# Local Economies and National Politics: How Members of Congress Respond to Economic Crisis

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Thesis directed by Professor E. Scott Adler

**Abstract**

This dissertation examines the nature of dyadic representation in the House of Representatives during the contemporary era of elite polarization and nationalized political conflict. Members of the House are each accountable to a unique geographic constituency but face pressures from polarized national parties. How do lawmakers balance these competing pressures? I argue that members of Congress are responsive to the needs of their districts, but that the nature of the representational relationship depends on the characteristics of the district, level of intra-party consensus on the issue at hand, and the visibility of the behavior in question. I have compiled a unique dataset of district characteristics measured annually between 2006 and 2013. This dataset includes economic indicators such as foreclosure and unemployment rates, employment by economic sector, income, and poverty, as well as a host of demographic and opinion measures. Local economic changes during this time period present an opportunity to identify constituency effects because they are very weakly correlated with other political characteristics. My dissertation is the first study to annually measure the economic and political situation of every district for an extended period of time and to track the district level effects of an unfolding economic crisis, which presents a unique opportunity to study legislative responsiveness. In three empirical chapters I examine constituency influence on issue positions, issue priorities, and legislative success. The results show that dyadic representation in the House has not fully nationalized, but neither is it equal from place to place or across legislative actions. There appears to be greater responsiveness on the least consequential activities and those least relevant to partisan agenda control. There is no evidence that responsiveness as measured depends on district characteristics. Whether and how Congress responds to economic or other national problems likely depends on the party and ideology representing the most affected districts.

*For Chelsea*

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# Chapter 1

## Responsiveness to Local Conditions during National Crisis

Members of the House of Representatives are often forced to balance competing pressures from party leaders and voters in their districts. Pressure from the geographic constituency is built into the way members of the House are elected. Each district has only one representative, and those representatives depend on the support of voters in their districts to keep their jobs. If a majority of voters decides to vote against the incumbent no amount of outside support can save them. Each congressional district is unique, with a demographic, economic, cultural, and geographic composition all its own. It's no wonder then that the prevailing explanation of legislative behavior, and even the organization of the legislature itself is the "electoral connection" between lawmakers and their districts (Mayhew 1974). At the same time this diversity of geographic constituencies contrasts sharply with the fact that every member of the House belongs to one of two ideologically homogenous and polarized parties (Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Theriault 2008).

Congressional polarization is fed by a cyclical process that begins and ends with members of ideologically distinct parties supporting their party's legislative agenda and voting as a bloc on most contentious issues. In short, when the parties became sufficiently internally cohesive and different from each other beginning in the 1970's, the rank and file delegated greater procedural powers to their leaders in order to reduce transaction costs (Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Rohde 1991). The leaders of the majority party then use their newfound rule-making powers to form a procedural cartel (Cox and McCubbins 1993) which uses a combination of formal powers and informal inducements to control the floor agenda (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Jenkins and Monroe 2012). Pressure from the party and the ideologically extreme makeup of the legislative agenda force lawmakers to behave in a more partisan and ideologically consistent fashion (Lee 2009; Theriault 2008). A key puzzle in representation and legislative politics is the degree to which members of Congress are able to represent their unique geographic constituencies when they belong to, and tend to be willing participants in, cohesive legislative parties.

A particularly important aspect of this puzzle is the question of the relative importance of the party and the constituency in policy representation. Policy representation is only one of several dimensions of the dyadic relationship, but it is the one that deals with the fundamental issue of who governs in American politics. In this chapter I review scholarly understanding of policy representation, outline a theory of dyadic policy responsiveness in the contemporary house, explain how it can be tested, and discuss the implications of these tests for our understanding of the nature of dyadic representation and policy dynamics. The theory provides expectations about how, and under what circumstances, lawmakers can be expected to respond to the policy demands of their unique constituencies. Testing those expectations allows us to better understand how Congress crafts economic policy, and whose preferences are weighted most heavily during periods of policy change.

**Policy Representation in Congress**

The public is aware that the parties are polarized and expresses disapproval of excess partisanship, gridlock, and perceived dysfunction in Congress, yet incumbents are still far more likely to win reelection than to be unseated by a challenger. A large body of research focuses on how members of Congress navigate "Fenno's paradox" (Fenno 1978) and win reelection when the institution is unpopular. Scholars have found that lawmakers use numerous strategies to appeal to their constituents and cultivate a personal vote or the impression that they are part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Many of these strategies are unrelated to policy-making or involve distributive policies without far reaching effects. Scholars have identified policy, allocation, service, and symbolism as the four dimensions on which elected officials represent their constituents (Eulau and Karps 1977; Harden 2013, 2015). While policy is only one of (at least) four dimensions, it is through policy representation that voters' needs and preferences influence public law, and studying constituency influence on policy making activity directly answers the question at the center of the study of representation, "who controls policy?"

Not all representatives have an equal incentive to engage in policy representation. Social groups vary systematically in their preferences for different types of representation (Griffin and Flavin 2011; 2007), and because members of Congress have limited time and staff, and value reelection, they devote more time to the kinds of activities desired by most voters in their districts (Harden 2013, 2015). These studies find that low income, non-white voters tend to prefer service and allocation to policy representation, and that wealthier people, whites and residents of suburban districts prefer that lawmakers focus on representing their policy preferences instead of allocating federal funds to the district or working on constituent service. These demographic differences in preferences for representation are most likely caused by the fact that constituency service has lesser relative importance in the lives of wealthy voters and that more educated voters experience greater political efficacy, are more likely to communicate their preferences to lawmakers (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012), and expect their policy preferences to be followed (Griffin and Flavin 2011). As a result representatives of affluent, suburban districts are more likely to engage in policy related activities and to comply with policy-related requests (Harden 2013).

There are also limitations to how well lawmakers are able to respond to the preferences of their constituents. Members of Congress are not equally aware of the opinions of all of their constituents and take some of them more seriously than others. Constituents who are active, affluent, and have a vested interest in a policy are more likely to make their views known to their representatives (Miler 2010), and politicians are also more likely to be aware of the views of people with similar socio-economic and professional backgrounds (Carnes 2013). To complicate matters further, evidence shows that state legislators tend to misperceive public opinion, believing that it is substantially more extreme and supportive of their party than it is in reality (Broockman and Skovron 2013), and they tend to dismiss the opinions of those with whom they disagree as uninformed or not strongly held (Butler and Dynes 2015). Although an experiment on New Mexico state lawmakers finds that they are more likely to vote according to public opinion when made aware of it (Butler and Nickerson 2011), a less sanguine interpretation of these findings is that informing lawmakers of public opinion would have had no effect had they already been aware of voters' wishes. The ability to respond to the preferences of constituents also depends on characteristics of the policy. For example legislators are more responsive on more salient, simple, and non-partisan issues (Hurley and Hill 2003), and less responsive on non-salient, highly technical issues that divide the parties.

In spite of these limitations to lawmakers' incentives and ability to represent their constituents in the policy making process, numerous studies present compelling evidence that they try to do so, and communicate their policy activities to constituents. Members of Congress claim credit and take clear positions in order to demonstrate that they are effective and champion positions that are pleasing to constituents (Mayhew 1974). They also carefully tailor their communications with constituents to maintain a local base of support (Fenno 1978), frequently to the point of exaggerating their policy influence and benefits to the district (Grimmer 2013; Messing, Grimmer, and Westwood 2015).

Even though communications with the district are often deliberately strategic and self-aggrandizing, they do reflect an underlying pattern of congruence between constituent preferences and needs and the policy-related activities of representatives (Burstein 2003; Erikson 1978; Miller and Stokes 1963). Subsequent work exploring this dyadic relationship on policy representation has divided the connection into three dimensions: issue/ideological positions, issue priorities, and legislative effectiveness. These dimensions reflect whether a representative agrees with the district, cares about what is important to people in the district, and actually accomplishes goals based on the district's needs.

The first studies of dyadic representation focused on representation of issue positons, specifically the congruence between majority opinion in legislative districts and roll call votes (Miller and Stokes 1963 set an example followed by countless others), and has expanded to measure congruence of district ideology with aggregated roll call scores (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001a; Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Bafumi and Herron 2010; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Stratmann 2000).

Another branch of the literature studies policy representation on a second dimension, comparing the priorities of lawmakers to those of the people they represent. Public opinion and economic interests are among the most important contributors to lawmakers' personal agendas (Hall 1996; Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010; Mayhew 1974; M. S. Rocca and Gordon 2010; Sulkin 2005, 2011), although other important factors include interest groups (Hall and Wayman

1990), personal interests (Burden 2007; Carnes 2013), compulsory issues (Adler and Wilkerson 2012; Walker 1977), and institutional position, especially committee membership (Adler and Lapinski 1997; Hall 1996; Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988). The relationship between public priorities and lawmakers' individual agendas is not as simple as members of Congress knowing the needs and policy concerns of their constituents and acting accordingly. Incumbents learn which issues their constituents want them to take a greater interest in through the process of campaigning for reelection. Sulkin (2005) presents compelling evidence that campaigns teach members of Congress which issues they need to take a more active role in addressing. Challengers strategically highlight neglected issues in their effort to unseat the incumbent. Incumbents, assuming they survive the challenge, take up these issues in the next legislative session. Based on Sulkin's findings, the effect of a district's issue priorities on lawmakers' agendas might depend, at least in part, on the presence and viability of recent challengers.

Recently congressional scholars have begun to more systematically study legislative effectiveness (Volden and Wiseman 2014), which is the ability of representatives to advance proposals through the legislative process. While legislative effectiveness is not usually conceptualized as a dimension of representation, I argue that such a conceptualization is appropriate. The issue positions and priorities lawmakers adopt in response to their districts only cause the district to be represented in national policy if those actions are translated into law. Whether representation in policy-making behavior leads to the representation in policy outcomes depends on the effectiveness of the behavior. Lawmakers tend to be more effective at shepherding legislation through the process if they are ideologically proximate to the median voter, belong to the majority party, hold a seat on committees with jurisdiction, hold a leadership position such as committee chair, are senior members of the chamber, or take on entrepreneurial roles (Adler and Wilkerson 2012; Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Cox and Terry 2008; Denzau and Mackay 1983; Frantzich 1979; Hasecke and Mycoff 2007; Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Krutz 2005; Volden and Wiseman 2014; Weissert 1991). Studies of legislative effectiveness have not sought to connect it to district need for the policy in question, except indirectly through the relationship between district characteristics and committee assignments (Adler and Lapinski 1997; Weingast and Marshall 1988). Yet members of Congress have an electoral incentive to create credit claiming opportunities in salient policy areas (Mayhew 1974), which should lead them to not only adopt issues that are important to constituents, but also to work harder on those issues.

When legislative politics scholars study representation they tend study the correlation of individual lawmakers' behavior with some measure of district opinion or needs (e.g. Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Erikson 1978; Miller and Stokes 1963). I refer to this correlation as congruence because it shows that members of congress take positions and adopt issues that correspond with some characteristic of their districts without shedding light on the mechanism behind this correspondence. It could be that members of Congress strategically behave in ways that will appeal to as many voters as possible (Mayhew 1974), or that each lawmaker is a or a permanent type, selected by voters for their characteristics, but not willing to change their priorities or behavior. Congruence might result from the fact that lawmakers behave as most randomly selected members of the district would, without actually putting forth any effort to listen to or follow the constituency. Congruence is a necessary condition for policy representation but if scholars are interested in the mechanisms behind constituency-representative correspondence they have to dig deeper into causal mechanisms, which cannot be evaluated using cross-sectional observational data (Burden 2004a; Kuklinski and Stanga 1979a; Stone 1980, 1982). One mechanism of congruence is the deliberate, dynamic tailoring by lawmakers of their behaviors to the wants and needs of their constituents, a mechanism I refer to as "responsiveness." The two criteria for responsiveness are key. First, it must be deliberate. In order to be responding to constituents, members of Congress must be trying to take actions of which voters will approve. Agricultural districts electing representatives with backgrounds in agriculture who prioritize agricultural policy produce a correlation between district interests and legislative behavior even if the representative is simply following her own priorities and not listening to voters. Responsive lawmakers *try* to promote their constituents' interests. Second, responsiveness is dynamic. Members of Congress must change their behaviors in response to a change in the needs or preferences of their districts. They must be willing to respond to signals from the public. The existence of dynamic responsiveness would be evidence that congruence between representatives and voters is deliberate rather than incidental, because a congruent but inattentive lawmaker would miss or ignore changes in the electorate. As Burden (2004), Kuklinski and Stanga (1979), and Stone (1980, 1982) point out, studies of the mechanisms behind district-lawmaker congruence require a temporal component. If district level change is followed by a corresponding change in legislative behavior then we can conclude that constituents influence the behavior of their elected representatives.

In the empirical chapters of this dissertation I test a theory of responsiveness on different legislative behaviors, examining whether members of Congress alter their behaviors in response to changing economic conditions in their districts. I leverage exogenous shocks to districts to see if they produce a corresponding behavior change on the part of representatives. This design allows for tests of a theory of responsiveness as I define it.

It is important to note that the terms “congruence” and “responsiveness” are used inconsistently in studies of representation. For example Lax and Phillips (2012) refer to the correlation between public opinion and policy as “responsiveness” and the similarity between what the public wants and what it gets as “congruence.” Lax and Phillips’ study measures collective representation at the state level rather than dyadic representation at the level of congressional districts, and the theoretical concepts behind these terms are not be the same across the two levels of analysis. What they call “responsiveness” is more analogous to what I refer to as “congruence,” and what they call “congruence” is not a construct included in the present study. Studies of dyadic representation also frequently use “responsiveness” to refer to a correlation between constituency characteristics/opinion and legislative behavior (for prominent examples see Erikson 1978; Gay 2007; Miller and Stokes 1963)  The point is, the representation subfield has not settled on consistent uses for either of these terms, but instead uses them in several different ways, all of which are justifiable. I refer to responsiveness as change in a lawmaker’s behavior that follows and is caused by a change in that lawmaker’s constituency. Only evidence for this kind of relationship demonstrates constituency control over their representatives between elections. A simple correlation between what lawmakers do and some measure of constituency characteristics I refer to as “congruence.”

A handful of prominent studies also conceptualize responsiveness as a change in behavior following a change in some characteristic of the constituency. Sulkin finds that members of congress adopt new issues that are raised by challengers during campaigns (2005) and that they keep campaign promises regarding issue priorities (Sulkin 2011). When lawmakers’ constituencies change because of redistricting they tend to adjust their issue priorities accordingly (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010), and respond in aggregate voting ideology

(Glazer and Robbins 1985; Kousser, Lewis, and Masket 2007; Stratmann 2000) and issue-specific voting scores (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010). Other studies argue however that responsiveness on issue positions and ideology is limited and infrequent (Poole and Rosenthal 1996, 1997; Stone 1980). Experiments on state legislators show that they are more likely to follow public opinion on a roll call vote if they are aware of what the public thinks (Butler and Nickerson 2011). Presumably they would also change positions in response to a change in constituent opinion if they were aware that such a change had taken place.

The literature on responsiveness presents mixed findings. Convincing studies provide evidence for and against the existence of responsiveness in issue positions. The evidence of responsiveness on issue priorities is less contradictory, but it most of it comes from redistricting, a particular kind of constituency change that may not be comparable to circumstances changing in the same district, or lawmakers responses to campaigns. Campaigns teach representatives about their constituencies which often leads them to adjust their behavior, but this situation also does not tell us how members of Congress respond when their district is affected by an exogenous economic shock that affects the opinions, priorities, and material needs of constituents. This dissertation contributes to the research on legislative responsiveness by modelling changes in issue positions, priorities, and legislative success as a response to economic shocks to existing districts.

**Dyadic Responsiveness and Theories of Lawmaking**

The studies reported in this dissertation not only contribute to our understanding of relationship between voters and their elected representatives and address concerns about politicians' attentiveness to the public and accountability, but they also have implications for our understanding of policy outcomes. A problem in existing theories of lawmaking is a disconnect between our understanding of how individual members of Congress behave and the dynamics of policy change in each chamber and in the legislative branch.

Despite numerous findings that legislative behavior is influenced by a variety of constituency characteristics, studies of policy change either use aggregated national conditions as explanatory variables or derive implications from models that, while elegant, are too simple to account for many situations. Research that models policy change statistically using a minimal set of national level indicators (e.g. Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Jones and Baumgartner 2005) is often quite successful at accounting statistically for variation in macro-political outputs such as passage of significant legislation, the composition of the legislative agenda and federal outlays in specific policy domains (although the fit of such models across policy areas varies considerably). The main limitation of this research is that the mechanism underlying the empirical patterns is invisible at the macro level of analysis, with actual decision making placed in a "black box" (Krehbiel 2006, 23). Several models of lawmaking address this problem by extracting the essential features of legislative politics to construct theoretical models (usually formal) that explain how policy changes and under what conditions it is likely to change (Krehbiel, 24-25). These models, broadly falling under the headings of distributive (Shepsle and Weingast 1987; Weingast and Marshall 1988), information (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990; Krehbiel 1991), partisan cartel (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005), conditional party government (Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Rohde 1991), and pivotal politics (Krehbiel 1998), differ in their specifics but all assume that policy is made by legislators distributed across a one, two, or *n* dimensional space, who have preferred policies represented by a point in the space and evaluate proposals based on proximity to their ideal points. Legislators will support policies that are closer to them than the status quo and oppose those that are not. The structure of actors' preferences, the distribution of actors in the space, and legislative institutions are assumed to determine legislative outcomes.

