Congress. More frequent committee transfers provides more information for estimating the committee hierarchy.

Thus even though it would seem that several factors should have inhibited the development of a hierarchically-structured standing committee system in the Senate and House (such as an under-developed party system and weaker careerist tendencies among members of Congress), a budding hierarchy did develop before the Civil War, becoming stronger and stable over time. The principal problem we have in examining the details of this hierarchy is that with over 80 committees to rank it is impossible to know whether the statistical technique we employed to estimate the structure of this hierarchy actually got it right. It is reassuring that once the hierarchy firmed up after the 29th Congress, committees such as Finance, Foreign Relations, and Appropriations rose to the top in the Senate and Ways and Means anchored the top of the

House hierarchy. We have to trust the technique a little more than we would normally like in order to conclude that the Committee on Canadian Relations was about as valued a committee assignment as the Committee on Agriculture from the 49th to the 66th Congress. The larger validity of the estimates we generated in this section can be judged through the results that emerge when we take the next step, and use the estimated hierarchy to analyze other behavior related to the committee system. That is precisely what we do in the next section, as we turn our attention to studying who got the good assignments and who got the dregs.

Institutional factors—state and section

The "Great Compromise" left an indelible mark on the design of Congress. Not only did it provide for equal representation of states in the Senate, but its design created expectations that senators themselves would also be treated equally in the chamber. McConachie claimed this expectation still held more than a century later when it came to dividing committee assignments, asserting that "the important and unimportant positions are almost evenly distributed, whether Maine be compared with Texas, or Nevada with New York" [1898, 269-70].

Needless to say, a strong committee system challenged the simplest notions of state equality even more directly than in the House. As a practical matter, it was impossible to provide equal representation of states on committees. A few committees were in fact constituted with a senator from each state, such as the select committee on Salaries for the President and Vice President, which was appointed in the first Congress. Still, most of the early select and standing committees had three or five members. When Senate standing committees were established in 1816, observers noted that other considerations such as the previous experience and abilities of the senator (Adams 1874, Vol. 1, 329), sectionalism (McConachie 1898, 267), and party (Adams 1874, Vol. 1, 384-85) were more important than state equality in determining committee rosters.

Even in the House in the early congresses, the Jeffersonian notions of strict democracy created a predisposition for state equality on committee rosters. Jeffersonians saw standing committees as potentially undemocratic, thus the best way to preserve the democratic influence of the Committee of the Whole would be to ensure that states were equally represented on committees. Elsewhere we show that while there is evidence that this view was influential in the early congresses, it had largely dissipated by the 12th Congress (Canon and Stewart 2001, 178). Therefore, we will not examine the state equality norm in the House.

Closely related to the question of state equality was that of sectional equity, particularly before the Civil War. Weingast (1998) is the most recent to note that the equal representation of states led to the "balance rule" between slave and free states, which was designed to block efforts in the House by the more populous north to restrict slavery.

While state equality and sectional interests never dictated committee assignments, disgruntled senators often relied on these principles to complain about committee assignments.

In one bitter debate on the issue in the 1850s, Senator Hannibal Allen, a Republican from Maine, objected to the partisan, sectional, and state-based biases of the Democratic assignment, "We do not seek responsibility but as representatives of equal States, we have obligations imposed upon us from which we cannot and ought not to shrink. As the representatives of equal States, we are entitled to an equal representation in the organization of this body, and are under obligation to our constituencies to discharge, so far as we may be able, the duties that are incumbent upon us" (*Congressional Globe* 35-1, 39). He went on to note that slave states had majorities on 13 of the 22 committees, and 3 of the free states' majorities were on the trivial committees (Enrolled Bills, Engrossed Bills, and Audit and Control the Contingent Expenses of the Senate), thus the committee system was undermining one of the Founding principles of the Senate.

If the constitutional principle of state equality persisted into the committee organization of the Senate, we should observe no relationship between measures of state size or "importance" and the participation of a senator in the committee system. We test for the equality of appointments with respect to state size in the Senate by including the percentage of the nation's population that is in a given state. Likewise, the operation of the balance rule causes us to predict that neither region was favored in committee assignments before the Civil War in the Senate, but that the more populous North should gain favorable treatment in the House as it tried to gain advantage on the slavery issue (captured by a dummy variable for slave states before the Civil War). Expectations for the post-War period for the House and Senate are not as clear. On the one hand, post-War animosities may have resulted in southerners being penalized in both the House and the Senate (we specify a dummy variable for southern states after the Civil War).[2] On the other hand, the lack of party competition in the South quickly created a power base for southerners in the committee system (due to the seniority norm). While we include a separate control for seniority, it is possible that the southern dominance of important committees will be evident in the portfolio values, even after controlling for seniority.

Individual Background and Qualifications

In addition to distributing committee seats according to notions of geographic equity, we assume that personal characteristics were a major determinant of who received the best committee assignments. The personal characteristics of senators have certainly entered into qualitative discussions of committee assignments in the historical Senate and House. We seek quantitative evidence of the same effects.

Noble Cunningham argued that "lack of talent" could explain the limited number of select committee assignments for some members when there was substantial variation in the distribution of assignments among senators. He cites an article in the *United States Gazette*, that

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[2]The "South" dummy variable is coded as the eleven states of the Confederacy, while "slave states" also include Missouri, Delaware, Maryland, and Kentucky, states which allowed slaves, but did not secede from the Union.

"found a 'great dearth of talents' in the House of Representatives, but observed that 'the Senate is very respectable in point of talents. The Rhode Island and New Jersey senators are miserable creatures,' he wrote, 'but there is a large portion of talent in that body.'" (Cunningham 1978, 248). Neither of the senators from Rhode Island received any assignments in the 9th Congress and the New Jersey senators were toward the bottom of the list. He also notes that those who had the greatest levels of House experience tended to have the most assignments in the Senate, a hypothesis that we systematically examine below (1978, 249).