These theories are right to model legislative politics as a strategic interaction between individual lawmakers. Only studies at this level of analysis will uncover the mechanism behind the macro-level patterns, but to understand how policy is made in the United States and why it changes when it does, we must combine abstract models of lawmaking with insights from research on legislative behavior. Theories of policy-making need to account for the heterogeneous pressures on lawmakers and systematic variation in their activities, and then nest these realistic lawmakers within institutional theories of lawmaking. Accounting for diversity in lawmaker activities and the idiosyncratic features of their political context that often motivate them will not merely lead to more realistic models, but will also allow researchers to better understand how signals from the economy are filtered through political institutions, see whose interests are reflected in policies, and evaluate the quality of representation on economic issues.

Formal models of lawmaking make three implicit assumptions about the homogeneity of lawmakers that are inconsistent with research on legislative behavior. First, to the extent that they allow for preferences to change at all, they do not allow for variation in how preferences change. Ideal points are assumed to shift uniformly in response to important events, and changes in the status quo are felt equally by all legislators. If some lawmakers' preferences are more apt to change than others, then the models will yield incorrect predictions to the extent that events change the distribution of preferences in the chamber. Second, formal theories of policy making implicitly assume legislators' preferences are only related to policy, that policy activities are costless (with the exception of information costs related to policy effects in information theory), and as a result that every lawmaker who can offer a winning alternative will do so. If any lawmaker is not inclined to offer an alternative policy then the identity of the key voter/proposer (be it the floor median, committee median, party median, or other pivot) changes, and if a would-be key actor declines to offer a proposal then the ability to choose policy falls to someone else. Third, existing theories often ignore the difficulty of shepherding a piece of legislation through the process to passage. A great deal of behavioral literature on legislative entrepreneurship and effectiveness finds major differences in the willingness of lawmakers to invest time and effort into writing detailed, passable legislation and mobilizing a coalition to support it and in the abilities of lawmakers, due to their institutional position or personal characteristics to succeed when the try to do this.  A large body of work on legislative behavior show that each of these three implied assumptions is unrealistic, and their violation should have consequences for policy outcomes and the accuracy of the models' predictions. The three empirical studies presented in this dissertation examine each of these assumptions in turn, and the findings will be useful to scholars seeking to improve our understanding of legislative outcomes.

The factors that influence individual lawmakers' behavior are not the same ones that influence Congress as a whole. While Congress is influenced by macro-political and economic conditions, individual lawmakers' behavior is shaped by partisanship (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Jenkins and Monroe 2012; Smith 2007), institutional position, and district level forces such as ideology and opinion (Burstein 2003; Erikson 1978; Miller and Stokes 1963), competitiveness (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001a; Burden 2004; Griffin 2006; Mayhew 1974; Sullivan and Uslaner 1978a), heterogeneity (Bailey and Brady 1998; Bishin 2009; Bishin, Dow, and Adams 2006, 2006; Gerber and Lewis 2004; Goff and Grier 1993; Harden and Carsey 2012; Kalt and Zupan 1990; Kingdon 1989), demographics (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010), and economic conditions. These factors influence lawmakers' issue positions, their level of responsiveness and how likely they are to do policy related work. The diversity of these variables across the country means that members of Congress vary systematically, and a great deal, in the types of activities they engage in and in how they interact with and respond to their constituencies. Theorists of legislative politics have not taken this variation, evident in behavioral studies, into account. They assume instead an unrealistic uniformity in legislative behavior and responsiveness that ignores the effects of the constituency on each actor in their model. The models produced with these simplifying assumptions are very useful, but in order to build on their success congressional scholars need to reintroduce heterogeneous actors into abstract collective choice situations.

Our understanding of policy-making would be improved by accounting for the characteristics of legislators' districts that influence their behavior and how the distribution of these characteristics interact with legislative institutions. In this dissertation I do not propose an alternative formal model of lawmaking, nor do I attempt to adjudicate between those that exist (although the results may be suggestive in this respect), but I do show that relaxing assumptions that are inconsistent with what we know about legislative behavior might be warranted and presents an opportunity to improve existing theories. Formal models based on legislative institutions predict a range of possible outcomes but scholars will not be able to precisely explain the legislation that is and is not passed into law without understanding the diverse incentives and motivations of the representatives who make decisions in the institution. The veracity of assumptions about uniformity in preference change, desire to craft policy, and legislative effectiveness can be studied empirically. To the extent that lawmakers systematically deviate from these assumptions, existing theories will make inaccurate explanations of policy change.

The first assumption to be relaxed is that changing circumstances induce an equal change in the policy positions of all legislators. Though unstated, this assumption is often so strong that theorists (especially Krehbiel 1998) model the status quo as changing in response to external events and not the positions of lawmakers relative to the status quo. In a one dimensional spatial model, a one unit shift in the status quo means a one unit shift (either positive or negative) in the distance to the status quo for each and every legislator. This rarely examined feature of these models rests on the assumption that every lawmaker is equally sensitive to policy change in a given area or perceives an equal change in the utility of the status quo with changes in national conditions. There are three reasons that this might not be the case. First, because economic conditions do not change uniformly throughout the country, lawmakers whose districts experience an economic change are more likely to respond to it. Changes in district level conditions should have an effect that is independent of national level conditions, even though national conditions pressure lawmakers and groups of lawmakers to solve problems. Second, lawmakers who face incentives to be more responsive (because they are in a competitive district or for any other reason) should be more likely to change their behavior in response to changes in district level conditions. Vulnerable members and members whose districts have a high demand for policy activity pay a higher cost for being out of sync with voters. Third, issues will be more salient in some districts than in others. Distributive theory draws attention to the fact that some districts have a higher stake in certain policy areas than others, and that their representatives seek greater influence over those domains. It follows that those representatives would be more responsive to economic changes that affect those policy areas or to policy shifts away from their ideal point. One could conceive of differences in issue salience as utility functions with varying slopes. Utility will decrease much more quickly as the status quo moves away from the ideal point of a lawmaker who cares about the policy than for one who does not. If variation in responsiveness is not randomly distributed across legislators, but is instead related to ideology, vulnerability, and district economic and demographic characteristics, then variation in individual responsiveness will explain why some committees, parties, and representatives of certain types of districts are more active than others on the same issue and across issues.

The second and possibly most important implicit assumption to be relaxed is that every lawmaker who could improve their policy utility from proposing or amending legislation will do so. There is in fact a great deal of variety in lawmakers' incentives to do the necessary work to craft or influence the content of legislation that causes some lawmakers to do much more policy work than others. The conventional median voter model only works if the median voter is willing to propose an alternative policy at his ideal point. In a median voter model with the conventional assumptions (single-peaked preferences, round-robin voting, equal proposal power) except that not every lawmaker is willing to offer an alternative, the winning policy would be that which the median voter prefers to every other policy someone is willing to propose. Its location is a function the distribution of proposers and need not be the median voter's ideal point. If we apply this modification to partisan cartel theory then party leaders, if they are obeying the "Hastert Rule," need not propose legislation at the party median; they only need to propose legislation that would gain the support of the party median. Even under an open rule, legislation will not be amended to the chamber median, but rather to a location chosen by the median or pivotal proposer. More so than the previous two, violation of the assumption that all lawmakers are equally willing to do policy work reduces the ability of existing models to predict legislative outcomes. These models assume a uniformity of desire to propose alternative legislation that simply is not found in Congress.

Policy activity is only one dimension of legislative behavior (Eulau and Karps 1977) and voters differ in how much they want their representative to focus on policy instead of one of the other dimensions (the others are service, allocation, and symbolism). African Americans, Latinos and people with low incomes are more likely to prefer that their representatives work on constituent service and allocation rather than policy (Griffin and Flavin 2011). Harden (2013) shows that state legislators prioritize activity types in part according to the level of demand in the constituency. Influence over different policy areas (as indicated by committee assignment) is also associated with district characteristics related to the domain under the committee's jurisdiction (Adler 2000; Adler and Lapinski 1997), which are in turn correlated with district demand for policy activity of any kind. Because race and income are correlated with partisanship, ideology, and committee membership we should see variation in committee productivity based on the demographic characteristics of committee members and the party in power. Distributive theory would, for example, view the appropriations subcommittees dealing with agriculture, financial services, and housing and urban development as equally likely to propose new legislation when the status quo is the same distance from their ideal points and a favorable alternative would pass on the floor. This theory would not account for the possibility that members of the housing and urban development subcommittee may come from lower income districts with larger minority populations and lower demand for representation in the form of new bills. While distributive theory predicts that all committees that could make policy gains by proposing legislation will do so, attention to the different constraints constituencies place on their lawmakers leads one to expect systematic variation in policy responsiveness.

The final common assumption, that lawmakers are equally capable of passing legislation they introduce, also falters when confronted with evidence from studies of legislative behavior. Spatial models assume that the only factor explaining whether a bill becomes a law is its location along some ideological dimension or location in a policy space relative to the status quo and some key actor, whether it's the median voter (Downs 1957), the party median (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005), or some set of pivotal actors (Krehbiel 1998). Investigations of legislative success find that numerous other factors influence whether a bill becomes a law, even taking the ideology of the sponsor into account,[1] not least of which is the willingness of a lawmaker to put forth sufficient effort (Hall 1996; Wawro 2001). Members of Congress do not automatically know the content or ideological placement of every policy that is introduced. When decided whether to support or oppose a proposal they have to rely on whatever clues are available about the content of the bill. Its sponsor, cosponsors, and the degree of support in the committee of origin are key pieces of information (Kingdon 1977, 1989; Krehbiel 1992). To mobilize support for a bill, sponsors have to sell colleagues on the proposal's merits and convince gatekeepers to bring the bill up for consideration at various stages of the process. This takes time that not everyone is willing to spend. Other lawmaker qualities influence legislative success as well, including membership in the majority party and a committee with jurisdiction or belonging to the party leadership, each of which make it easier for a sponsor to advance legislation (Volden and Wiseman 2014). These determinants of legislative success are not randomly or evenly distributed across the legislature, and the distribution of these factors affects legislative outcomes in ways not captured by most macro-level models.

[1] Granted the sponsor's ideological location may not predict all bills they introduce, but placing individual bills on an ideological continuum is a measurement problem that has yet to be solved.

**Responsiveness in a Polarized House**

Since there is variation in the degree to which members of Congress change positions on issues, adjust their legislative priorities, and succeed at passing sponsored legislation into law this variation needs to be explained in order to improve models of legislative outcomes. What national level models of lawmaking lack is heterogeneity in how individual members of Congress are affected by a national problem. If their individual responses vary systematically, then that variation constitutes an important factor that should be incorporated into national level models. Congress' response to national level economic change is the sum of two components, chamber/party leaders crafting a broad policy strategy including the most significant pieces of the legislative agenda (Sinclair 1997), and individual lawmakers acting independently, often in response to their districts. Studies of lawmaking at the macro level are unable to show the relative importance of each component. In theory, both mechanisms alone could lead to aggregate responsiveness by the legislature, but reality is certain to be a mix of the two. How the responses of individual lawmakers vary and the relative importance of the district and the party are the key questions to which this dissertation contributes.

Two pictures of lawmakers emerge from the legislative behavior field. One is of the politician who is responsive to the point of pandering and concerned to the point of paranoia about winning reelection, and willing to adapt in any way necessary to stay in office (Fenno 1978; Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010; Mayhew 1974; Miller and Stokes 1963). The other picture that emerges is of the uncompromising ideologue more willing to lose elections than to budge from her ideological positions (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001a; Bafumi and Herron 2010; Poole and Rosenthal 1996, 1997). Both caricatures are accepted by the scholarly and public imagination, but they cannot both be completely accurate, at least not for the same lawmakers at the same time. These two portraits also have implications for how Congress responds to national problems, with ideologues more likely to cede control of the agenda to party leaders, an efficient choice because copartisans favor similar policies, and more constituency-focused lawmakers less likely to do so (see Aldrich and Rohde 2000 or Cox and McCubbins 1993 for this logic). The theoretical puzzle that ties the following chapters together is, to what extent are members of the House responsive to their unique constituencies and to what extent are they partisan and unflinchingly ideological? They seek the approval of two different groups, voters in their districts and high level members of their parties who dispense institutional positions, credit claiming opportunities, campaign resources, and other means of increase influence and prestige. They have to balance the wishes of these two audiences by strategically choosing when to follow each one. Under what conditions will they diverge from the issue positions and priorities of their party to reflect a need in their district and vice versa?

I will answer these questions in three empirical chapters, each one studying responsiveness to district level change in one of three behaviors: specific issue positions, issue priorities, and legislative success. Each chapter will lay out specific theoretical expectations for the behavior being studied, but at the outset I expect a few general patterns to hold across the chapters. First, lawmakers should be more responsive to their districts when the actions they take in Congress are visible to the public. Visible actions are more likely to earn electoral punishments and rewards than more obscure actions that are equally important and thus give lawmakers a greater incentive to buck the party line. Visible actions are those that are a matter of public record, are reported in the news, and are easy for the public to interpret and understand. Recorded votes on final passage, and bill introductions and cosponsorships should exhibit more responsiveness to the constituency than procedural roll call votes and the behind the scenes work needed to build a coalition and pass a bill. Less visible actions should be a function of the party, which exploits the obscurity of procedural votes and informal negotiation to control the legislative agenda and influence its members (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Jenkins and Monroe 2012).

Second, responsiveness likely depends on a few characteristics of the congressional district that lead to greater demand for policy representation or incentive to provide it. Wealthy, educated, white voters have been found to prefer policy representation over other dimensions and to prefer it to a greater extent than the less affluent (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Harden 2013). Electorally vulnerable lawmakers have a greater incentive to respond to voters on all dimensions of representation because any dissatisfied part of their constituency puts them at a greater risk of losing the next election (Fiorina 1973; Griffin 2006). Responsiveness to constituents should be greater across all three behaviors for more educated, affluent, and competitive districts.

Third, the nature of responsiveness likely depends on lawmakers' ideology and partisanship. Ideology gives people, including politicians, a framework for understanding the political world and for deciding which policies are morally right and which will be effective. When circumstances change in a lawmaker's district their ideology informs them about the viability of their previous issue positions and about what kinds of policies constitute an appropriate response. While ideology is an internal guide for legislative decision making, partisanship is a source of external pressure. Because the parties are ideologically distinct, pressure from the party will often serve to enforce ideological consistency when circumstances in the district pressure lawmakers to stray.

**Data and Design**

To study responsiveness to district economic change I create a unique dataset that takes advantage of recently available measures of congressional district characteristics. They key variables are the district-level unemployment and foreclosure rates. The American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census provides annual demographic and economic indicators at the congressional district level beginning in 2006, with data also available in 2004 and 2000. Unemployment rates are the percentage of the civilian labor force that is unemployed. To these data I add district level foreclosure rates for every year between 2006 and 2013. To construct foreclosure rates I obtained counts of foreclosures in every ZIP code from RealtyTrac.[2] I aggregated the ZIP codes to the district level using the MABLE/Geocorr software provided by the Missouri Census Data Center. The software facilitates the reaggregation of data from one level to another by weighting each unit in the "source" level by the percentage of the unit that is in each unit of the "target" level. The weights can be constructed using either land area or non-publicly available micro data. In this case every ZIP code – congressional district pair was weighted by the proportion of the ZIP code's households that are in the congressional district. Using the weight file produced by MABLE/Geocorr, weighted sums of foreclosures were

[2] Foreclosures are defined as occasions in which a lender repossesses a property due to the borrower failing to pay the mortgage. This is the last stage of the foreclosure process and represents only the subset of homes for which the mortgage delinquency and foreclosure risk resulted in tangible consequences. From a methodological standpoint this definition has the advantage of having an identical definition in every state. Other stages of the foreclosure process vary according to state laws.

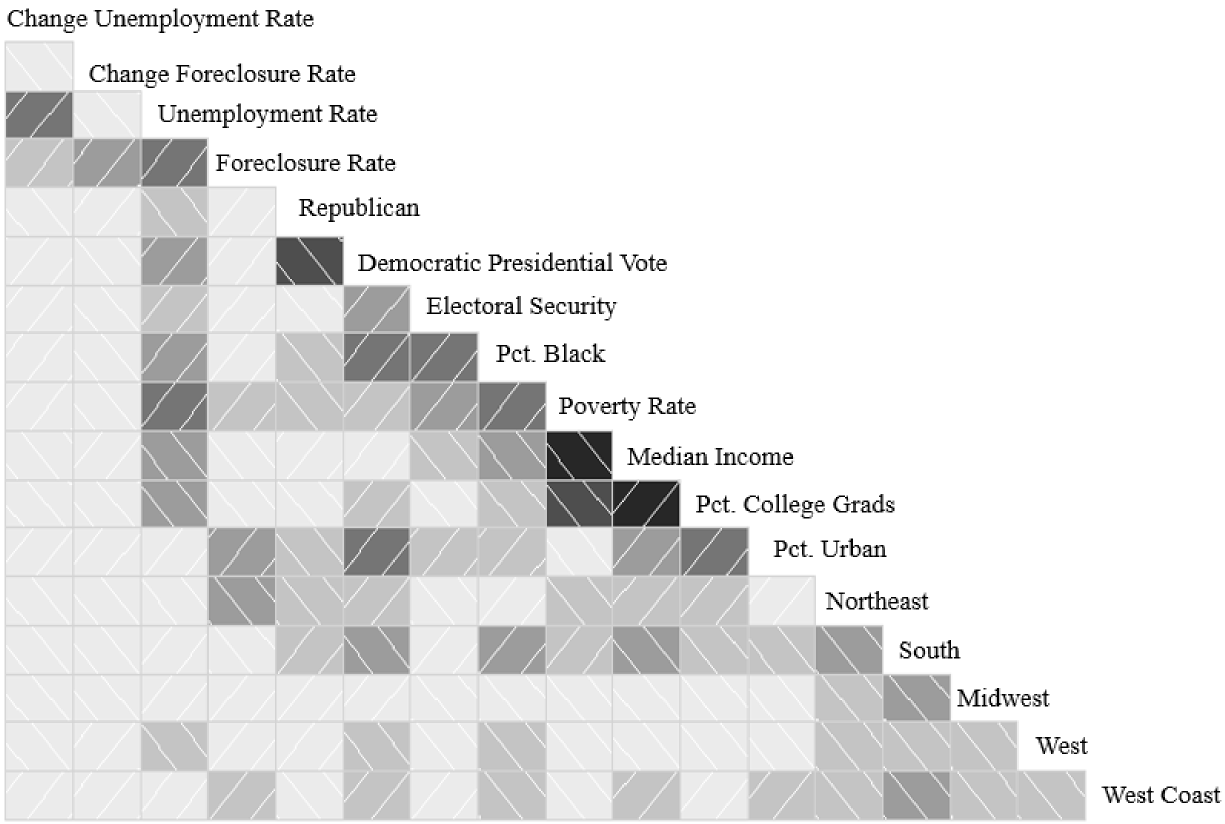
constructed for each district. This value is divided by the total number of households to produce the foreclosure rate.

This is the first time, to my knowledge, that an unfolding economic crisis has been tracked over time in every congressional district. While the economic crisis immediately became the most salient issue nationally, and no place was unaffected, the effects varied greatly from place to place (See Table 1.1). Changes in the foreclosure and unemployment rates are only weakly correlated with poverty, ideology, partisanship, region, and other politically significant variables (see the two columns on the left side of Figure 1.1. White squares indicate a Pearson's R of 0 and black indicates a correlation of -1 or 1, with diagonal lines showing the direction). These exogenous economic shocks allow for more accurate identification of parameters because of the reduced possibility for confounding factors and greater balance between the districts most and least affected by the crisis. These data make it possible to study legislative responsiveness to economic crisis in a way that was previously much more difficult.

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics of District Economic Indicators

| | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min. | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Rate | 8.74 | 3.18 | 2.6 | 27.5 |
| Change in Unemployment Rate | 0.29 | 1.94 | -13.2 | 8.1 |
| Foreclosures per 1,000 Households | 0.52 | 0.58 | 0 | 6.19 |
| Change in Foreclosures per 1,000 | 0.02 | 0.38 | -2.32 | 4.39 |

Figure 1.1: Correlations of Economic Indicators and Ideology with Other Variables




A different behavior is studied in each chapter and will be discussed in greater detail below. The first empirical chapter studies responsiveness in specific issue positions. For that analysis I identify cases in which multiple roll calls, both substantive and procedural, occurred on the same question months apart and in different calendar years. Using these pairs (and one triplet) of roll call votes I measure the effect of district level change on position change on specific issues and compare equally important visible and obscure actions. The second empirical chapter analyzes bill sponsorship and cosponsorship. I code all bills according to whether or not they are proposals to change an economic policy and the means included in the bill to affect the desired change and measure the effect of changing district conditions on the counts of sponsorship and cosponsorships of each type of bill. The third empirical chapter measures the effect of district conditions on legislative success (measured as whether or not each bill is reported out of committee and passes the House). That analysis allows for an assessment of the importance of the study of sponsorship and cosponsorship. From these analyses a picture emerges of how the House responds to economic crisis, what role the dyadic relationship plays in the response, and how lawmakers balance competing pressures from their unique constituencies and polarized political parties.

# Chapter 2

# Do Members of Congress Change Positions on Specific Issues in Response to Their Districts?

Why do Members of Congress change positions over time? Legislative responsiveness to constituents is fundamental to democratic representation and presents an interesting theoretical puzzle. On the one hand, normative expectations of representatives in a democratic system hold that when constituents' attitudes and economic circumstances change, lawmakers should adjust their behavior accordingly. Regardless of whether one believes that the representative's role is to obey public opinion (Dahl 1956; Key 1961) or to act in constituents' interests regardless of what they think (Burke 1774), democratic theory and conventional wisdom hold that legislators should respond to changing conditions by adjusting their behaviors, including the policy positions taken on behalf of constituents. On the other hand, politicians face competing pressure to be leaders, and risk being labelled "flip-floppers" if they change positions (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010). Voters may view this behavior as unreliable (Bender and Lott 1996; Lott and Bronars 1993) or even dishonest, and partisan activists may prefer a more consistent candidate in the next primary (Masket 2009). Remaining steadfast against a tide of public opinion and changing economic reality and switching positions to adapt to new circumstances both come with political risks. In this paper I present a theory of how members of Congress balance these risks and test it using indicators of economic well-being between 2007 and 2010.

In addition to their implications for democratic responsiveness, the findings of this study help us understand how aggregate responsiveness occurs (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Wlezien 1995) even though individual members of the House rarely reverse positions (Clausen 1973; Poole 2007; Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Stratmann 2000). Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson find that most aggregate policy change happens between elections through “rational anticipation.” This study sheds light on who rationally anticipates a change in the public mood and adjusts their positions accordingly, and under what circumstances they do so.

I test the theory that members of the House are more likely to reverse a previously held position when their district is affected by an issue in a way that makes their prior vote less compatible with current conditions. For example if a representative votes to terminate federal unemployment benefits in one year, but then unemployment increases in her district, in the next year she will be more likely to support unemployment benefits. This expectation seems intuitive in light of the extensive literature on the electoral connection, but at present only an alternative model of responsiveness on specific positions has been tested. The characteristics of the district may cause lawmakers from some contexts to be more responsive than others. Pressure from constituents is not the only kind lawmakers face. On votes for which party leaders want a unified caucus lawmakers should be more likely to take the party position, possibly at the expense of responding to the district.

The period between 2007 and 2010 is useful for examining legislative responsiveness to economic and opinion changes for two reasons. First, the housing collapse, financial crisis, and recession of 2007 - 2009 presented an abrupt and severe exogenous shock to the country, the effects of which varied by congressional district and were uncorrelated with public partisanship, representative ideology, and other political variables. These conditions facilitate more reliable identification of constituency effects. Second, this period coincided with the creation of several large data collection projects that make it possible to create annual or nearly annual measures of economic conditions by congressional district. The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and several other public and private data sources enable the creation of accurate annual measures of economic conditions at the district level. Using these sources I examine lawmakers' individual responses to changing conditions in their districts and compare the effects of economic changes in different political contexts. The results show that members of Congress rarely respond to shocks to their constituency by changing issue positions, but are more likely to do so when the issue is simple and affects voters directly. Responsiveness is also mostly confined to votes on final passage rather than procedure, in which case partisanship prevails. The lack of pervasive responsiveness in position change is unsettling because the policies studied are among the most salient of their congressional terms, which would typically suggest higher public responsiveness, however high salience may increase scrutiny on "flip-floppers." The findings not only contribute to answering an important question about representation, but also shed light on how the U.S. House responds to economic crisis.

**Background**

Measuring legislative responsiveness to constituents has (with good reason) been a central focus of the representation literature, but most of the work in this field is limited by the difficulty of measuring changes in legislative behavior and constituency characteristics over time. Scholars of representation have accumulated mountains of evidence that lawmakers vote in ways consistent with the preferences of constituents, with some variation according to issue domain, salience, and district-level factors such as competitiveness and complexity (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Bailey and Brady 1998; Burden 2004; Erikson 1978;

Griffin 2006; Hurley and Hill 2003; Jewell 1983; Miller and Stokes 1963; Page et al. 1984; see Burstein 2003 and Shapiro 2011 for thorough reviews and Jacobs and Shapiro 2000 for a dissenting interpretation of the evidence). Voters also appear to reward and punish their representatives according to the congruence of their legislative behavior with public opinion (Ansolabehere and Jones 2010; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002; Figlio 2000; Stratmann 2000).

This evidence of congruence between public preferences (or some demographic proxy) and roll call patterns is usually taken as evidence that lawmakers respond to their constituents, but the data used are often cross-sectional, and thus only able to show a correlation without revealing the mechanism involved. As Kuklinski and Stanga (1979) argue, "[t]he use of data collected at a single point in time […] precludes separating agreement resulting from simple elite-mass sharing of policy attitudes and that due to the actual response of officeholders. In short, the causal link […] is remote at best" (1091). Responsiveness implies change over time, and a responsive legislator will change behaviors following a change in the wishes or material situations of constituents. Most dyadic studies of position taking in roll call votes study congruence, and are unable to estimate the extent to which it is caused by lawmakers changing their positions in response changes in their constituencies (Stone 1980; 1982 also addresses the conceptual and empirical problem of separating congruence from responsiveness).

Numerous studies of other legislative behaviors do explicitly theorize about and observe responsiveness over time, including work on issue priorities (Sulkin 2005), communication with constituents (Fenno 1978), aggregate roll call ideology (Glazer and Robbins 1985; Kousser, Lewis, and Masket 2007; Poole 2007; Stone 1980, 1982; Stratmann 2000), and even issue-specific scores (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010). Glazer and Robbins' (1985) analysis of change in member roll call ideology following redistricting, and Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin's (2010) analysis of issue-specific interest group scores and individual legislative priorities are particularly relevant. Both studies measure responsiveness on positions, but the measures are scores which consist of aggregated roll call votes rather than specific positions on individual bills. This study contributes to the literature by directly measuring "flip flopping" on specific policy questions and testing responsiveness using an exogenous shock that is uncorrelated with other social and political characteristics.

A small literature on specific position change takes on the task of identifying instances of repeated votes on the same proposal in order to study issue-specific position change, but these studies are limited by the lack of constituency level data collected at frequent intervals. The most common set of findings is that position change is caused by shifts in the national political environment. Members of Congress are more likely to shift positions on roll calls to support a president of their party (Asher and Weisberg 1978; Kesselman 1961, 1965; Meinke 2005) or in response to changes in the national definition of an issue (Asher and Weisberg 1978; Carmines and Stimson 1989). One of the main reasons that previous studies of position change ground their explanations and evidence in national level conditions, in spite of the prevalence of dyadic theories of legislative responsiveness, is that district data measured at frequent intervals were not yet available. These national level factors alone paint an incomplete picture of why legislators who are accountable to unique geographic constituencies change their positions. They also do not shed light on the representation subfield's central normative questions about democratic accountability, faithful articulation of constituents' opinions and interests, and who controls policy in the United States.

Some recent models of position change do incorporate information about members' constituencies, finding that district-level opinion, economic stakes, and congruence between ideology and party can delay or encourage taking a position or encourage a switch. For example, a high economic stake in free trade influences the timing of position taking on NAFTA (Box-Steffensmeier, Arnold, and Zorn 1997) and whether a representative's position on most favored nation status for China changed (Seo 2010). A large union presence enforces stability over a sequence of roll call votes on the federal minimum wage increase (Meinke 2005). While important for demonstrating that district level economic characteristics and opinion are important predictors of position change as well as initial, stable position taking, these studies are not able to show that members of Congress respond to changing circumstances by changing their positions for the simple reason that the characteristics related to the laws in the studies cited above are highly stable, and the models use the level of each constituency characteristic rather than the amount of change. Using recently available data sources on district opinion and economic characteristics, the analyses presented here model change in roll call votes using economic changes at the district level. These changes are often dramatic due to the rapid onset of the financial crisis and recession, but are not concentrated disproportionately in districts of any particular demographic or political profile. The pairing of data on exogenous district-level changes with repeated roll call votes allows for a direct test of responsiveness in position taking.

As intuitive as the expectation of dyadic responsiveness is, studies of aggregate responsiveness cannot distinguish between it and alternative mechanisms. Furthermore, the existing literature on specific position change does not test the dyadic responsiveness hypothesis, and there is ample literature to suggest that it is unlikely to hold. If members of Congress are nominated by ideologues (Aldrich 1995; Masket 2009), have their campaigns financed by ideologues (Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo, and Snyder 2003), draw their most reliable support from ideologues (Abramowitz and Saunders 1998; Sundquist 1983), and are themselves ideologues (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001a; Bafumi and Herron 2010; Poole 2007), then they should be more likely to "die in their ideological boots" than to reverse a roll call position (Poole 2007, 435; but see; Kousser, Lewis, and Masket 2007).

**Balancing Responsiveness and Consistency**

When faced with a changing environment in their districts, members of Congress have to balance two dangers to their careers, the risk of being seen as unresponsive and the risk of being labeled unreliable "flip-floppers." What happens when members of Congress cannot simultaneously represent the district and maintain their previous issue positions? If the House chamber responds to the public mood, surely someone must be changing positions. There are at least two possible mechanisms by which individual actions could lead to aggregate responsiveness between elections. First, members of Congress could rationally anticipate opinion change in their constituency, what I will call *dyadic responsiveness*. In aggregate, behavioral adjustments, including position reversals, lead to responsive policy-making.

Second, rational anticipation of national opinion could be coordinated by party leaders who use their agenda setting powers to adjust policy while allowing ideological lawmakers to remain consistent on specific issues. Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson (1995) use "rational anticipation" to refer to policy changes resulting from "shifting perceptions of what is electorally expedient," and that in order to avoid defeat "politicians modify their behavior at the margin" (545). Behavioral modification does not necessarily imply position reversal as it is defined and measured in this study. It could mean that members of Congress allow a previously blocked policy to receive a vote, introduce new legislation, or amend existing policies, all of which can happen without representatives changing positions on a series of roll call votes in response to their constituents. This latter mechanism allows aggregate rational anticipation to occur through the actions of party leaders and would be reflected in roll call scores, but would not involve reversing specific prior positions. These mechanisms cannot be distinguished by macro-level or correlational studies, and have not yet been tested by the small literature on specific position change. Taking advantage of an exogenous shock to the economy I will test for the presence of dyadic responsiveness, and see whether it is limited to final passage votes or whether occurs on key procedural votes as well.

The voluminous literature on the electoral connection leads to the expectation that members of Congress respond to changes in their constituencies, and that such responsiveness should explain a large proportion of observed position change. Lawmakers generally take positions that are congruent with their constituents' preferences, and when important local changes that contradict the previous position occur, such as economic hardship or an abrupt shift in public opinion, representatives have an incentive to risk the "flip-flopper" label in order to maintain congruence with their districts. When a national crisis occurs not all politicians will respond to it by changing positions. Member of Congress are eager to avoid accusations of "flip-flopping," and those whose districts are unaffected have less incentive to do so.

*Dyadic Responsiveness Hypothesis*: Representatives of districts where conditions change in a way that contradicts their previous position should be more likely to change that position than representatives of districts that have not experience such a change.

Even among those who are affected, characteristics of their constituency may moderate their responsiveness. Representatives of more competitive districts have a greater incentive to respond to their constituents (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Burden 2004; Griffin 2006; Sullivan and Uslander 1978). These representatives have more to fear from alienating a small number of attentive voters, and should be less confident of winning reelection, but there is disagreement on this point (Bafumi and Herron 2010b; Fiorina 1973; Groseclose 2001). Some constituencies are also more likely to demand substantive policy representation from their representative in the House. Affluent, well-educated constituencies expect representatives to listen to their policy positions and advocate for them in office (Griffin and Flavin 2011), and representatives behave accordingly. Members of Congress (Griffin and Flavin 2011) and state legislators (Harden 2013; 2015) who represent wealthier, better-educated, whiter constituencies are more active in policy making and more responsive to district opinion than their colleagues elected from less affluent, less educated districts with larger African-American and Latino populations.

*Conditional Responsiveness Hypothesis*: Representatives of more competitive and better educated districts will be more responsive than representatives of less competitive and less educated districts.