Byrd extends Cunningham's assessment to the next period of committee assignments, arguing that during the period of balloting for committee assignments, personal factors such as expertise and reliability played a central role:

> The reappearance of certain senators on certain types of committees seems logical when we consider that the Senate as a whole elected members of each committee. We may assume that individual senators developed personal reputations for interest and expertise in particular areas that would lead their colleagues to include them on any committee considering a related subject. Other senators developed sufficient political prominence and reliability to encourage the members of the majority party to place them on committees where they would be the most effective (Byrd, 1988, vol. 2, 211).

While it is difficult to adequately measure personal differences among senators or representatives (if we had a mechanism to sort out the "miserable creatures" from the talented members, it would provide new meaning to the term "dummy variable"), we will suggest several individual-level characteristics that tap some members' skills and backgrounds, and which were likely taken into account when assignments were made. The first set of factors pertain to *previous legislative experience*. The most obvious of these factors is seniority within the House or Senate. As reflected in several of the quotes in this paper already, length of service was not an automatic guarantee of good committee assignments, but long-serving senators did tend to acquire better assignments, for a variety of obvious reasons.

The career trajectory of many senators from the House to the "upper chamber" also suggests another factor that may have been weighed when assignments were made. In particular, *former members of the House* may also have been privileged in committee assignments because of their highly relevant legislative experience. The measure we employ for the Senate is simply the number of years of House experience, prior to service in the Senate (the variable ranges from 0-32). For the House, we use a dummy variable indicating whether or not the member had prior experience in the state legislature (house or senate).

As with previous legislative experience, *level of education* was likely a cue to the "quality" of senators, particularly rookies. At a time when very few Americans had much formal education to speak of, even most senators lacked education past adolescence. Senators with a college degree must have had much to offer. Therefore, we measure education with a dummy

variable, indicating whether the senator had attended college (we tried an alternative coding for whether the member attended an Ivy League college, a non-Ivy college, or no college, but the simpler dichotomous variable worked better).

Congress specializes in writing laws; *lawyers* specialize in applying and advocating in the context of the law. Particularly during this period, when congressional staff members—or "clerks"—were virtually unheard of, lawyers had valuable skills for the drafting of legislation. Therefore we expect that being an attorney not only would be a signal to other members that a rookie may be a more valuable to the chamber on account of his chosen profession, but that having a legal background would continue to advantage these members well into their congressional career. We measure legal occupation with a dummy variable.

We also include a dummy variable for *farmers* who served in Congress. Given that the Agriculture committee was not very highly rated in the committee hierarchy of the House or Senate, we expect this variable to be negatively related to the overall quality of a member's portfolio.

The final individual variable that we include is the election margin for the House member. The "Clapp/Masters" hypothesis asserts that members who are elected with narrow margins of victory will gain better committee assignments because the leadership will want to make them more secure (Masters 1961; Clapp 1964). This hypothesis has been soundly rejected for the modern committee system, but nobody has subjected the hypothesis to a systematic test for the 19th century committee system. We include the margin of victory, plus an interaction between the margin of victory and freshman status (assuming that the boost in the value of one's committee portfolio would be greatest as a freshman). As one gains seniority, it is more difficult to sort out the impact of election margin on the value of a committee portfolio because the direction of causation cuts both ways and in opposite directions. That is, the Clapp/Masters hypothesis predicts a negative sign for the variable (as election margins go down, the value of committee portfolios go up). However, the causal arrow can also run the other way: as one gains seniority and wins better committee assignments, this could have a positive impact on electoral margins, which would suggest a positive sign for the variable. Thus, we would not expect the main effect to be significant, but the interaction term should be significant with a negative sign if the Clapp/ Masters hypothesis is correct.

Partisanship and ideology

Despite the Founders' fear of the negative influence of the "factions" in the political system, political parties were established very quickly in the U.S. Congress (Aldrich, 1995; Hoadley, 1986). Consequently, we would expect that partisanship should have been evident in how committee assignments were distributed. Our previous research, cited above, finds that the majority party did have an advantage in committee assignments, but this dominance was far from universal (and certainly did not approach the level of control of the committee system that the majority party enjoys today). Given the relatively generous treatment of the minority party in

receiving committee assignments throughout the 19th century (with the Civil War exception), one might expect no systematic differences between the majority and minority parties in the quality of their portfolios. However, there is one exception to that expectation: majority parties with small margins cannot afford to be quite as generous and therefore will give themselves disproportionate bonuses in the party ratios on the prestige committees. This tendency is captured in a dummy variable that is coded as one if the majority party has between 50% and 55% of the seats.

The median voter theorem suggests that moderate legislators should be able to command more institutional resources than extremists, because they are so often pivotal. Did they during this period? Given the evolution of party control of standing committees in the 19th century, we have a more nuanced measure of ideology for the standing committee models. For the early period of balloting in the Senate, the floor had more control over the assignment process than parties. Therefore, we expect that members who were more ideologically extreme, with respect to the median senator, will not receive as attractive portfolios as more centrist senators. This variable is simply the absolute value of the difference between the member's D-NOMINATE score and the median NOMINATE score for the chamber in that Congress (Poole and Rosenthal, 1997). We specify a similar variable to capture the impact of parties on the assignment process; here our expectation is that deviations from the party median will be punished with less attractive committee assignments. We expect that the chamber distance variable will be significant in early congresses, but not the party variable and that the opposite should hold after the mid-part of the 19th century when parties took control of the assignment process.

Committee Portfolios in the Senate and House

The results for the standing committee analysis for the Senate are reported in Tables 3 and 4 and the House results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.[3] We will discuss the Senate models first. In the early Congresses (14-48), the model performs surprisingly well, given the lack of hierarchy in the structure of Senate committees in this period and the high degree of uncertainty in our measure of committee portfolio. All of the variables are significant and in the expected direction, with the exception of the dummy variable for farmers, the party distance variable (which was expected to have no effect, and indeed the variable is not significantly different from zero, even if it does have a positive sign), and the dummy variable for southern states after the Civil War.