The degree of responsiveness to constituents also likely depends on partisan pressure, in addition to characteristics of the district. Political parties act as procedural cartels, monopolizing the production of rules that determine the success or failure of nearly every legislative proposal (Cox and McCubbins 1993; 2005), having performed this function in the post-war era at least since the 1970's (Schickler and Rich 1997). The main purpose of the cartel is to keep the House agenda firmly in the hands of the majority leadership (Cox and McCubbins 2005), which they are able to do more effectively on issues on which the party is united (Rohde 1991). Parties are more likely to enforce discipline among their members on procedural votes than on final passage of salient legislation (Cox and Poole 2002; Jenkins, Crespin, and Carson 2005; Snyder and Groseclose 2000). Part of the reason that parties can control procedural votes better than substantive ones is that representatives are more able to follow the party leadership on procedural questions when leaders' goals are at odds with constituent opinion because procedural votes are low-salience, poorly understood outside of Congress, and receive little media attention. Key procedural votes are often as important for deciding the fate of legislation as final passage votes, but on these questions lawmakers should be less responsive to public opinion and their positions more determined by partisanship. If members of Congress are constrained to not only support the leadership's position on procedural votes, but also to retain that position when the same policy is considered a second or third time (unless the leadership changes positions), then lawmakers should be less responsive to their constituents on procedural votes.

*Procedural Cartel Hypothesis*: Responsiveness to constituents will be lower for procedural votes than for final passage votes. Procedural votes will also be better predicted by partisanship.

**Data and Design**

To test the above hypotheses I create a unique dataset that takes advantage of recently available measures of district characteristics. They key variables are the district-level unemployment and foreclosure rates.  The American Community Survey conducted by the U.S.

Census provides annual demographic and economic indicators at the congressional district level beginning in 2006, with data also available in 2004 and 2000. Unemployment rates are the percentage of the civilian labor force that is unemployed. To these data I add district level foreclosure rates for every year between 2006 and 2013, aggregated by the process described in chapter 1.

Responsiveness is measured using five carefully selected pairs of roll call votes (and one set of three) dealing with three policy questions. Using *CQ Almanac* legislative histories, the roll call databases from the Policy Agendas Project and Voteview, Congressional Research Service summaries, and the texts of relevant legislation I identified three pairs of final passage and procedural votes that met three criteria. They considered identical or nearly identical policy questions, occurred in different calendar years, and were at least three months apart. The first pair of votes is the final passage vote on the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, commonly referred to as the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) or the bailout, and the 2009 vote to disapprove of spending the second half of the $700 billion fund (H.J. RES. 3). Congressional disapproval, had it passed the Senate and been signed into law, would have prevented $350 billion in TARP money from being used to add liquidity to teetering financial institutions. The second pair is the initial vote on the House bill that would become the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act and the vote on the conference report six months later. The two versions of financial reform legislation were not identical, but they were similar and both represented do-or-die hurdles for financial regulatory reform. The third set consists of three House votes to extend federal unemployment benefits in 2008, 2009, and 2010, with roughly one year between each vote.

All of these votes are on controversial policies to address an extremely salient national problem, but they differ in important ways. TARP was intended to stabilize the economy and end the crisis. It was difficult for non-experts to understand and quickly became deeply unpopular. Dodd-Frank was not targeted at the current crisis, but was instead intended to prevent similar events in the future. The package of reforms and regulations of the financial sector was complicated and the legislature divided along partisan lines. The extension of federal unemployment benefits, a constant topic of negotiation in Congress from 2008 to 2010, provided direct aid to people who were suffering as a result of the economic downturn. The policy was expected to provide some stimulus, but its main purpose was to provide immediate assistance to the unemployed. The implications of this proposal for the well-being of the unemployed and their families were simple for voters and lawmakers to understand. Table 2.1 shows all roll call votes used in the analysis.

\

Table 2.1: Paired Roll call Votes

| Match | Date | Roll call Number | Bill Number | Description | Yea | Nay |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Benefits (Passage) | 10/3/2008 | 1858 | H.R. 6867 | Extend Unemployment Benefits | 368 | 28 |
| | 9/22/2009 | 720 | H.R. 2548 | Extend Unemployment Benefits | 331 | 83 |
| | 11/18/2010 | 1408 | H.R. 6419 | Extend Unemployment Benefits | 258 | 154 |
| Extend Unemployment Benefits (Procedure) | 6/12/2008 | 1586 | H.R. 1265 | Extend Unemployment (recommit) | 170 | 243 |
| | 7/1/2010 | 1407 | H.R. 5618 | Extend Unemployment (table) | 220 | 196 |
| TARP (Passage) | 10/3/2008 | 1856 | H.R. 1424 | Pass TARP | 264 | 171 |
| | 1/22/2009 | 26 | H.J.Res. 3 | TARP Disapproval | 269 | 155 |
| TARP (Procedure) | 10/3/2008 | 1855 | H.R. 1424 | TARP Rule | 223 | 205 |
| | 1/21/2009 | 24 | H.R. 384 | TARP Disapproval (recommit) | 199 | 227 |
| Dodd-Frank (Passage) | 12/11/2009 | 966 | H.R. 4173 | Dodd-Frank | 223 | 202 |
| | 6/30/2010 | 1398 | H.R. 4173 | Dodd-Frank Conference | 237 | 192 |
| Dodd-Frank (Procedure) | 12/11/2009 | 965 | H.R. 4173 | Dodd-Frank (recommit) | 190 | 232 |
| | 6/30/2010 | 1397 | H.R. 4173 | Dodd-Frank Conf. (recommit) | 198 | 229 |

Roll call numbers come from the competitive roll calls used to compute NOMINATE Scores, and differ from the numbers used in other roll call databases. The database including these roll call numbers can be found here: http://voteview.com/dw-nominate_textfile.htm

For each policy question I use one pair (or set) of final passage votes and one pair of procedural votes, either a motion to recommit or (where applicable) a motion to consider. Although the procedural votes are different in their specifics they each represented the last hurdle before the bill received a roll call vote, this each procedural vote is as important for passage as the final passage vote. Final passage votes measure the public position taken by each member of Congress, while the final procedural votes are cast with minimal public scrutiny, but also with enhanced partisan pressure. For each vote I code support for passage (or consideration) as 1 and opposition as 0. For procedural votes, a vote that would allow the bill to receive a final passage vote is coded as 1 and the opposite as 0.

## Results

To model position change I use probit models corrected for sample selection bias. The dependent variable in each model is the second or third (in the case of unemployment benefits) roll call on each question. I control for each lawmaker's choice on the previous vote making it possible to interpret the effect in terms of the probability that a representative who previously opposed the policy will become supportive or that a previously supportive representative will retain her position. In this case it is necessary to use probit instead of logit because the selection correction requires an assumption that errors of the selection and outcome models form a joint normal distribution. Table 2.2 presents the results of models testing the dyadic responsiveness hypothesis on final passage votes, Table 2.3 presents tests of the conditional responsiveness hypothesis, and Table 2.4 presents three models of the final procedural votes for each bill completing the test of the partisan cartel hypothesis.

The 2008 election occurred between the votes on TARP and extending unemployment benefits, making it necessary to correct for any selection bias that may occur as a result of electoral replacement. If the members of Congress who lost reelection in 2008 did so in part because they were less responsive to their constituents, then running an uncorrected model including only the winners may overestimate constituency effects. The key variable in the selection equation is the incumbent representative's share of the vote in the 2008 election. Results of the outcome models are consistent across a variety of specifications of the selection equation as well as when the selection process is not taken into account.

The models include two measures of constituency change: change in the unemployment rate, and change in the foreclosure rate. The models also include controls for electoral security (measured as the share of the two-party presidential vote won by the candidate of the incumbent representative's party in the previous election), the percentage of district residents over twenty-five with a bachelor's degree, and the representative's party. More electorally secure representatives may have less incentive to be responsive to their constituents, but on the other hand they can be less concerned that one position reversal will cost them reelection. More educated constituents may insist on greater responsiveness in roll call behavior and be more aware of the connection between complicated economic policies, such as TARP, and conditions in the district. Not only do lawmakers from different parties differ in their predisposition to support intervention in the economy, they also face differing incentives to change positions based on the stance of party leaders and the president. In the models of position change on TARP and Dodd-Frank I include a control for the percentage of the civilian labor force employed in finance, banking, and real estate because those sectors were directly affected by the legislation. I expect that representatives of districts with a greater stake in the financial sector will be more likely to support TARP and less likely to support Dodd-Frank.

Only one out of three models of position change on final passage votes (see Table 2.3) shows evidence of dyadic responsiveness. Representatives were more likely to support extending unemployment benefits when unemployment in their districts increased regardless of their previous positions. There were no discernable independent effects of change in the foreclosure rate for any of the three policies studied. It is suggestive that the only observed instance of dyadic responsiveness occurs on a policy that is both relatively easy to understand and has an immediate impact on individual voters. The models presented in Table 2.2 provide stronger support for the partisan cartel hypothesis. Republicans were less likely than democrats to support each policy regardless of their initial position. For TARP and unemployment benefits this change can be partially attributed to a change in party control of the presidency. Both parties mostly supported extending unemployment benefits in 2008 and 2009, but in 2010 the bulk of the Republican conference switched positions. To ensure that any switching caused by the Republican Party's position change is not wrongly attributed to changes in district conditions I interact membership in the GOP with a dichotomous indicator for the year 2010. Predictably

Republicans became even more likely to oppose extending federal unemployment benefits in 2010, but the effect of district level change in unemployment remains.

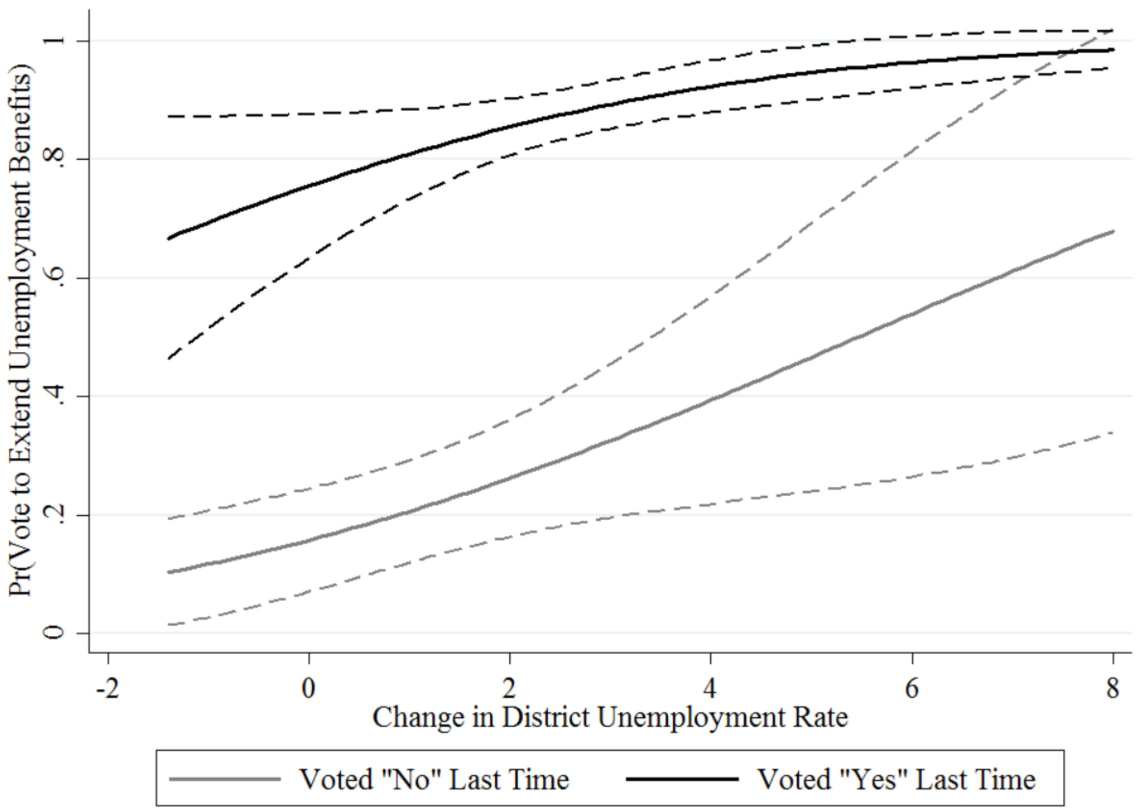
Table 2.2: Effects of District Change on Substantive Position Change

| | TARP | Extend Unemployment | Dodd-Frank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Rate Change | 0.146 | 0.184** | -0.040 |
| | (0.081) | (0.071) | (0.084) |
| Foreclosure Rate Change | 0.260 | -- | -0.087 |
| | (0.255) | -- | (0.314) |
| Pct. Employed in Finance | 0.052 | -- | 0.217 |
| | (0.059) | -- | (0.120) |
| Pct. College Grad | 0.018 | 0.006 | -0.028 |
| | (0.013) | (0.006) | (0.017) |
| Electoral Security | 0.022** | -0.002 | 0.016 |
| | (0.009) | (0.007) | (0.023) |
| Republican | -2.604** | -1.126** | -2.182** |
| | (0.314) | (0.288) | (0.596) |
| 2010 | -- | 0.687 | -- |
| | -- | (0.375) | -- |
| Republican X 2010 | -- | -1.403** | -- |
| | -- | (0.359) | -- |
| Lagged DV | 1.785** | 1.692** | 2.336** |
| | (0.313) | (0.189) | (0.444) |
| Intercept | -3.521** | -0.641 | -1.534 |
| | (0.690) | (0.525) | (1.271) |
| N | 361 | 727 | 413 |
| Wald $\chi 2$ | 142.52 | 205.50 | 193.92 |
| PRE | 75.34 | 61.35 | 92.97 |
| Selection Equation | Reelection 2008 | Reelection 2008 | |
| Incumbent Vote Share | 0.082** | 0.069** | -- |
| | (0.026) | (0.020) | -- |
| Intercept | -3.978** | -2.809** | -- |
| | (1.554) | (1.145) | -- |
| N | 420 | 786 | -- |
| $\rho$ | 0.422 | -0.019 | -- |

Values are probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses
** $p < 0.05$

Figure 2.1 plots the predicted probabilities of supporting an extension of federal unemployment benefits across the range of district level change in the unemployment rate. Because the research question is about position change, predicted probabilities are plotted separately for lawmakers who supported or opposed the benefits extension on the previous vote. Lawmakers who previously supported the extension were somewhat less likely to do so on a subsequent vote (probability roughly = 0.6) if unemployment slightly improved or remained relatively stable in their districts, but those whose districts were most effected by rising unemployment were virtually certain to support extending federal benefits. Likewise, almost all members of Congress who had previously opposed an extension did so again on a subsequent vote if their district did not experience rising unemployment. However, if unemployment worsened in their districts after the previous vote, they were more likely to support a future extension. The few representatives who had previously opposed extending federal benefits and whose districts were among the hardest hit were more likely than not to reverse their previous position.

Figure 2.1: Effects of District Change on Position Change




The other notable finding from the analyses presented in Table 2.2 is that more electorally secure members of Congress were more likely to support TARP (i.e. to oppose its disapproval) on the second vote. Figure 2.2 shows the magnitude of this effect by plotting the predicted probability of opposing the disapproval of TARP across the range of electoral security for two groups of lawmakers, those who voted for and against TARP initially. Those who opposed TARP from the beginning were virtually certain to cast a vote against allowing the president to use the second half of the funds. Those who supported TARP initially varied in their decision on the second vote. Representatives of more competitive districts, where their party's presidential candidate won less than 60 percent of the popular vote, were more likely than not to reverse their previous position and oppose the unpopular "bailout." However more electorally secure representatives were more likely to retain their support of the unpopular policy. Although not direct evidence of responsiveness to district economic changes, this finding does indicate that electoral security makes lawmakers more likely to maintain an unpopular position.

Figure 2.2: Effect of Electoral Security on Position Change

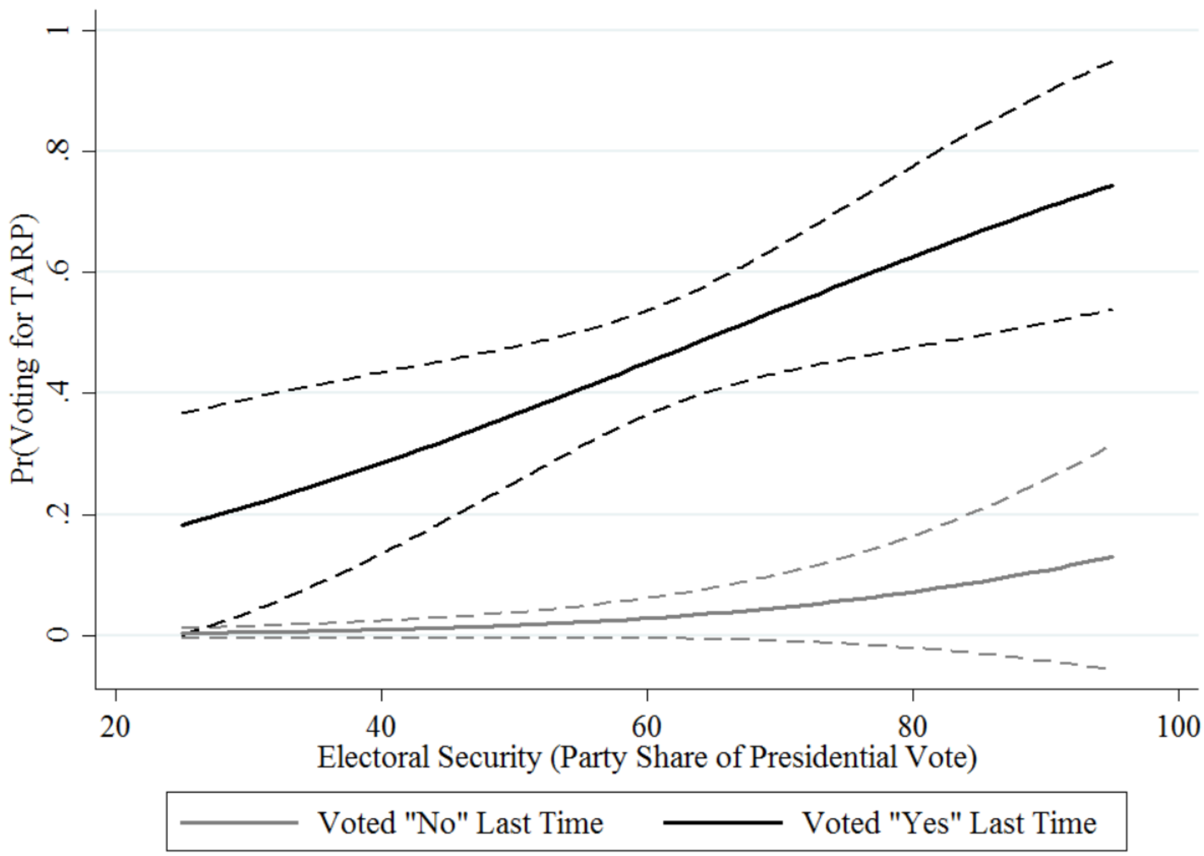


Table 2.3 presents six models testing the conditional responsiveness hypothesis. The models interact change in district-level unemployment with electoral security (which should decrease responsiveness) and the percentage of college graduates (an indicator of constituent attentiveness to policy, which should increase responsiveness). The most important thing to note is that none of these models uncover support for the conditional responsiveness hypothesis. Neither electoral security nor an educated constituency moderate the effects of unemployment change.[3] Once again, most reliable predictors of a position taking on a repeated roll call vote are previous position and partisanship. The finding of unmoderated dyadic responsiveness on unemployment benefits and the effect of electoral security on TARP remain in these models.

[3] Unpresented models tested interactions of change in the foreclosure rate with the same moderators. Results were the same.

Table 2.3: Test of Conditional Effects Hypothesis

| | TARP | | Extend Unemployment | | Dodd-Frank | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Rate Change | 0.427 | 0.412 | 0.195 | 0.397** | -0.363 | -0.162 |
| | (0.351) | (0.227) | (0.257) | (0.149) | (0.574) | (0.218) |
| Foreclosure Rate Change | 0.247 | 0.316 | -- | -- | -0.087 | -0.090 |
| | (0.263) | (0.264) | -- | -- | (0.316) | (0.310) |
| Pct. Employed in Finance | 0.056 | 0.053 | -- | -- | 0.213 | 0.219 |
| | (0.059) | (0.060) | -- | -- | (0.118) | (0.120) |
| Pct. College Grad | 0.016 | 0.056 | 0.006 | 0.022 | -0.027 | -0.033 |
| | (0.013) | (0.033) | (0.008) | (0.013) | (0.016) | (0.018) |
| Electoral Security | 0.039** | 0.022** | -0.002 | -0.003 | 0.009 | 0.015 |
| | (0.017) | (0.009) | (0.012) | (0.007) | (0.020) | (0.023) |
| Change in Unemployment X | -0.005 | -- | -0.000 | -- | 0.006 | -- |
| Electoral Security | (0.005) | -- | (0.004) | -- | (0.010) | -- |
| Change in Unemployment X | -- | -0.011 | -- | -0.008 | -- | 0.005 |
| Pct. College | -- | (0.007) | -- | (0.005) | -- | (0.007) |
| Republican | -2.628** | -2.602** | -1.128** | -1.135** | -2.167** | -2.167** |
| | (0.323) | (0.321) | (0.207) | (0.206) | (0.593) | (0.597) |
| 2010 | -- | -- | 0.685** | 0.637** | -- | -- |
| | -- | -- | (0.274) | (0.275) | -- | -- |
| Republican X 2010 | -- | -- | -1.400** | -1.395** | -- | -- |
| | -- | -- | (0.295) | (0.294) | -- | -- |
| Lagged DV | 1.773** | 1.791** | 1.692** | 1.737** | 2.334** | 2.360** |
| | (0.305) | (0.322) | (0.234) | (0.238) | (0.441) | (0.446) |
| Intercept | -4.486** | -4.434** | -0.663 | -1.035 | -1.189 | -1.414 |
| | (1.169) | (0.813) | (0.767) | (0.666) | (1.097) | (1.265) |
| N | 361 | 361 | 727 | 727 | 413 | 413 |
| Wald $\chi2$ | 154.08** | 144.68** | 245.15** | 241.36** | 203.81** | 215.02** |
| PRE | 74.67 | 74.01 | 61.35 | 61.35 | 92.97 | 92.97 |
| Selection Equation | Reelection 2008 | | Reelection 2008 | | | |
| Incumbent Vote Share | 0.082** | 0.082** | 0.069** | 0.069** | -- | -- |
| | (0.026) | (0.026) | (0.010) | (0.010) | -- | -- |
| Intercept | -3.980** | -3.975** | -2.809** | -2.809** | -- | -- |
| | (1.554) | (1.542) | (0.574) | (0.574) | -- | -- |
| N | 420 | 420 | 786 | 786 | -- | -- |
| $\rho$ | 0.422 | 0.473 | -0.019 | -0.014 | -- | -- |

Values are probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses

** $p < 0.05$

Table 2.4 shows the three models of position change on procedural votes, which support the procedural cartel hypothesis. Recall that the procedural cartel hypothesis predicts less responsiveness on procedural votes and larger effects for partisanship. That is exactly what we see. Although there is some evidence of responsiveness on procedural votes, partisanship is by far the most important consideration. The difference between the parties is greater on all three procedural votes than in any of the models of final passage.  On the motion to recommit Dodd-Frank the model can only be estimated for Democrats because every Republican opposed considering the bill on both occasions.

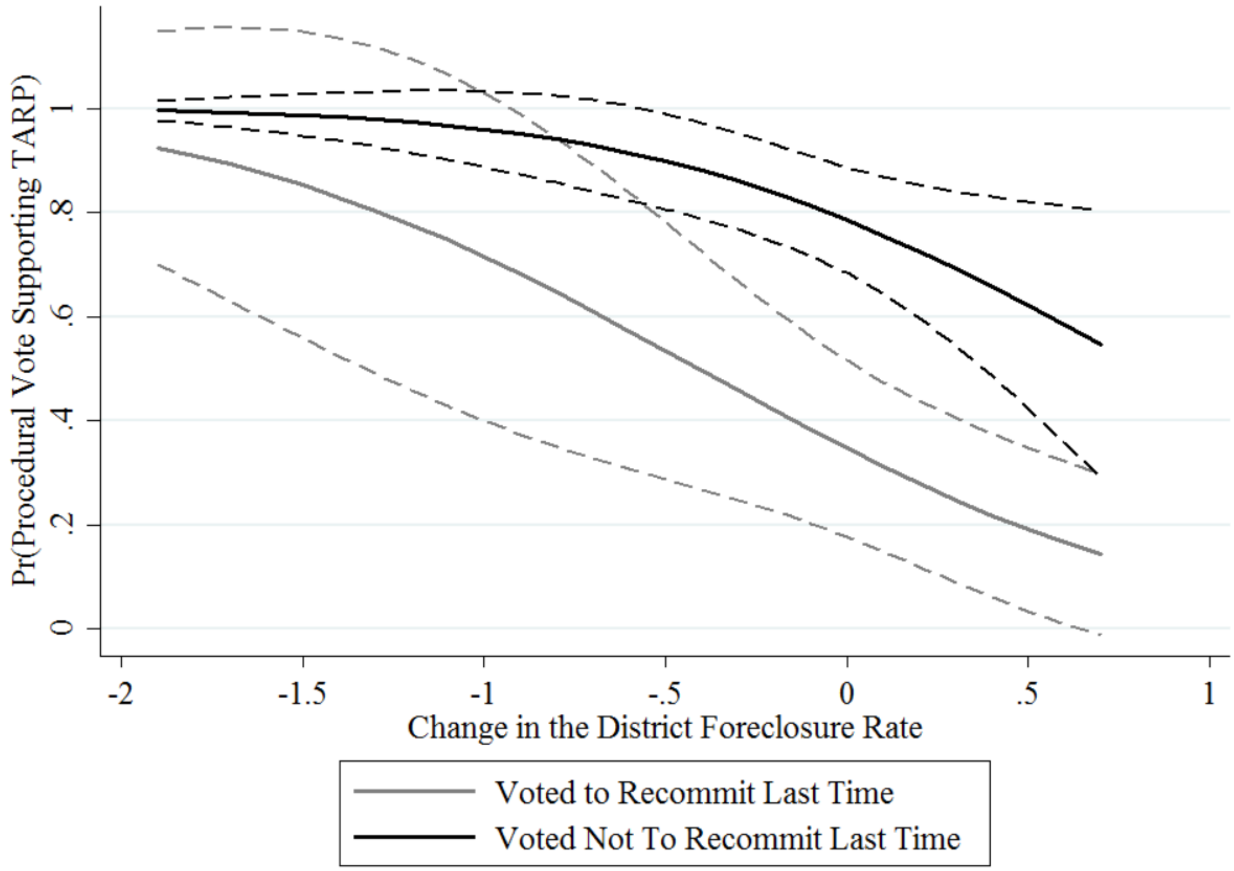
Table 2.5: Effects of District Change on Procedural Change

| | TARP | Extend Unemployment | Dodd-Frank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Rate Change | 0.104 | 0.039 | 0.012 |
| | (0.139) | (0.151) | (0.117) |
| Foreclosure Rate Change | -0.962** | -- | -0.196 |
| | (0.395) | -- | (0.838) |
| Pct. Employed in Finance | 0.206 | -- | 0.132 |
| | (0.119) | -- | (0.098) |
| Pct. College Grad | -0.020 | -0.008 | -0.025 |
| | (0.023) | (0.020) | (0.020) |
| Electoral Security | 0.054** | 0.083** | 0.070** |
| | (0.014) | (0.020) | (0.019) |
| Republican | -3.241** | -4.811** | Dems. Only |
| | (0.375) | (0.843) | -- |
| Lagged DV | 1.185** | -0.542 | 0.953** |
| | (0.285) | (0.657) | (0.422) |
| Intercept | -3.506** | -2.816** | -2.429** |
| | (1.052) | (0.805) | (0.947) |
| N | 361 | 334 | 244 |
| Wald $\chi 2$ | 230.74** | -- | 26.42** |
| PRE | 89.29 | -12.59 | 18.18 |
| Selection Equation | Reelection 2008 | Reelection 2008 | |
| Incumbent Vote Share | 0.083** | 0.002 | -- |
| | (0.026) | (0.010) | -- |
| Intercept | -4.067** | 1.406** | -- |
| | (1.587) | (0.692) | -- |
| N | 420 | 357 | -- |
| $\rho$ | -0.356 | -0.998** | -- |

Values are probit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses
** $p < 0.05$

Constituency economic change did effect switching on one procedural motion. Change in the foreclosure rate has an unexpected negative effect on support for TARP. Districts in which the foreclosure rate increased were more likely to support considering the motion to disapprove of the second half of the funds. Closer inspection (see Figure 2.3) reveals that representatives of districts where the foreclosure rate decreased between 2008 and 2009 (by this time the foreclosure crisis had begun to subside) were more likely vote against considering disapproval (a procedural vote in favor of TARP) than lawmakers whose districts' foreclosure rates stayed the same or increased. This makes intuitive sense. Blocking the second half of the TARP funds was electorally expedient, but lawmakers representing districts where conditions were improving did not want to be put in a position to vote against a policy that showed signs of helping their constituents. Representatives of districts where foreclosures rates continued to increase into 2009 were all the more willing to follow public hostility towards TARP because the policy did not appear to be improving conditions in their geographic constituency. The other notable finding from the models of procedural voting is that safer members of Congress were more likely to cast procedural votes in support of all three controversial economic policies (with the caveat that the model of the vote to recommit Dodd-Frank only includes Democrats), likely because they were less concerned about having to cast a politically difficult roll call.

Figure 2.3: Effect of Foreclosure Change on Procedural Support for TARP




Taken together these results provide limited support for the dyadic responsiveness hypothesis, showing that roll call switching in response to changing district conditions occurs, but not regularly. There is no support at all for the conditional responsiveness hypothesis, and there is very strong support for the partisan cartel hypothesis. The cohesiveness and position of the party appear to be the single most important factors in explaining position change on roll call votes.

**Discussion**

This study takes advantage of an exogenous economic shock, the Great Recession beginning in 2007, and the availability of high quality data at the congressional district level to study the responsiveness of roll call position taking in the U.S. House. I identify three key economic policies that received multiple roll call votes (TARP, federal unemployment benefits, and Dodd-Frank) and model the decisions of lawmakers to repeat or reverse their previous positions on these policies as a function of district-level changes in economic conditions.

To answer the question that motivated this study, when members of Congress cannot simultaneously respond to changing circumstances in their districts and remain consistent on high profile roll call votes, they tend to err on the side of consistency. The evidence shows that lawmakers do not generally respond to changes in their constituency by reversing their prior policy stances. Some vote switching occurs, but on two of the three policies it is not explained by changes in the district. Based on the selection of policies analyzed, responsiveness on specific positions seems to occur when the issue is simple, affects constituents directly, and partisan pressure is relatively weak. These findings are consistent with Hurley and Hill's (2003) expectation of greater responsiveness on simpler issues with crosscutting pressures. They also support more than they undermine the assertions that lawmakers are ideologically consistent and that vote switching is influenced by the national political environment. At the same time, the one case of substantial responsiveness and the position instability fostered by electoral security add important exceptions to these patterns. The substantial evidence of increased responsiveness among marginal lawmakers and those whose constituents demand policy representation do not appear to hold for vote switching behavior, at least not for these salient economic policy questions during the study period.

The findings presented here shed light on the mechanisms behind the aggregate responsiveness of legislative outputs to national public opinion, what Stimson, Erikson, and MacKuen (1995; Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002) call "rational anticipation." Dyadic responsiveness of lawmakers to their unique constituencies on specific, salient policy positions does not appear to be a major part of the reason that the House responds to national public opinion. The findings presented above suggest that changes to the legislative agenda, positions on new issues, and other legislative behaviors are a much larger part of the explanation for aggregate responsiveness. Previous studies finding aggregate responsiveness, cross-sectional congruity of district characteristics and roll call votes, and studies of position change that focus on constituency characteristics rather than position change were not able to look for this mechanism, so a test for responsiveness to constituency change on this behavior adds to scholars' knowledge even if the evidence points towards limited and conditional responsiveness to constituents.

The findings presented here do not give much cause for optimism about the quality of democratic responsiveness. Lawmakers did respond to their districts on the policy that would provide direct aid to voters, but did not do so on passage of a law to stabilize the financial system (TARP) or on one to prevent similar situations from arising in the future (Dodd-Frank). Members of Congress do switch positions on occasion, but it appears that response to constituency changes is not usually the cause of such "flip-flops." This is surprising in light of numerous studies that show greater responsiveness on salient issues, which these policies were. Studies on other issues are needed to corroborate this finding, but roll call switching might be less susceptible to the electoral connection than other behaviors. It is also possible that the usual effect of salience on responsiveness does not apply to position change because of the political risks associated with inconsistency. Future research should take advantage of the proliferation of subnational demographic and economic data to investigate this question with votes on other policies of varying salience.