The most unexpected finding, which persists through the other periods and actually becomes stronger over time, is the variable for the relative population of each state. Contrary to

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[3]We included year dummies to control for over-time effects due to the pooled cross-sectional time series design of our data. The results were very robust; after the dummies were included, the coefficients for the variables of interest were very stable (changing, on average, by no more than a few percent). We also did some preliminary tests for unit effects, but did not detect any serious heteroskedasticity.

McConachie's assertion that Maine and Texas were treated the same, senators from large states clearly received better committee assignments than senators from small states. The effects in the early period were quite small. A two-standard deviation shift from the mean of .0295, for example comparing a senator from New Hampshire to a senator from North Carolina in the 14th Congress, yields a shift of .065 in a senator's portfolio. Putting this in more meaningful terms, this difference in state size would move a member who had a portfolio of median value to one that is in the 57th percentile. This relatively small effect becomes quite large in later congresses. In the 49th-66th Congresses when the effect of state size is the largest, a two-standard deviation shift in state size (say, for example comparing Georgia to Pennsylvania in the 63rd Congress), would produce a portfolio shift of 1.91. This would move a senator from a median portfolio to one that was just above the 70th percentile, holding all else constant, a truly significant shift.

The individual characteristics of senators, such as lawyer, farmer, House service, college, and freshman status, are all significant in the model that covers the 14th-48th Congresses but the effects are relatively small. For example, a freshman who otherwise would have had a portfolio of median value, would be moved down to the 40th percentile; lawyers would have a comparable boost in the positive direction. A college degree helped a member improve the quality of his committee assignments to a somewhat smaller degree (improving a portfolio from the median to the 54.5th percentile), while ten years of previous House service would have boosted a senator's median portfolio into the 62nd percentile.

Institutional variables also have a significant impact. A senator with two terms of experience would have a portfolio that was in the 72nd percentile compared to the median portfolio he would have had as a rookie. The ideological position of senators with respect to the chamber median and party median also had the expected effect on the quality of portfolio. The party variable had no impact and a shift of two standard deviations from the chamber median would reduce the value of a senator's portfolio by about five percentiles. Parties that had relatively tight majorities also took a greater share of the good committees for their members than parties that enjoyed more comfortable majorities.

The fit of the model improves and more of the variables are significant for the later subperiod, after the 30th Congress when parties exerted more control (when compared to the model that includes the balloting period of the 14th-29th Congresses). However, the stronger statistical relationships in the later period could be accounted for by the improved quality of our measures. This almost certainly accounts for the fact that the dummy variables for the lawyer and freshmen variables were not significant for the 14th-29th Congresses, when we would expect such personal variables to matter more. One odd finding for the 14th-29th Congresses, for which we have no immediate explanation, is that the dummy variable for farmer was highly significant during a period in which the Agriculture Committee was one of the least desired committees.

Table 4 shows the models for the 49th-79th Congresses, with two subperiods for the pre- and post-committee realignment of the 67th Congress. Most of the variables remain significant and in the expected direction and the overall fit of the various models is quite a bit better than the

models in Table 3. The most important results in terms of testing theories of congressional organization is that the party distance variable is significant in the later period and the chamber distance variable actually has the wrong sign (and is significant for the 49th-79th Congresses). Thus, partisan theories of congressional organization receive some support in this period, although the substantive effects are fairly small. A two-standard deviation shift from the party median NOMINATE score would yield a committee portfolio in the 41.6th percentile, rather than the median, all else constant.

The institutional variables have a substantial impact in this period. A senator starting his or her third term would have a portfolio in the 88th percentile, compared to the median portfolio he or she would have as a rookie. A few differences across the subperiods are that southern states received worse committee assignments than non-southern states in the 67th-79th Congresses, but were not treated differently in the 49th-66th Congresses. The reverse was true for parties with slim majorities: they gave themselves better assignments in the earlier subperiod, but not the later (the variable is not significant in the later period).

Overall, the data in these two tables demonstrates that the quality of committee assignments in the Senate had very identifiable patterns, from the very first sessions in which standing committees emerged. There patterns strengthen over time with the role of parties and the significance of state size becoming increasingly important.

The models for the House, displayed in Tables 5 and 6, are similar to the Senate results in terms of many of the specific variables, but with some important differences with respect to more general patterns. One difference is that the models for the antebellum period in the House (the first two pairs of columns in Table 5) have almost no explanatory power, while the early periods for the Senate had a surprising number of variables that were significant and in the expected direction. For the first model, from the 1st through the 22nd Congress, six of the ten variables have the wrong sign and none of them are statistically significant (in fact, only two variables have coefficients that are larger than their standard errors, and one of those–party distance–is in the wrong direction). The second period, from the 23rd to the 35th Congress, fares a bit better, with nine of the 12 variables in the expected direction and one of them significant at the .05 with a one-tailed test (parties with small margins) with four others nearly reaching the .05 level of significance (freshman, college, previous legislative experience, and margin of victory).[4] The dummy variable for parties that had slim majorities in the House had a surprisingly large impact on the quality of committees doled out to its members, given that parties had generally not taken firm control over the committee system in the mid-part of the 19th Century. Parties with small majorities would move one of their members from a median portfolio to one in the 74th percentile, a truly significant boost.

Another clear difference between the Senate and House models is that the overall fit of the models for the House is substantially lower than in the Senate (with adjusted R^2 of less than

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[4]Significance levels in the tables are reported for two-tailed tests.

.10 for most of the House models, while with the exception of the earliest period, the Senate models had R^2s in the .20 range for the period before the 48th Congress and significantly higher for two of the three models for the congresses after the 48th). We are not quite sure why the proportion of explained variance is so low, other than to note that the committee hierarchy was not as well developed in the House as it was in the Senate in the 19th century and that the quality of the data on individual members is probably of lower quality in the House as well.