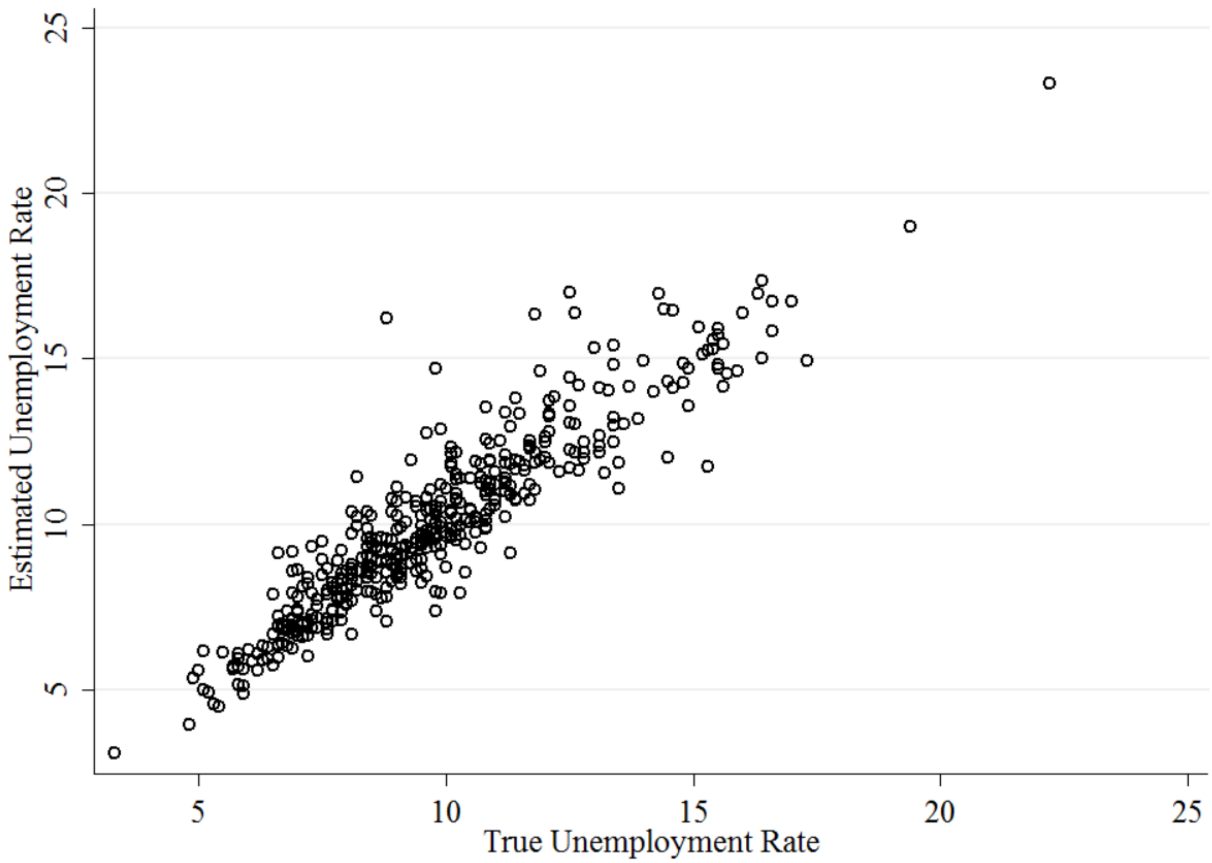
**Appendix 2A: Vote Change Totals**

| Table 2.1A: Position Change Totals | | 2009 | | 2010 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Switch | Stay | Switch | Stay |
| TARP (Pass) | Change to Yes | 12 | 135 | -- | -- |
| | Change to No | 85 | 138 | -- | -- |
| TARP (Recommit) | Change to Yes | 18 | 183 | -- | -- |
| | Change to No | 17 | 152 | -- | -- |
| Extend Unemployment (Pass) | Change to Yes | 1 | 23 | 14 | 68 |
| | Change to No | 39 | 271 | 78 | 240 |
| Extend Unemployment (Recommit) | Change to Yes | -- | -- | 182 | 26 |
| | Change to No | -- | -- | 128 | 2 |
| Dodd-Frank (Pass) | Change to Yes | -- | -- | 12 | 184 |
| | Change to No | -- | -- | 3 | 216 |
| Dodd-Frank (Recommit) | Change to Yes | -- | -- | 7 | 177 |
| | Change to No | -- | -- | 13 | 215 |

**Appendix 2B: Validating the ZIP to CD Aggregation Process**

To validate the construction of foreclosure rates at the district level I use unemployment rates, which are available from the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder at both the district and ZIP code levels. Both measures are constructed using census microdata and were therefore aggregated without error because households are in one and only one congressional district and ZIP code. To validate my measure of foreclosure rates I aggregated unemployment at the ZIP code level to the congressional district level using the exact same procedure followed for foreclosures. Comparing the aggregated unemployment measure to the "true" district-level unemployment measure should provide a reliable indication of the accuracy of district-level foreclosure rates in the paper and tell us how well the aggregation procedure corresponds to congressional districts. The correlation (Pearson' R) of these two measures is 0.922. Figure 2.1B is a scatter plot of the estimated and true unemployment rates in 2011 (the only year in which both ZIP code and district unemployment were available). Not only is the correlation high, the slope of the relationship between the two measures (estimated using bivariate OLS) is 0.979. The mean aggregation error (true value – estimated value) is -0.223 with a standard deviation of 1.093.

Figure 2.1B: Estimated vs. True Unemployment Rates



# Chapter 3

# Who Responds to Economic Crisis and How? Bill Sponsorship during the Great Recession

This chapter studies legislators' responsiveness to constituency level change in their issue priorities and in the content of their proposals. Using constituency level data from 2006-2011 and data on bill introduction and cosponsorship I test a theory of bill sponsorship in response to economic problems. When a national economic crisis takes place Congress is usually compelled to respond, as was the case during the 2007-2009 recession. To address the potentially dire economic situation Congress enacted several landmark policies, numerous less significant ones, and considered thousands of others. Theories of lawmaking predict such a response in aggregate but they do not tells us who, among the 435 members of the House, are most likely to participate in crafting the legislative response to crisis, or provide clear expectations as to the content of their proposals. As the literature on agenda setting shows, whether a member of Congress participates in proposing legislation is probably more important than how they vote on final passage of bills that are considered (Hall 1996). It is therefore critically important to understand who introduces legislation and what leads to the introduction of different kinds of policies. Normative and theoretical concerns about representation make it important to know the extent to which these actions are responses to the constituency.

Using a unique dataset of district level economic indicators from the period shortly before to shortly after the recession (2006 – 2011), data on individual members of Congress, and an original coding of the content of bills, this study compares the sponsorship and cosponsorship behavior of representatives whose districts were differently affected by the recession. I analyze the content of legislative responses by coding the policy tools included in bills aimed at influencing the economy. The design leverages cross-district variation in the effects of the recession to test the theory that representatives respond to problems in their district by introducing bills, but that the content of their responses depends on their ideology and position within the institution. The results show us that lawmakers respond to economic hardship in their constituency by introducing more economic legislation and signaling their support by adding their names as cosponsors, but the policy tools they use to address district needs depend on their ideology and institutional position. In this chapter I review the literature on why members of congress work on policy and propose legislation, arguing that while we know a great deal about what explains the issue priorities of legislators, we do not have a comparable understanding of how they choose among various policy tools. If the content of policy has consequences then these choices determine who benefits from a policy change and how effective it is at solving the intended problem or producing the intended public good. I then argue that ideology and institutional position should explain *how* members of Congress try to address economic problems, and test this argument using original data on the policy tools included in individual bills.

**Spending Time on Policy**

Why do members of Congress devote scarce time and energy to crafting legislation, and on which policy domains to they focus? Given the numerous tasks competing for the attention of members of Congress and their staffs and the fact that producing legislation is a public good, numerous scholars have treated the fact that lawmakers spend any time making laws as a theoretical puzzle (Hall 1998; Harden 2013; 2015; Schiller 1995; Wawro 2000). Evidence suggests that variation in policy activity depends on institutional position (Woon 2009), with the prospect of attaining more influential leadership roles serving as an important incentive to do the difficult work of crafting policy (Fenno 1973; Harden 2013; Schiller 1995; Wawro 2000). Another important factor is constituent demand, with more affluent voters preferring policy representation over other forms (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Harden 2013; 2015), although Wawro (2000) finds no evidence that constituents reward legislative entrepreneurship.

Additional research focuses on lawmakers' specific issue priorities rather than the amount of effort they devote to policy activities of any kind. Issue agendas are explained by lawmakers' personal backgrounds and interests (Burden 2015; Carnes 2013; Choi 2015), partisanship (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003), perceptions of constituency needs (Hall 1996; Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010; Miler 2010; Rocca and Gordon 2010) which can be revealed by challengers' campaigns (Sulkin 2005; 2011), and the president's agenda if they are of the same party (Hall 1996; Kingdon 1989).

Some of the factors that explain individual issue agendas account for change in lawmakers' priorities and some do not. Personal background such as family ideology (Choi 2015), class, professional background, and life experience (Burden 2015; Carnes 2013) are generally unchangeable by the time someone is elected to national office, although Burden does cite examples of politically formative experiences happening to sitting members of Congress. Ideology is generally thought to be stable (Poole 2007), however there is evidence that it can shift gradually in response to constituency change (Glazer and Robbins 1985; Stratmann 2000), as can relative issue positions (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010). While static factors such as personal background are undoubtedly important for understanding variation among members of

Congress, an account of how lawmakers' individual priorities and levels of policy activity change must build on dynamic influences.

The dynamic influences of legislators issue agendas include their perceptions of constituent needs, support for the president's agenda, and partisan goals. Not only are members of Congress more active on issues that are salient for their constituents both through institutional positions (Adler and Lapinski 1997; Weingast and Marshall 1988) and individual participation (Arnold 1990; Hall 1996), but their priorities change in response to constituents as well (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010; Sulkin 2005). Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin show that lawmakers adjust their issue priorities after redistricting in ways that reflect the changed demographics of their districts, and Sulkin (2005) shows that incumbents incorporate their challengers' campaign agenda in to their future legislative work. To the extent that challengers highlight unaddressed constituent concerns (as Jacobson 2013 and others argue), campaigns connect the policy priorities of individual lawmakers to the concerns of voters in their district.

Studies using redistricting to study responsiveness to constituency conditions (Glazer and Robbins 1985; Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010) show that members of Congress mold their representational styles to the demographic and political characteristics of the district and will change their behavior when these features change. The natural design provided by redistricting has been very useful at helping scholars distinguish between the responsiveness and congruence explanations for the correlation between legislative behaviors and district characteristics (for a discussion of the conceptual differences see (Burden 2007; Kuklinski and Stanga 1979), but the bulk of the tests are limited to changes in demographic characteristics with well understood political significance (age, race, socioeconomic status, labor union membership etc.). Members of Congress also know in advance when redistricting is going to occur, and find out what their new district is going to be before running for reelection. This gives them time to tailor strategies to their new constituents.

I add to the empirical literature on policy responsiveness by assessing the effect on lawmakers' issue priorities when their existing district is impacted by an exogenous shock that is only weakly correlated with partisanship, racial and ethnic composition, average socioeconomic status, and other politically relevant variables. This contribution is useful for two reasons. First, as we have seen in previous chapters the effects of the recession varied substantially from district-to-district and were barely correlated with political and demographic characteristics. Leveraging this variation allows for easier identification of effects than studies of dyadic representation are usually able to achieve. The fact that conditions in existing districts change rather than the districts themselves being redrawn complements the redistricting based studies of responsiveness by using a qualitatively different kind of constituency change as the independent variable. Second, studying the effects of district level change during a crisis is theoretically interesting. Crises create opportunities for policy change that are not available during more stable times (Kingdon 1984). Whether by changing the definition of existing problems (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), or compelling Congress to address an old one (Adler and Wilkerson 2013; Kingdon 1984; Walker 1977) crises dramatically increase the chances that policy will change significantly. A cursory survey of American political history shows that many of the most important domestic policy reforms in the nation's history were direct responses to economic crisis (and even more if one includes the social and economic stresses produced by war). Crisis creates a political situation in which dramatic policy change is possible, but the presence of a crisis does not necessarily imply an obvious solution. As a result when members of Congress turn their attention toward the same problem, they come up with different responses and means of protecting their constituents.

**Who Introduces What?**

In order to understand how Congress responds to an economic crisis we have to understand who introduces responses and what they propose. Members of Congress are more likely to shoulder the costs of creating and introducing legislation when it directly affects their constituents (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010; Woon 2009). Voters who have been personally affected by the recession or who live in communities where the family, friends, and neighbors are affect are more likely to view the economy as a serious problem (Reeves and Gimpel 2012). Members of Congress are also keenly aware of economic conditions in their districts and want to avoid accusations of inattentiveness (Sulkin 2005). They are also more likely to be aware of local economic conditions than to accurately perceive public opinion. Proposing new economic legislation allows lawmakers to not only signal that the economy is a priority, but also to take unique positions on the issue (Michael S. Rocca and Gordon 2010).

Bill sponsorship is the most important measure of a lawmaker’s issue priorities because sponsoring a bill is costly in terms of effort by the representative and her staff, and the introduction of a bill is the most direct way a member of Congress can change public law and influence the House’s agenda. Introducing a bill is also an action members of Congress can, and technically must given that there can only be one original sponsor, do independently. Most of the choices lawmakers face are defined by party leaders or other members of the chamber, but the decision of whether to introduce a bill and what its content will be is under each lawmaker’s control.

While bill sponsorship is the most important component of lawmakers' individual agendas, it is not the only indicator. Another measure of representatives' issue priorities is the legislation they sign as a cosponsor. Cosponsorship is low-cost, requiring only a signature, but it signals support for the bill and concern for the issue that the bill addresses. The literature on cosponsorship cites three reasons for this behavior. First, members of Congress cosponsor legislation with ideologically similar lawmakers because they share the preferences of these colleagues. Second, lawmakers use cosponsorship as a position taking strategy (Mayhew 1974) to show their constituents that they support popular legislation (Campbell 1982; Koger 2003). Third, cosponsorship is a signal to the chamber (either the median voter or the majority leadership) of the level and array of support for a bill (Kessler and Krehbiel 1996). The evidence for the importance of cosponsorship for legislative outcomes is somewhat mixed with Fowler (2006) finding that legislators with more cosponsors tend to be more successful, but Wilson and Young (1997), in a more direct test of cosponsorship's effect on bill passage, find that cosponsors only increase the chances that a bill will progress through the early stages of the legislative process. This study uses both sponsorship and cosponsorship as measures of legislators' priorities, recognizing that sponsorship is more costly but more important, while cosponsorship is easy signal of support for lawmakers who lack the time or opportunity to sponsor original legislation.

The first hypothesis sets up a simple test of dyadic responsiveness, using variation in district-level change to examine constituency effects on lawmakers' priorities. It also sets up the second part of the analysis, which examines the choices lawmakers make about how to address economic problems.

*Constituency Change Hypothesis*: Representatives of districts that experienced greater increases in unemployment or foreclosure will introduce more economic legislation than representatives of districts that experienced smaller increases in unemployment or foreclosure.

Understanding whether members of Congress respond to economic crisis in their constituencies by sponsoring economic legislation is an important question about the quality of representation, but increased bill sponsorship, on its own, does not tell us how members of Congress address local and national economic problems. For that we have to analyze the content of economic proposals. For a macroeconomic problem such as high unemployment or foreclosure rates there are a number of possible solutions. For instance the government could cut taxes to stimulate economic growth, spend money on public works or other projects to increase consumption (also stimulating economic growth), give direct aid to the needy, or regulate various aspects of the economy to prevent abuses and minimize risk. Casual observers of economic policy debates in U.S. politics know that for any economic issue there is always debate over what kind of response is appropriate. While scholars of Congress have done extensive research on the individual issue priorities of its members (Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010; Sulkin 2005; 2011; Woon 2009), they have not paid comparable attention to the means they choose to address policy problems. The policy tool chosen to address a specific problem influences the effectiveness of the policy response and determines who benefits from the change in policy. For example, cutting taxes directly benefits those who would otherwise owe more to the federal government whereas increasing spending on social welfare benefits people with lower incomes who pay less in taxes. These two different types of response to economic hardship have a disparate effect on the population. While there is an argument to be made that either or both (or neither) of these policies is effective, either kind of policy change has profound consequences for the people directly affected. Add to that the fact that one of the policies may, in reality, be a more effective cure for rising unemployment and the choice lawmakers make of what kind of policy response to introduce or support becomes all the more important.

How do members of Congress decide what kinds of policies to introduce? One key factor is their ideology. Ideologies are, as summarized by Francis E. Lee, "interrelated political beliefs, values, and policy positions" (2009, 27). They tell politicians (or anyone else) how the world works and how they should respond to problems that arise. Ideology not only provides information about right from wrong, but also leads to empirical predictions about what policies will work. For example, opponents of gun control not only seek to maintain a strict interpretation of the Second Amendment on normative grounds, they also hold as an empirical assertion that prevalent gun ownership actually makes the public *less* threatened by gun violence. More to the point, advocates of supply-side economics argue that tax cuts are not only more desirable than redistribution for being less confiscatory, but are also *more effective* at stimulating economic growth and increasing employment (Friedman 1962). Because ideology influences the way politicians think about the political world, it also likely influences the choices they make about how to respond to constituents needs.

Current research on elite ideology usually treats it as falling along a unidimensional left-right continuum reflecting attitudes about the role of the government in the economy (Poole and Rosenthal 1997). Although there are other dimensions to ideology, the left-right economic dimension "organizes political conflict" in the U.S. for most of its history (Poole and Rosenthal 1997, p. 5-7). The most common measures of the ideology of members of Congress are derived from roll call votes (e.g. Snyder and Groseclose 2000; Poole and Rosenthal 1997) but others using campaign contributions (Bonica 2013) have been proposed. Important recent work has shown that much of the seeming ideological divide in scores based on roll call voting is a result of partisan competition for power rather than purely differences of belief (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Lee 2009; Theriault 2008), but ideological differences are nonetheless prevalent in the U.S. Congress. Representatives at the liberal end of the spectrum tend to support greater government intervention in the economy, especially on behalf of those who are less able to participate or succeed in the market place. Economic liberals are more likely to view redistribution, government spending, and regulation is desirable and effective solutions to economic problems, and should thus be more likely to propose policies of this nature when introducing economic legislation. On the other end of the spectrum, economic conservatives are more likely to oppose the aforementioned "liberal" policies and instead will seek to improve the economy by decreasing regulation and cutting taxes, arguing that these changes will provide the market with the freedom and capital to grow and efficiently provide goods and services. If ideology guides people's (including lawmakers') thinking about how the economy works, then we should see predictable variation in the kinds of responses lawmakers propose and support based on where they fall on the ideological spectrum. Liberals should be more likely to suggest various types of government action to promote economic growth while conservatives should suggest reducing government involvement as a means to the same ends. If, on the other hand, circumstances trump ideology then we should not expect the content of proposals to vary according to ideology.