The clear break in the House models comes between the second and third periods. Recall that this break corresponds to the change in committees being appointed by session to being appointed by Congress. The most significant change is the impact of a member's seniority. As we note above, the existing literature has argued that the seniority system was not fully established in this period (1859-1889). However, Table 5 shows that the seniority variable goes from having a coefficient that is in the wrong direction and smaller than its standard error in the antebellum congresses to a strong, positive coefficient that is more than 15 times the size of its standard error in the Civil War and post-Civil War era. The variable is also substantively significant: a member with an additional two terms of seniority would move from a median portfolio to a portfolio in the 84.6th percentile! Three other variables all have a similar effect in the negative direction: southerners, party outliers, and ideological extremists all receive portfolios that are between 16 and 17 percentiles below the median, all else equal.[5] This is fairly strong support for both partisan and majoritarian theories of congressional organization. The only puzzling result here is that the electoral margin/freshman interaction that attempted to test the Clapp/ Masters hypothesis was significant and *positive*! That is, freshman with larger electoral margins actually received committee portfolios that were better than their colleagues who did not fare as well at the polls. However, the substantive effect of this variable is quite small.

The strongest results for the House are in the fourth model, presented in Table 6. This is very reassuring given that this *should* be the period with the strongest effects for many of these variables, especially the party related ones (small parties and party distance). A member of the majority party who is two standard deviations away from party median, will receive a portfolio that is about 13 percentiles below the median portfolio. The ideological extremists receive about the same treatment as well. College graduates and members of parties with small majorities both get a large bonus of about 16th percentiles in the portfolio hierarchy, while southerners, somewhat surprisingly, fare even better than that (with an 18.5 percentile advantage over non-southerners, all else equal). Seniority is still important, but not quite as much as the previous period, with a two-term member receiving a portfolio that is 19 percentiles above the median. Freshman, for the first time in the history of the House, received portfolios that were 22

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[5]For the party outliers and the ideological extremists, this is calculated by taking two standard deviation from the mean of the variables. The chamber distance variable had nearly an identical effect as the party distance even though its coefficient is about half the size because the standard deviation for the chamber distance is more than twice as large as the party distance standard deviation.

percentiles lower than they would have if their other characteristics would have given them a median-valued portfolio.

The final period for the House spans the period from 1911-1947 (bound by the Cannon revolt on one side and the Legislative Reorganization Act on the other). Given the removal of control of committee assignments from the Speaker, we would expect party to play less of a role in committee assignment and this is precisely what happens. The party distance variable is no longer significant and ideological extremists are no longer punished as well. Members of small majority parties still receive a large bonus (nearly 29 percentiles), while more senior members and southerners receive significant advantages as well. Members with previous legislative experience in state legislatures had a significant impact on committee portfolios for the first time, with a 17 percentile bonus.

Discussion and Conclusion

There are three significant themes to emphasize here: 1) both partisan and majoritarian theories receive some support in this analysis, with partisan theories seeming to fit the historical expectations with the greatest regularity; 2) changes in institutions, such as the mechanisms for how committees assignments were made and whether assignments were made in each session or by Congress, have a significant impact on the distribution of quality committee assignments, and 3) the House and Senate appear to share more similarities than differences in the evolution of their committee systems. We will briefly address each point.

In the early stages of the development of the committee system, political parties in Congress were in their infancy. Therefore, we did not expect parties to exert much influence over the allocation of prized committee assignments. Indeed, in the Senate, they did not have the institutional capacity to exert such control, even if they would have wanted to until balloting for committees was abandoned. The institutional capacity was present in the House at a much earlier date, but the committee system was not used in this fashion by party leaders until after the Civil War. However, once a clearer committee hierarchy developed, parties rewarded their more loyal members with better committee assignments than members who strayed from the fold. The evidence was strongest in the House in the late 19th and early 20th century when Speakers Reed and Cannon ruled the institution, but is also quite strong in the Senate after the 48th Congress. The systematic influence of party loyalty of committee assignments in the Senate is an important observation in a chamber that is supposedly guided by principles of collegiality and clubiness. Evidence for majoritarian theories is not quite as strong, with extremist senators from the 49th-79th congresses actually being rewarded with better committee assignments than their peers who remained closer to the chamber median.

Changes in institutions surrounding committee assignments are also key in understanding how committee portfolios were allocated. The most dramatic shifts in the House and the Senate corresponded with the change from making appointments by session to making appointments for

an entire congress. In both the House and the Senate, for example, this shift coincides with the emergence of the "party distance" variable as a strong predictor of committee portfolios. Similarly, the revolt against Speaker Cannon and the subsequent change in the committee assignment process in the House had an identifiable impact on the significance of the party distance variable.

Perhaps the most interesting general insights come from comparing the evolution of the committee systems in the House and Senate. In making these comparisons, any neo-institutionalist must begin by examining the Constitution. As written, the Constitution avoided making the U.S. Senate the handmaiden of an aristocratic class, or even of the executive branch. However, the Constitution also imbued the House with greater popular political legitimacy and a strategic advantage over the nation's purse strings. Thus, while not dominated by an upper class or the executive, there was a real possibility that the Senate would be dominated by the House, much like Commons dominates Lords. From what we have seen, there was no guarantee that the Senate would match the House one-on-one in institutional capacity. However, through a combination of good fortune and institutional persistent, the Senate developed a committee system that not only paralleled the House's in its capacity, but periodically led the way in institutional development. One other important point is uncovered in this analysis for the first time: state equality has been thoroughly violated in the composition of Senate committees from the beginning. This is especially important for a chamber whose *raison d'etre* is state equality. Perhaps being unconstrained by this Constitutionally proscribed norm allowed the Senate committee system to develop in a more representative fashion and one that more closely mirrored the House.

One way the Senate led the way in the development of congressional committees was in getting to standing committees first. Of course, the House was slowly adding a standing committee here and there during the first quarter century of the Republic, while the Senate creaked along appointing a select committee at a time for all lawmaking except adjudicating claims. Still, in the 1810s when the legislative environment became rapidly more complex due to the war against England, it was the Senate that acted before the House in deciding that standing committees would be the norm, not the exception. And, it was the Senate that first made standing committee service universal, not the House (Canon and Stewart, 2002).