*Ideological Solution Hypothesis*: More liberal members of Congress are more likely to introduce and cosponsor stimulus, welfare, regulation, and research funded or carried about by the government, and are less likely to propose tax cuts.

Another consideration that might influence the content of policy proposals is a legislator's position within the institution. Assuming, all else equal, that members of Congress want their proposals to pass, they should be more likely to introduce legislation that they will have greater ability to shepherd to the floor. Granted, it is not always necessarily the case that lawmakers introduce bills with the intention of passing them into law, as indicated by findings that bills have pure position taking value (Mayhew 1974; Rocca and Gordon 2010), but it still stands to reason that members of Congress have a greater incentive to invest the time and effort required to craft legislation if they occupy a position within the House that gives them disproportionate influence over the bill's chances of success. The most significant institutional positions with regard to influence the content of economic policy are committee assignments.

Opportunities created by a lawmaker's institutional position may influence the content of economic proposals independently of ideology. Members of the House use ideology to identify their most preferred policies, but they also value influence over legislative outcomes and will opportunistically proposed policies that they are better able to influence. Committee membership gives lawmakers disproportionate influence over polices that fall under their panel's jurisdiction, and it is likely tempting for members of Congress to introduce laws that fall under the jurisdiction of a committee to which they belong. If a lawmaker's committee assignments do not provide her with jurisdiction over her most preferred policies, she may be willing to introduce legislation that is not the ideal type of response because it falls under her committee's jurisdiction. For example a conservative that has no institutional access to tax policy may introduce an economic stimulus program if her committee assignments give her the opportunity to influence how the program is designed and implemented.

Committee assignments should have a substantial effect on the type of legislation that lawmakers propose. Scholars usually discuss committee jurisdictions in terms of policy domains, with each committee holding gatekeeping power over a specific area of federal policy (Adler and Lapinski 1997; Weingast and Marshall 1988). While true, “policy domains” are not the only way to conceptualize the differences between committee jurisdictions. Committees can also be thought of as monopolizing different policy tools. Taxes, for instance, are both a policy domain and a means of influencing economic policy. Collecting taxes and setting tax rates is a major area of federal policy, but using tax cuts to stimulate an industry are often means to ends beyond “good tax policy” such as “creating jobs” or “incentivizing renewable energy.” Such policies usually must pass through the House Committee on Ways and Means, even if the goal is something other than an effective tax code. Similarly, most federal discretionary spending must be approved by the Appropriations Committee, and regulations of different types must pass through Energy and Commerce, Banking and Finance, or other committee depending on the nature and target of regulation. Committees therefore can also be thought of as monopolizing control of different policy tools. When a lawmaker considers how to best respond to an economic problem they face infinite choices. To narrow the options down to a manageable set they ask themselves three questions: “What policy would be effective? What policy would be consistent with good government? And what kind of policy could I actually influence?” Ideology answers the first two questions, and institutional position answers the third. If their goal is to claim credit for policy victories they should be more likely to introduce legislation that they can more easily guide through committee. While committee membership is more likely related to sponsorship than cosponsorship, norms of reciprocity among members of a committee and the desire to signal the committee's consensus to the floor to cause committee membership to increase the chances of copsonsorship of bills under the committee's jurisdiction as well.

*Committee Jurisdiction Hypothesis*: Members of committees with jurisdiction over a given policy tool are more likely to propose laws that use that tool than members of unrelated committees.

**Data and Design**

To create measures of bill sponsorship for each member of Congress I obtained data on every bill introduced in the House between 2006 and 2012 from the Congressional Bills Project (approximately 22,000 bills). To test the first hypothesis I needed to identify all bills that could be construed as a response to the recession, unemployment, or foreclosure. Because there are so many economic interests in the United States, almost any government spending, taxation, or regulation will affect the economic wellbeing of some region, economic sector, or social group, so even the most specific bills might be attempts by members of Congress to shield constituents from economic hardship. To avoid making arbitrary judgments about what kinds of economic policies are relevant I define economic policy broadly for the purpose of testing the constituency change hypothesis. To do this I used Policy Agendas Project minor topic codes, which are provided in the Congressional Bills data. A bill was coded as economic if its minor topic code involved taxes, regulation, welfare, or government spending.[4] I use minor topics instead of major

[4] The list Policy Agendas minor topics coded as "economic" is provide in Appendix 4A.

topics because their specificity makes the measure more precise. For example most minor topics under the major topic “Agriculture” meet the criteria for inclusion, but the minor topic on “Food Inspection and Safety” does not. Likewise, most of the minor topics under “Law, Crime, and Family Issues” do not fit the criteria for inclusion as responses to the recession, but the minor topic on “Prisons” includes laws affecting an (unfortunately) large industry. The most significant omission from the set of economic bills are those dealing with health care. Because this policy area was at the top of the legislative agenda during the height of the recession, for reasons largely unrelated to the recession, including bills relating to health policy would artificially inflate the number of bills introduced as a response to unemployment, foreclosure, and the economic recession and could lead to spurious inferences.

In order to code bills according to the means by which they influence the economy I used summaries provided by the Congressional Research Service. Partial summaries and links to additional information are available in the Congressional Bills data. I identified nine means by which economic bills sought to influence the economy which I classify as trade, welfare, tax cuts, financial regulation, other regulation, research and development spending, stimulus, workforce development, and foreclosure prevention. Trade is any effort to alter trade policy, secure favorable terms for domestic industries, or increase access to foreign markets. Welfare is federal aid to the poor or unemployed, tax cuts are any reduction in taxes, financial regulation is any rule about lending practices, transparency, liquidity, or other behavior in the financial sector. Other regulations are any regulatory bill that does not specifically target the financial sector. Research and development is any bill that offers federal funding specifically for scientific or industrial research or the development of new technologies. The stimulus category includes bills that call for spending on infrastructure, new facilities, or other projects that would entail the hiring of large numbers of employees. Workforce development includes bills for vocational training programs, and the foreclosure category includes all bills specifically aimed at helping people avoid foreclosure or find housing if they were recently evicted from a foreclosed property. Most of the bills in this category could also be considered financial regulation (with a few arguable instances of tax cuts or welfare) but I count foreclosure as a separate category when the bill is a direct intervention on behalf of those currently facing foreclosure.

The dependent variables are the total number of economic bills and bills using each policy tool sponsored and cosponsored by each member of Congress in each year. The total number of sponsored and cosponsored bills with economic Policy Agendas minor topics for each member of Congress in each year are the dependent variables for the constituency change hypothesis. Counts of the number of bills in each category sponsored and cosponsored by each lawmaker in each year will be the dependent variables in tests of the ideological solution and committee jurisdiction hypotheses. I expect that conservatives will be more likely to sponsor tax cuts, and less likely to sponsor bills including any of the other policy tools, except for trade which should not be predicted by ideology. Cosponsorship data come from Fowler's (2006) study of cosponsorship networks in Congress.[5] Because the dependent variables are counts with overdispersion, I test the hypotheses using negative binomial regression.

Independent variables include annual measures of district-level unemployment rates from the U.S. Census and foreclosure rates aggregated from ZIP code level data created by RealtyTrac

[5] Fowler's data, based on THOMAS records, can be downloaded here: http://jhfowler.ucsd.edu/cosponsorship.htm. Updated data on the 111th and 112th Congresses were generously provided by Laurel Harbridge.

respectively. Additional demographic controls are taken from the Census. Ideology is measured using the first dimension of Poole and Rosenthal's (1997) DW-NOMINATE score. Committee membership data come from Charles Stewart III and Jonathan Woon.[6] Electoral vulnerability is measured using each representative's copartisan presidential vote share in the previous election aggregated to the district level.

**Analysis**

I model bill sponsorship behavior using negative binomial regression because the dependent variables are counts with overdispersion. Vuong's closeness tests do not support using zero inflated models. To account for temporal autocorrelation a lagged dependent variable is included in each model and standard errors are clustered by member of Congress. Fixed effects models produce similar results for all time-varying covariates. The number of non-economic bills introduced or sponsored is included as a control to account for any omitted measures of legislators' overall policy activity, which could lead to spurious inferences about the relationships between key independent variables and sponsorships and cosponsorships of each type of bills. Results for all models of sponsorship are presented in Table 3.1, and results of cosponsorship models are presented in Table 3.2. They provide varying levels of support for all three hypotheses.

The first column of Table 3.1 shows that when the unemployment rate increased in a representative's district they sponsored more economic legislation, consistent with the constituency change hypothesis. Separating the effects by policy tool it appears that the effect was is most pronounced among bills introducing tax cuts, direct aid to those in need, or

[6] http://web.mit.edu/17.251/www/data_page.html.

increasing regulation (financial or otherwise). There is no comparable evidence of responsiveness to increases in the foreclosure rate. In fact, representatives of districts that experienced spikes in foreclosure introduce less economic legislation overall, particularly regarding tax cuts, welfare, non-financial regulation and trade. There is evidence of responsiveness to increasing unemployment, but the combination of unexpected and null results for foreclosure fail to support the hypothesis of responsiveness to that indicator.

The models largely support the ideological solution hypothesis. Conservatism does not affect the overall level of bill sponsorship, but conservatives do introduce more bills including tax cuts and fewer bills calling for workforce development. Conservatives and liberals do not statistically differ in the introduction of bills in other policy areas. This finding is consistent with the notion that conservatives view tax cuts as an effective form of economic stimulus one of the few legitimate government responses to economic problems, but because of the mostly null findings, the ideological solution hypothesis finds only limited support in the models of bill sponsorship.

The results support the committee jurisdiction hypothesis. The variables *jurisdiction committee 1-3* are dummy variables for whether each representative belongs to a committee with jurisdiction over each policy area, with some policy tools regularly falling under two or three committees. If more than one committee could receive referrals of a certain type of policy multiple indicators or an indicator of membership in any economic committee were used as needed (see Table 3.2A). Members of most relevant committees were more likely than nonmembers to propose economic bills and bills including policy tools over which their committee has jurisdiction. Controlling for other factors, members of Congress tend to introduce bills whose fates they will have a hand in deciding.

Table 3.1: Negative Binomial Models of Bill Introduction

| | All Economic | Taxes | Stimulus | Foreclosure | Welfare | Financial Regulation | Other Regulation | Workforce | Research | Trade |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Rate Change | 0.035** | 0.061** | -0.032 | -0.025 | 0.045** | 0.119** | 0.071** | -0.123 | 0.024 | -0.062 |
| | (0.010) | (0.029) | (0.051) | (0.061) | (0.023) | (0.035) | (0.035) | (0.068) | (0.048) | (0.047) |
| Foreclosure Rate Change | -0.226** | -0.382** | -0.328 | -0.050 | -0.301** | -0.254 | -0.483** | -0.180 | -0.388** | 0.440 |
| | (0.060) | (0.168) | (0.297) | (0.190) | (0.147) | (0.168) | (0.142) | (0.231) | (0.181) | (0.244) |
| Unemployment Rate | -0.008 | -0.032 | 0.074** | -0.024 | 0.001 | -0.026 | 0.021 | 0.078 | -0.011 | -0.082** |
| | (0.009) | (0.026) | (0.037) | (0.044) | (0.020) | (0.027) | (0.030) | (0.046) | (0.035) | (0.040) |
| Foreclosure Rate | 0.017 | -0.054 | -0.061 | 0.511** | -0.085 | 0.131 | -0.190 | -0.058 | -0.028 | -0.267 |
| | (0.038) | (0.140) | (0.187) | (0.118) | (0.087) | (0.118) | (0.124) | (0.159) | (0.183) | (0.191) |
| District Liberalism | 0.002 | 0.007 | 0.015 | 0.064** | -0.014** | 0.003 | 0.015 | 0.009 | 0.026 | -0.010 |
| | (0.003) | (0.007) | (0.013) | (0.021) | (0.006) | (0.008) | (0.009) | (0.015) | (0.014) | (0.012) |
| Pct. College Grad | 0.003 | 0.011 | -0.003 | -0.010 | 0.008 | 0.004 | 0.013 | -0.013 | 0.002 | -0.025** |
| | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.010) | (0.013) | (0.005) | (0.006) | (0.007) | (0.013) | (0.010) | (0.010) |
| Electoral Vulnerability | 0.004 | 0.005 | 0.017 | 0.034 | 0.001 | -0.003 | 0.006 | 0.018 | 0.012 | 0.019** |
| | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.012) | (0.018) | (0.005) | (0.007) | (0.008) | (0.013) | (0.012) | (0.009) |
| Conservatism | -0.043 | 0.591** | -0.140 | -0.504 | -0.281 | 0.081 | 0.163 | -0.935** | 0.097 | -0.145 |
| | (0.074) | (0.202) | (0.328) | (0.437) | (0.163) | (0.237) | (0.240) | (0.386) | (0.329) | (0.281) |
| Majority | 0.154** | 0.249 | 0.299 | -0.557 | 0.065 | 0.417** | 0.316** | -0.495 | 0.180 | -0.457** |
| | (0.047) | (0.135) | (0.225) | (0.316) | (0.108) | (0.172) | (0.148) | (0.307) | (0.206) | (0.189) |
| Jurisdiction Committee 1 | 0.170** | 1.288** | 1.036** | 0.150 | 0.462** | 1.455** | 0.615** | 1.223** | 1.221** | 0.517 |
| | (0.058) | (0.157) | (0.196) | (0.275) | (0.121) | (0.136) | (0.191) | (0.257) | (0.199) | (0.266) |
| Jurisdiction Committee 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.240 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 1.016** |
| | -- | -- | -- | -- | (0.146) | -- | -- | -- | -- | (0.169) |
| Jurisdiction Committee 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -0.082 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| | -- | -- | -- | -- | (0.151) | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Non-Economic Bills | 0.064** | 0.063** | 0.052** | 0.051** | 0.087** | 0.029** | 0.090** | 0.058** | 0.090** | 0.239** |
| | (0.004) | (0.008) | (0.013) | (0.015) | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.009) | (0.011) | (0.010) | (0.016) |
| Lagged DV | 0.063** | 0.211** | 0.739** | 1.172** | 0.258** | 0.452** | 0.549** | 0.768** | 0.786** | 0.091** |
| | (0.007) | (0.062) | (0.135) | (0.252) | (0.039) | (0.077) | (0.084) | (0.287) | (0.129) | (0.020) |
| Intercept | 0.146 | -2.490** | -4.514** | -4.942** | -1.696** | -2.567** | -3.955** | -4.395** | -3.850** | -2.143** |
| | (0.175) | (0.402) | (0.845) | (0.990) | (0.331) | (0.455) | (0.588) | (0.899) | (0.731) | (0.591) |
| N | 1,948 | 1,948 | 1,948 | 1,948 | 1,948 | 1,948 | 1,948 | 1,948 | 1,948 | 1,948 |

Values are negative binomial coefficients, with standard errors clustered by representative in parentheses. ** p < 0.05