In the research reported in this paper, we see that the Senate did lag behind the House in the development of its committee system in one important fashion—rather than give to the presiding officer the right to make committee assignments, the Senate relied on the democratic balloting method for about 30 years. While this probably defused many of the tensions that existed in the House over the composition of committees, it also hindered the ability of party majorities to firmly take the reins of power once the legislative session began. And perhaps even more significantly, the balloting apparatus made it difficult for senators to protect the human capital they developed through committee service.

When balloting finally was abandoned in the 1840s, the way was open for three important institutional developments. First, parties could assume a greater role in guiding the work output of committees, through the coordination of committee appointments. With the rise of party-initiated resolutions, there was now a framework for working out details such as party ratios on each committee, and thus a framework for ensuring that the majority party controlled the votes on the most important committees. Second, with a mechanism in place that could guard committee seats for the most diligent and useful committee members, there was now hope that senators might stay put on committees long enough to develop expertise within their committees' jurisdictions. Finally, with an explicit mechanism in place for coordinating the placement of senators on committees, it was now possible to use the committee system itself for more than just writing laws. The committee system could also become a legislative proving ground for new senators entering the chamber.

In other words, the groundwork was laid in the antebellum Senate for a type of committee careerism that has frequently been the subject of attention from students of the House. Even if committee careerism was not as deep or enduring in the Senate as it was in the House, the important point is that the groundwork was laid in the upper chamber of the American Congress for an endogenously-developed policy making apparatus. With such an apparatus, the Senate was able to avoid total domination by the well-endowed lower chamber. If senatorial exceptionalism is grounded in its policy making independence, and if that independence is grounded in its committee system, then the independence of the committee system is grounded in a series of institutional developments in the twenty years before the Civil War.

Most of this paper has not been about the antebellum committee system, of course, but rather about the operation of the committee system across 150 years. This paper has demonstrated that a committee hierarchy developed in the House and Senate on relatively parallel tracks at an earlier stage than we would have expected. Furthermore, very clear patterns emerge by the mid-19th century in terms of how access to this committee hierarchy was granted. A variety of personal, partisan, and institutional variables all influenced the allocation of valued committee turf many decades before the House and Senate have typically been viewed as "professionalized" or "institutionalized."

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Table 1– Estimates of Senate committee service value, 14th–79th Congress, using the Grosewart method.

	14th–49th Cong.					49th–66th Cong.					67th–79th Cong.			
Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.		Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.		Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.	
1	Railroads	0.78	0.49		1	Expenditures of Public Money	4.36	2.69		1	Foreign Relations	4.51	0.85	*
2	Appropriations	0.64	0.50		2	Appropriations	4.23	0.77	*	2	Finance	3.60	0.73	*
3	Privileges and Elections	0.54	0.37		3	Foreign Relations	3.74	0.77	*	3	Appropriations	3.56	0.77	*
4	Rules	0.53	0.58		4	Expends., Commerce and Labor	2.75	3.46		4	Irrigation and Reclamation	2.67	0.96	*
5	Education and Labor	0.45	0.36		5	Finance	2.72	0.67	*	5	Rules	2.07	0.70	*
6	Military Affairs	0.44	0.22	*	6	Judiciary	2.71	0.65	*	6	Public Lands and Surveys	1.89	0.61	*
7	Civil Service and Retrenchment	0.42	0.44		7	Banking and Currency	2.50	1.17	*	7	Civil Service	1.40	0.61	*
8	Commerce	0.38	0.22	*	8	Commerce	2.13	0.60	*	8	Judiciary	1.27	0.55	*
9	Foreign Relations	0.38	0.19	*	9	Naval Affairs	2.09	0.70	*	9	Audit and Control	1.25	0.60	*
10	Revolutionary Claims	0.27	0.21		10	Expends., Navy	1.98	1.42		10	Banking and Currency	1.04	0.51	*
11	Revision of the Laws	0.27	0.41		11	Expends., Justice	1.72	1.03	*	11	Enrolled Bills	1.03	0.89	
12	Patents	0.25	0.22		12	Interstate Commerce	1.69	0.54	*	12	Territories and Insular Possessions	0.99	0.46	*
13	Library	0.25	0.37		13	Military Affairs	1.67	0.57	*	13	Expends., Executive Departments	0.71	0.48	
14	Naval Affairs	0.19	0.21		14	Rules	1.61	0.64	*	14	Naval Affairs	0.58	0.48	
15	Judiciary	0.18	0.22		15	Expends., War	1.54	0.92	*	15	Agriculture and Forestry	0.52	0.52	
16	District of Columbia	0.14	0.17		16	Five Civilized Tribes of Indians	1.37	1.09		16	Interstate Commerce	0.52	0.53	
17	Finance	0.13	0.20		17	Expends., Interior	1.35	0.87		17	Commerce	0.46	0.44	
18	Public Buildings	0.12	0.23		18	Standards, Weights, and Measures	1.35	1.10		18	Immigration	0.25	0.50	
19	Indian Affairs	0.11	0.22		19	Cuban Relations	1.28	0.54	*	19	Library	0.16	0.84	
20	Retrenchment	0.10	0.45		20	Expends., Agriculture	1.26	1.23		20	Education and Labor	-0.04	0.48	
21	Public Lands	0.09	0.20		21	Geological Survey	1.23	0.83		21	Patents	-0.06	0.61	
22	Audit and Control	0.04	0.24		22	Pacific Islands and Porto Rico	1.20	0.70	*	22	Privileges and Elections	-0.09	0.58	
23	Post Office and Post Roads	0.01	0.19		23	Phillippines	1.02	0.60	*	23	District of Columbia	-0.10	0.52	
24	Enrolled Bills	-0.03	0.25		24	Transp. & Sale of Meat Products	1.01	0.85		24	Public Buildings and Grounds	-0.28	0.59	
25	Claims	-0.03	0.18		25	Public Lands and Surveys	0.94	0.56	*	25	Pensions	-0.31	0.54	
26	Territories	-0.03	0.24		26	Disposition of Useless Papers	0.93	0.82		26	Indian Affairs	-0.44	0.57	
27	Pensions	-0.13	0.17		27	Corporations Organized in D.C.	0.89	0.54		27	Claims	-0.46	0.51	
28	Roads and Canals	-0.14	0.25		28	Post Office and Post Roads	0.86	0.43	*	28	Military Affairs	-0.53	0.47	
29	Agriculture	-0.14	0.22		29	Interoceanic Canal	0.85	0.52	*	29	Printing	-0.62	0.78	
30	Private Land Claims	-0.19	0.21		30	Privileges and Elections	0.85	0.55		30	Mines and Mining	-0.85	0.66	
31	Improvement of the Miss. River	-0.21	0.95		31	Expends., Commerce	0.81	1.12		31	Manufactures	-0.93	0.58	*
32	Mines and Mining	-0.22	0.31		32	Private Land Claims	0.75	0.54		32	Post Office and Post Roads	-0.99	0.44	*
33	Printing	-0.23	0.29		33	Irrigation and Reclamation	0.70	0.56		33	Interoceanic Canal	-1.12	0.60	*
34	Militia	-0.33	0.28		34	Organization ... of the Exec. Depts.	0.63	0.48						
35	Manufactures	-0.33	0.24		35	Library	0.63	0.64						
36	Engrossed Bills	-0.40	0.23	*	36	Public Buildings and Grounds	0.62	0.55						
37	Pacific Railroads	-0.63	0.47		37	Coast and Insular Survey	0.60	0.81						
38	Transp. Routes to the Seaboard	-1.02	0.64		38	Indian Depredations	0.57	0.52						
39	Commerce and Manufactures	-1.10	0.61	*	39	Canadian Relations	0.53	0.47						
40	Public Lands and Surveys	-2.07	1.10	*	40	Forest Reservations	0.49	0.59						
41	Investigation and Retrenchment	-3.08	1.72	*	41	Audit and Control	0.43	0.69						
					42	Agriculture and Forestry	0.41	0.59						
					43	Expends., Post Office Department	0.40	1.16						
					44	Expends., State	0.40	0.80						
					45	Mississippi River Improvements	0.29	0.50						
					46	Fisheries	0.26	0.66						
					47	District of Columbia	0.21	0.45						
					48	Printing	0.19	0.64						
					49	Conservation of National Resources	0.15	0.76						
					50	Census	0.11	0.48						
					51	Immigration	0.10	0.41						
					52	Pensions	0.09	0.49						
					53	Education and Labor	0.06	0.53						
					54	Expends., Treasury	0.05	1.15						
					55	Pacific Railroads	-0.01	0.53						
					56	Revolutionary Claims	-0.04	0.45						
					57	Engrossed Bills	-0.06	0.64						
					58	Indian Affairs	-0.11	0.48						
					59	Examine the Several Branches of the	-0.17	0.58						
					60	Patents	-0.19	0.58						
					61	Territories	-0.22	0.46						
					62	Epidemic Diseases	-0.24	0.83						
					63	Transportation Routes to the	-0.25	0.45						
					64	Civil Service	-0.25	0.48						
					65	Public Health and National	-0.26	0.54						
					66	Manufactures	-0.27	0.63						
					67	Mines and Mining	-0.42	0.51						
					68	Indian Lands	-0.72	0.90						
					69	Coast Defenses	-0.76	0.58						
					70	Railroads	-1.10	0.57	*					
					71	Enrolled Bills	-1.28	0.85						
					72	Claims	-1.54	0.52	*					
	N = 2,560					N = 1,122					n = 607			

*p < .10

Table 2. Estimates of House committee service value, 14th–79th Congress, using the Grosewart method

1st–79th Congress			1st–35th Congress			36th–50th Congress			51st–61st Congress			62
1	W.W. Vet. Leg.	∞ *	1	War Claims	1.80 *	1	Ways & Means	∞ *	1	Ways & Means	∞ *	1
2	Ways & Means	2.08 *	2	Ways & Means	1.44 *	2	Terr.	2.16 *	2	Pub. Bldg.	2.77 *	2
3	War Claims	1.79 *	3	Terr.	1.39 *	3	War Claims	1.38 *	3	War Claims	2.61 *	3
4	Riv. & Harb.	1.54 *	4	Rev. Pens.	1.31 *	4	Rev. Pens.	1.26 *	4	Riv. & Harb.	2.15 *	4
5	Terr.	1.50 *	5	Patents	1.07 *	5	Pub. Bldg.	0.98 *	5	Exp., Commerce	2.05	5
6	Roads	1.45 *	6	Naval Aff.	0.89 *	6	Revis. Laws.	0.82 *	6	Terr.	1.53 *	6
7	Rev. Pens.	1.29 *	7	Revis. Laws.	0.87 *	7	Appropriations	0.78 *	7	Naval Aff.	1.52 *	7
8	Appropriations	1.03 *	8	Pub. Expend.	0.85 *	8	Rules	0.76	8	Commerce	0.95 *	8
9	Naval Aff.	0.95 *	9	P.O.	0.81 *	9	Judiciary	0.76 *	9	Pub. Lands	0.90 *	9
10	Rules	0.82 *	10	Railways	0.79 *	10	Foreign Aff.	0.65 *	10	Judiciary	0.87 *	10
11	Pub. Expend.	0.79 *	11	Pub. Lands	0.76 *	11	Accounts	0.58	11	Accounts	0.86	11
12	Judiciary	0.74 *	12	Militia	0.71 *	12	Naval Aff.	0.57	12	P.O.	0.80 *	12
13	Revis. Laws.	0.74 *	13	Foreign Aff.	0.68 *	13	Pub. Expend.	0.51	13	Appropriations	0.80 *	13
14	P.O.	0.73 *	14	Priv. Land Cl.	0.67 *	14	Military Aff.	0.48	14	Revis. Laws.	0.73	14
15	Foreign Aff.	0.69 *	15	Military Aff.	0.63 *	15	Pub. Lands	0.44	15	Agriculture	0.67	15
16	Pub. Lands	0.64 *	16	Manufactures	0.57 *	16	Priv. Land Cl.	0.40	16	Priv. Land Cl.	0.66	16
17	Priv. Land Cl.	0.59 *	17	Inval. Pens.	0.55 *	17	Mines	0.39	17	Foreign Aff.	0.64 *	17
18	Commerce	0.57 *	18	Judiciary	0.50 *	18	P.O.	0.38	18	Rules	0.63	18
19	Pub. Bldg.	0.56 *	19	Indian Aff.	0.48 *	19	Railways	0.33	19	D.C.	0.57 *	19
20	Military Aff.	0.53 *	20	Commerce	0.46 *	20	D.C.	0.31	20	Banking	0.51 *	20
21	Banking	0.52 *	21	D.C.	0.44 *	21	Indian Aff.	0.26	21	Immigration	0.51	21
22	Agriculture	0.51 *	22	Agriculture	0.43 *	22	Exp., Justice	0.25	22	Elections # 1	0.51	22
23	Railways	0.48 *	23	Elections # 1	0.42 *	23	Patents	0.23	23	Coinage	0.50	23
24	Merch. Marine	0.38 *	24	Claims	0.36 *	24	Labor	0.22	24	Education	0.48	24
25	Elections # 1	0.38 *	25	Pub. Bldg.	0.32	25	Commerce	0.21	25	Military Aff.	0.46	25
26	Exp., Exec. Dept.	0.36	26	Exp., War	0.31 *	26	Pac. RR	0.21	26	Merch. Marine	0.44	26
27	Manufactures	0.34 *	27	Exp., Treasury	0.30 *	27	Freedman's Aff.	0.14	27	Pensions	0.44	27
28	Patents	0.34 *	28	Exp., Pub. Bldg.	0.27 *	28	Elections # 1	0.11	28	Labor	0.37	28
29	Indian Aff.	0.33 *	29	Exp., P.O.	0.26 *	29	Agriculture	0.07	29	Miss. Levees	0.32	29
30	Accounts	0.28 *	30	Accounts	0.26 *	30	Militia	0.07	30	Indian Aff.	0.31	30
31	D.C.	0.28 *	31	Exp., Navy	0.24 *	31	Pensions	0.04	31	Indian Aff.	0.27	31
32	Insular. Aff.	0.28	32	Exp., State	0.24 *	32	Inval. Pens.	0.04	32	Exp., Interior	0.27	32
33	Inval. Pens.	0.27 *	33	Mileage	-0.02	33	Coinage	0.02	33	Inval. Pens.	0.25	33
34	Militia	0.26	34	Engraving	-0.28	34	Education	-0.05	34	Exp., State	0.22	34
35	Immigration	0.25				35	Exp., Navy	-0.06	35	Irrigation	0.22	35
36	Labor	0.24				36	Manufactures	-0.07	36	Election of Pres.	0.18	36
37	Exp., Treasury	0.21 *				37	Exp., Pub. Bldg.	-0.10	37	Exp., Justice	0.17	37
38	Memorials	0.19				38	Banking	-0.12	38	Civil Service	0.14	38
39	Exp., Pub. Bldg.	0.17				39	Claims	-0.13	39	Exp., P.O.	0.09	39
40	Exp., War	0.17				40	Exp., P.O.	-0.16	40	Exp., Pub. Bldg.	0.08	40
41	Exp., Navy	0.16				41	Miss. Levees	-0.17	41	Pac. RR	0.07	41
42	Exp., P.O.	0.15				42	Exp., State	-0.18	42	Insular. Aff.	0.05	42
43	Freedman's Aff.	0.14				43	Mileage	-0.20	43	Elections # 1	0.05	43
44	Pac. RR	0.14				44	Exp., Interior	-0.21	44	Exp., Navy	0.03	44
45	Exp., State	0.14				45	Exp., Treasury	-0.35	45	Militia	-0.05	45
46	Claims	0.13				46	Exp., War	-0.38	46	Manufactures	-0.07	46
47	Pensions	0.09							47	Exp., War	-0.07	47
48	Flood Control	0.08							48	Exp., Agri.	-0.15	48
49	Miss. Levees	0.07							49	Exp., Treasury	-0.18	49
50	Exp., Interior	0.07							50	Ind. Arts	-0.28	50
51	Education	0.06							51	Elections # 3	-0.44	51
52	Exp., Justice	0.05							52	Alc. Liq. Traff.	-0.45	52
53	Coinage	0.04							53	Mileage	-0.54	53
54	Irrigation	0.00							54	Elections # 2	-0.64	54
55	Exp., Commerce	-0.03							55	Census	-0.67	55
56	Election of Pres.	-0.12							56	Claims	-0.68	56
57	Mines	-0.14							57	Railways	-0.73	57
58	Ind. Arts	-0.15							58	Mines	-0.75	58
59	Engraving	-0.19										59
60	Mileage	-0.20										60
61	Exp., Agri.	-0.22										61
62	Civil Service	-0.23										62
63	Alc. Liq. Traff.	-0.24										63
64	Elections # 1	-0.27										64
65	Elections # 2	-0.29										
66	Census	-0.32										
67	Exp., Labor	-0.41										
68	Elections # 3	-0.52										

Table 3. Standing Committee Assignments in the Senate, 1816-1884

Variable Name	14th-48th Cong.		14th-29th Cong.		30th-48th Cong.	
	Coeff.	Signif.	Coeff.	Signif.	Coeff.	Signif.
Constant	-.260 (.076)	.0005	-.446 (.096)	.0001	.079 (.092)	.195
Freshman	-.076 (.025)	.0015	-.040 (.041)	.162	-.176 (.045)	.0001
Lawyer	.065 (.025)	.0045	.0050 (.045)	.451	.133 (.043)	.001
Farmer	.04 (.046)	.192	.132 (.069)	.0275	-.146 (.094)	.06
College	.047 (.019)	.0075	.063 (.032)	.0235	.021 (.034)	.271
Distance from party median	.063 (.059)	.14	.096 (.091)	.146	.028 (.110)	.40
Distance from chamber median	-.083 (.033)	.0055	-.057 (.057)	.160	-.173 (.057)	.001
Seniority (Senate)	.019 (.005)	.0001	.0267 (.008)	.001	.028 (.009)	.001
House service	.012 (.003)	.0001	.011 (.004)	.002	.015 (.005)	.0035
Southern state (after the Civil War)	.013 (.04)	.368	–	--	.021 (.056)	.30
Slave state (before the Civil War)	.107 (.023)	.0001	.054 (.031)	.0415	.062 (.053)	.12
Small party majority	.079 (.037)	.017	.0079 (.051)	.439	.069 (.079)	.19
Relative state pop.	1.11 (.28)	.0001	.774 (.406)	.0295	1.605 (.553)	.002
	N=1,749 Adjusted R^2 = .204		N=732 Adjusted R^2 = .076		N=1,016 Adjusted R^2 = .201	

Table 4. Standing Committee Assignments in the Senate, 1885-1946

Variable Name	49th-79th Cong.		49th-66th Cong.		67th-79th Cong.	
	B	Signif.	B	Signif.	B	Signif.
Constant	.122 (.323)	.352	.314 (.350)	.185	3.914 (.452)	.0001
Freshman	-1.36 (.129)	.0001	-1.479 (.168)	.0001	-1.99 (.266)	.0001
Lawyer	.393 (.109)	.0001	.255 (.150)	.044	.539 (.204)	.004
Farmer	-.238 (.197)	.113	-.073 (.266)	.291	-.384 (.378)	.155
College	-.108 (.109)	.162	.199 (.132)	.067	-.726 (.246)	.0015
Distance from party median	-1.702 (.301)	.0001	-2.192 (.432)	.0001	-2.506 (.542)	.0001
Distance from chamber median	.466 (.155)	.0015	.117 (.197)	.276	.513 (.317)	.0925
Seniority (Senate)	.313 (.015)	.0001	.396 (.020)	.0001	.233 (.027)	.0001
House service	.046 (.010)	.0001	.033 (.013)	.0225	.0324 (.018)	.036
Southern state	-.526 (.108)	.0001	.0152 (.144)	.458	-1.349 (.329)	.0001
Small party majority	.446 (.153)	.002	.502 (.152)	.001	-.108 (.379)	.387
Relative state pop.	20.49 (2.17)	.0001	32.53 (2.84)	.0001	11.55 (4.215)	.003
	N=2,947 Adjusted R^2 = .390		N=1,638 Adjusted R^2 = .495		N=1,252 Adjusted R^2 = .193	

Table 5. Standing Committee Assignments in the House, 1789-1889

Variable Name	1st-22nd Cong.		23rd-35th Cong.		36th-50th Cong.	
	B	Signif.	B	Signif.	B	Signif.
Constant	.621 (.040)	.0001	.953 (.214)	.0001	-.0088 (.201)	.965
Freshman	.0077 (.022)	.723	-.191 (.123)	.121	.072 (.118)	.543
Lawyer	.018 (.020)	.369	.061 (.089)	.489	-.045 (.090)	.613
Farmer	-.011 (.029)	.698	.109 (.171)	.525	-.266 (.187)	.156
College	.021 (.018)	.241	.128 (.080)	.109	.067 (.080)	.402
Election Margin	--	--	-.0051 (.003)	.110	-.0044 (.002)	.057
Election Margin* Freshman	--	--	-.00071 (.005)	.888	.012 (.004)	.004
Distance from party median	.042 (.035)	.229	-.093 (.256)	.716	- .642 (.324)	.047
Distance from chamber median	.00059 (.038)	.988	.087 (.207)	.675	-.374 (.171)	.029
Seniority (House)	.00095 (.003)	.737	-.014 (.020)	.464	.230 (.015)	.0001
State legislative service	-.015 (.010)	.379	.103 (.078)	.185	-.028 (.076)	.712
Slave state	.018 (.020)	.370	-.064 (.199)	.747	--	--
Southern state	--	--	.0152 (.144)	.458	-.210 (.121)	.083
Small party majority	-.0076 (.035)	.828	.209 (.111)	.059	.232 (.137)	.091
	N=1,912 Adjusted R^2 = .012		N=1,248 Adjusted R^2 = -.001		N=3,141 Adjusted R^2 = .094	

Table 6. Standing Committee Assignments in the House, 1889-1946

Variable Name	51st-61st Cong.		62nd-79th Cong.	
	B	Signif.	B	Signif.
Constant	.603 (.264)	.023	1.74 (.190)	.0001
Freshman	-.340 (.153)	.026	-.171 (.127)	.167
Lawyer	-.139 (.113)	.221	-.144 (.082)	.079
Farmer	.064 (.224)	.776	-.270 (.183)	.140
College	.387 (.105)	.0001	-.030 (.095)	.751
Election Margin	-.0034 (.002)	.139	-.00092 (.001)	.497
Election Margin* Freshman	.00058 (.005)	.898	.0054 (.003)	.060
Distance from party median	-.706 (.376)	.060	-.275 (.279)	.324
Distance from chamber median	-.322 (.180)	.073	.128 (.189)	.498
Seniority (House)	.135 (.013)	.0001	.062 (.007)	.0001
State legislative service	.153 (.097)	.113	.128 (.075)	.086
Southern state	.52 (.143)	.0001	.193 (.111)	.080
Small party majority	.416 (.185)	.025	.467 (.119)	.0001
	N=3,473 Adjusted R^2 = .067		N=6,834 Adjusted R^2 = .032	