Table 3.2: Negative Binomial Models of Bill Cosponsorship

| | All Economic | Taxes | Stimulus | Foreclosure | Welfare | Financial Regulation | Other Regulation | Workforce | Research | Trade |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Rate Change | 0.021** | 0.000 | -0.018 | -0.041** | 0.058** | 0.056** | 0.164** | 0.015 | 0.010 | -0.110** |
| | (0.004) | (0.008) | (0.013) | (0.020) | (0.006) | (0.009) | (0.009) | (0.018) | (0.009) | (0.013) |
| Foreclosure Rate Change | -0.130** | -0.180** | -0.082 | -0.165 | -0.183** | -0.311** | -0.213** | -0.308** | -0.127** | -0.254** |
| | (0.027) | (0.059) | (0.078) | (0.091) | (0.033) | (0.054) | (0.051) | (0.092) | (0.057) | (0.078) |
| Unemployment Rate | 0.004 | -0.012 | 0.023** | -0.007 | 0.024** | 0.024** | -0.028** | 0.102** | -0.047** | 0.090** |
| | (0.004) | (0.008) | (0.010) | (0.014) | (0.005) | (0.008) | (0.009) | (0.016) | (0.008) | (0.009) |
| Foreclosure Rate | 0.026 | -0.031 | 0.007 | 0.235** | -0.063** | 0.011 | -0.035 | -0.081 | -0.052 | -0.194** |
| | (0.017) | (0.041) | (0.038) | (0.060) | (0.026) | (0.035) | (0.031) | (0.055) | (0.035) | (0.051) |
| District Liberalism | -0.004** | -0.010** | -0.001 | 0.023** | -0.004** | -0.007** | 0.004 | -0.009 | 0.013** | -0.009** |
| | (0.001) | (0.003) | (0.003) | (0.007) | (0.002) | (0.003) | (0.002) | (0.005) | (0.003) | (0.004) |
| Pct. College Grad | 0.000 | -0.007** | -0.002 | -0.002 | 0.001 | 0.008** | -0.003 | 0.013** | -0.002 | 0.008** |
| | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.003) | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.002) | (0.003) |
| Electoral Vulnerability | -0.004** | -0.003 | -0.008** | 0.009 | 0.006** | -0.002 | -0.001 | -0.008 | 0.012** | 0.007** |
| | (0.001) | (0.002) | (0.003) | (0.006) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.004) | (0.002) | (0.003) |
| Conservatism | -0.067 | 0.835** | -0.467** | -0.966** | -0.358** | -0.017 | 0.242** | -1.486** | -0.343** | 0.004 |
| | (0.035) | (0.063) | (0.091) | (0.162) | (0.051) | (0.064) | (0.059) | (0.135) | (0.066) | (0.088) |
| Majority | -0.067** | -0.215** | -0.463** | -0.225** | -0.104** | -0.046 | 0.105** | -0.956** | -0.408** | 0.151** |
| | (0.019) | (0.032) | (0.051) | (0.104) | (0.028) | (0.045) | (0.036) | (0.095) | (0.040) | (0.049) |
| Jurisdiction Committee 1 | 0.012 | 0.434** | 0.267** | 0.030 | 0.026 | 0.651** | 0.080 | 0.357** | 0.298** | 0.222** |
| | (0.029) | (0.068) | (0.062) | (0.085) | (0.041) | (0.048) | (0.043) | (0.090) | (0.068) | (0.075) |
| Jurisdiction Committee 2 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.027 | -- | -- | -- | -- | 0.362** |
| | -- | -- | -- | -- | (0.050) | -- | -- | -- | -- | (0.071) |
| Jurisdiction Committee 3 | -- | -- | -- | -- | -0.120** | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| | -- | -- | -- | -- | (0.038) | -- | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Non-Economic Bills | 0.009** | 0.010** | 0.006** | 0.005** | 0.010** | 0.007** | 0.009** | 0.004** | 0.009** | 0.007** |
| | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Lagged DV | 0.001** | -0.018** | 0.011 | 0.275** | 0.008** | 0.008 | -0.051** | 0.069 | -0.019** | 0.022 |
| | (0.000) | (0.005) | (0.021) | (0.036) | (0.002) | (0.009) | (0.009) | (0.043) | (0.009) | (0.024) |
| Intercept | 2.975** | 0.977** | -0.037 | -2.033** | 0.638** | -0.155 | 0.346** | -1.593** | 0.158 | -1.771** |
| | (0.097) | (0.144) | (0.184) | (0.344) | (0.111) | (0.154) | (0.150) | (0.313) | (0.159) | (0.199) |
| N | 1,928 | 1,928 | 1,928 | 1,928 | 1,928 | 1,928 | 1,928 | 1,928 | 1,928 | 1,928 |

Values are negative binomial coefficients, with standard errors clustered by representative in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$

Table 3.2 presents full results for models of bill cosponsorship. Here we see support for the constituency change hypothesis in the form of significant positive effects for all economic legislation, welfare, and both kinds of regulation. However the hypothesis is contradicted by negative effects on trade and foreclosure, and a null effect of change in the foreclosure rate on aid to those facing foreclosure. The ideological solution hypothesis finds more support in models of cosponsorship than in models of sponsorship. More conservative members of the House cosponsor more tax increases, and fewer stimulus, foreclosure aid, welfare, workforce, and research bills. The fact that more conservative representatives cosponsor more miscellaneous regulations contradicts the hypothesis. The cosponsorship models in Table 3.2 also support he committee jurisdiction hypothesis. Members of a committee of jurisdiction are likely to cosponsor more legislation in 8 of the 9 specific areas. There is no effect of committee membership for all economic bills or for other regulation, the two broadest categories. Differences in expected counts of bill sponsorship and cosponsorship are presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Effect of Membership on a committee of Jurisdiction on Expected Count

| | Sponsorship | Cosponsorship |
|---|---|---|
| All Economic | 1.185 | 1.012 |
| Tax Cuts | 3.626 | 1.543 |
| Stimulus | 2.818 | 1.306 |
| Foreclosure | 1.162 | 1.030 |
| Welfare | 1.587 | 0.887 |
| Financial Regulation | 4.284 | 1.917 |
| Non-Financial Regulation | 1.850 | 1.083 |
| Workforce | 3.397 | 1.429 |
| Research | 3.391 | 1.347 |
| Trade | 2.762 | 1.249 |

The substantive effects of changing unemployment rates on bill sponsorship are presented in Figure 3.1, which plots predicted counts of introduced bills across the observed range of change in unemployment. Statistically significant relationships are represented by black lines and non-significant relationships are gray. The magnitude of the effects does not appear massive at a glance, with a one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate increasing the average number of introductions of any economic legislation by 0.1, with effects roughly 1/10$^{th}$ the size for legislation employing specific tools. It is important to keep in mind that these are the effects for individual members of Congress. Depending on how many districts are affected, which during the study period was virtually all of them at some point, these effects could translate into substantial changes in the legislative agenda. These results are mostly consistent with the constituency change hypothesis. When a representative's district is affected by an economic problem they adjust their issue priorities, in the form of bill sponsorship, accordingly. Lawmakers whose districts experienced rising unemployment during the recession introduced more economic legislation, particularly legislation that used tax cuts, direct aid to the needy, and regulation to address economic problems.

Figure 3.1: Effect of Unemployment Change on Economic Bill Sponsorship

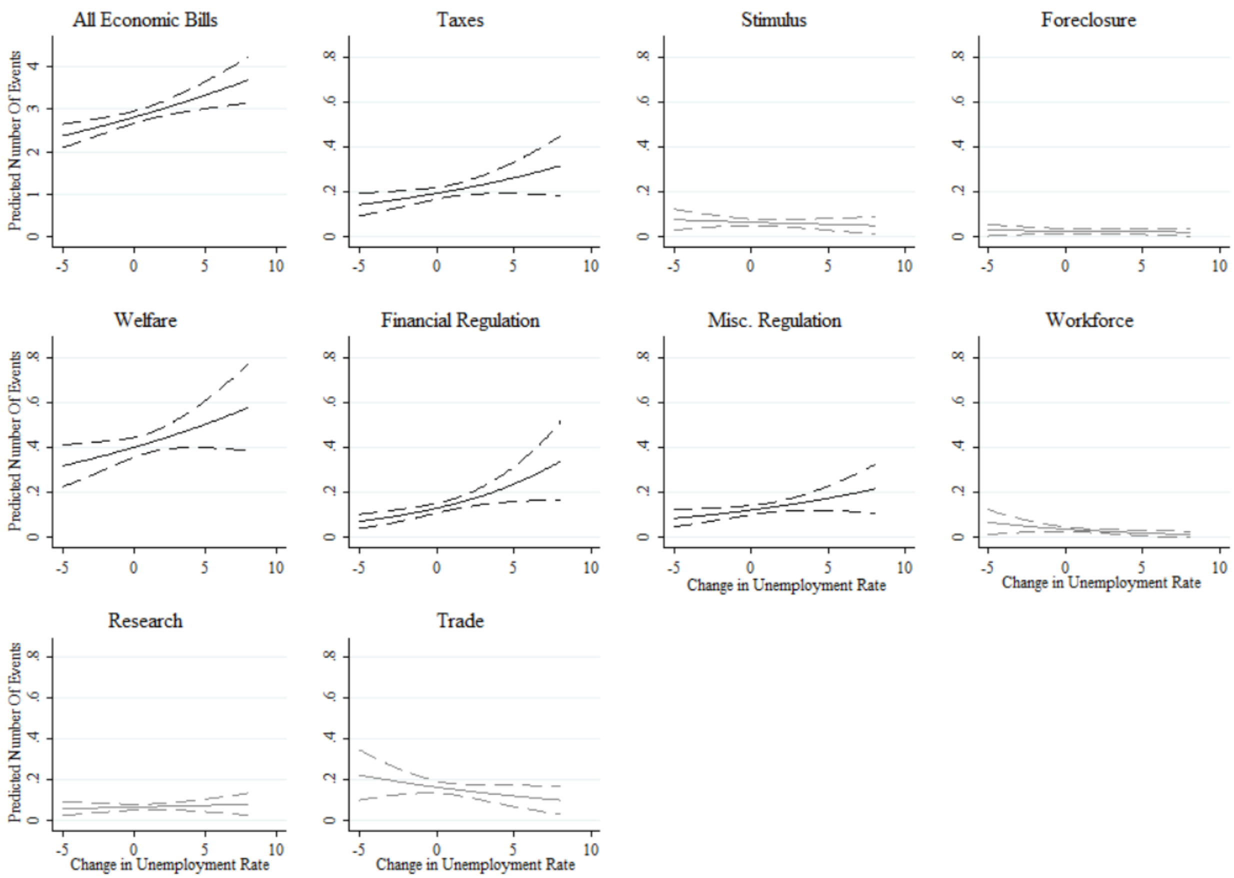



Figure 3.2 presents the effect of change in the unemployment rate on bill cosponsorship, an easier way of demonstrating issue priorities and support for a proposal. For this measure the evidence for the constituency change hypothesis is greater. When unemployment increases in a representative's district they are more likely to cosponsor economic bills generally, tax cuts, financial regulation, other forms of regulation, and are less likely to introduce bills involving trade or foreclosure prevention. Although the effects of changing unemployment affect a somewhat different set of policy tools for cosponsorship than for unemployment, there is ample evidence to support the constituency change hypothesis across models of both behaviors.

Figure 3.2: Effect of Unemployment Change on Bill Cosponsorship

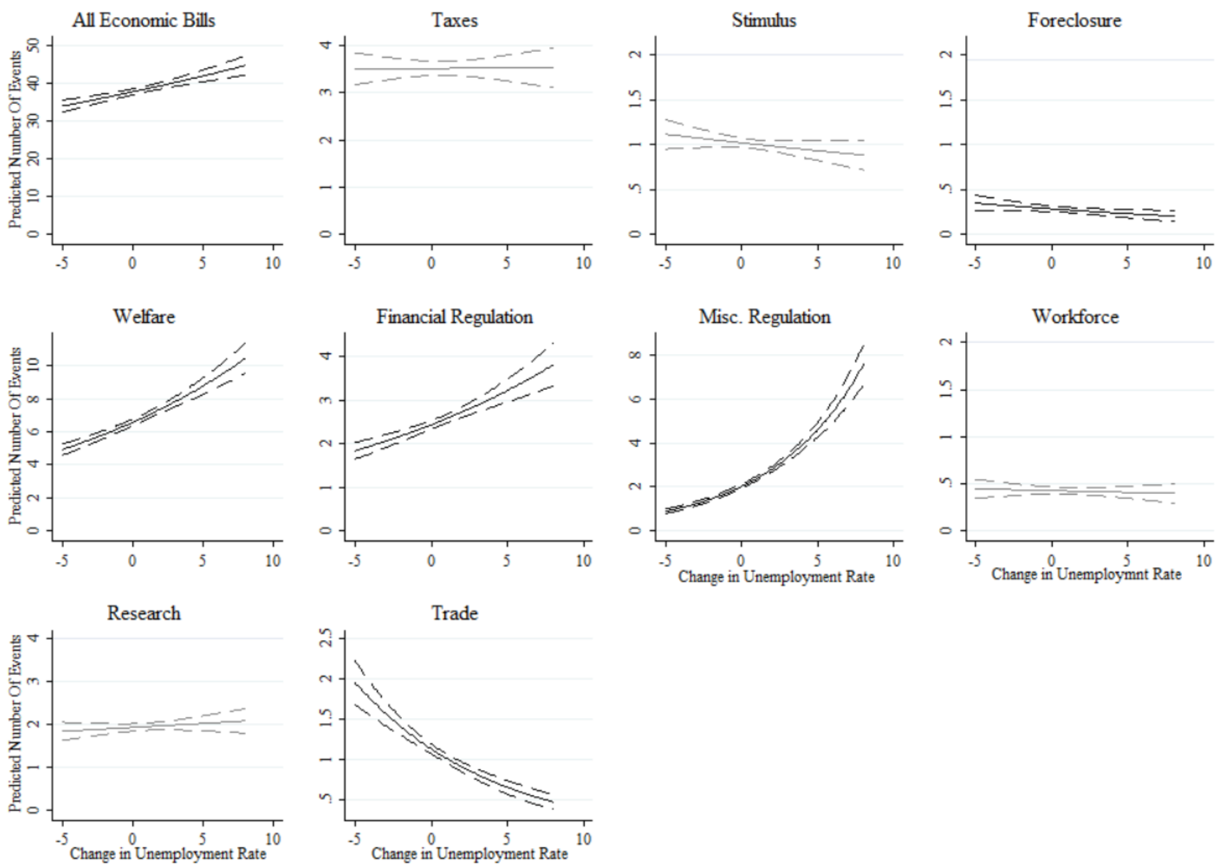
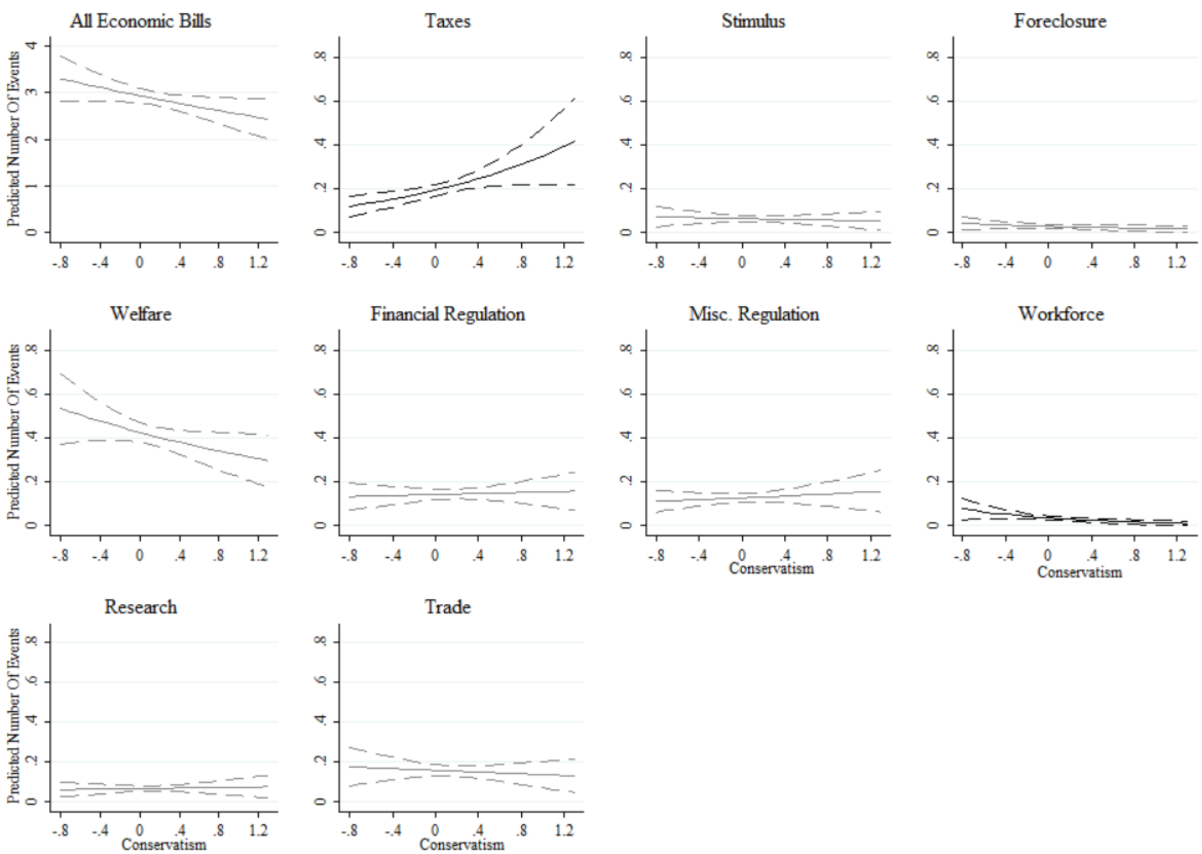



Figure 3.3 presents the predicted number of introductions of each type of bill for individual members of Congress across the range of roll call ideology (measured using the 1st dimension of DW-NOMINATE). The results provide only weak support for the ideological solution hypothesis, showing that the most conservative lawmakers are more than twice as likely to introduce a tax cut than the most liberal representatives, but the probability is still less than 0.5 Conservatives also introduce fewer workforce development bills than do liberals, although the magnitude of the difference is much smaller due to the universally lower rates of introducing bills of this type. There does seem to be an ideological difference in how members of Congress address economic problems judging by a comparison of the content of bills sponsored by

lawmakers across the ideological spectrum.[7] Conservatives are less likely to introduce economic legislation, consistent with their reluctance to intervene at all. When they do introduce economic bills they are more likely to use tax cuts to achieve their goals, and less likely to rely on federal stimulus, direct aid to those in foreclosure, workforce development, and federally funded research. These findings largely support the ideological solution hypothesis, although statistically significant negative effects on welfare and regulation would have been even stronger support.

Figure 3.3: Bill Sponsorship and Ideology

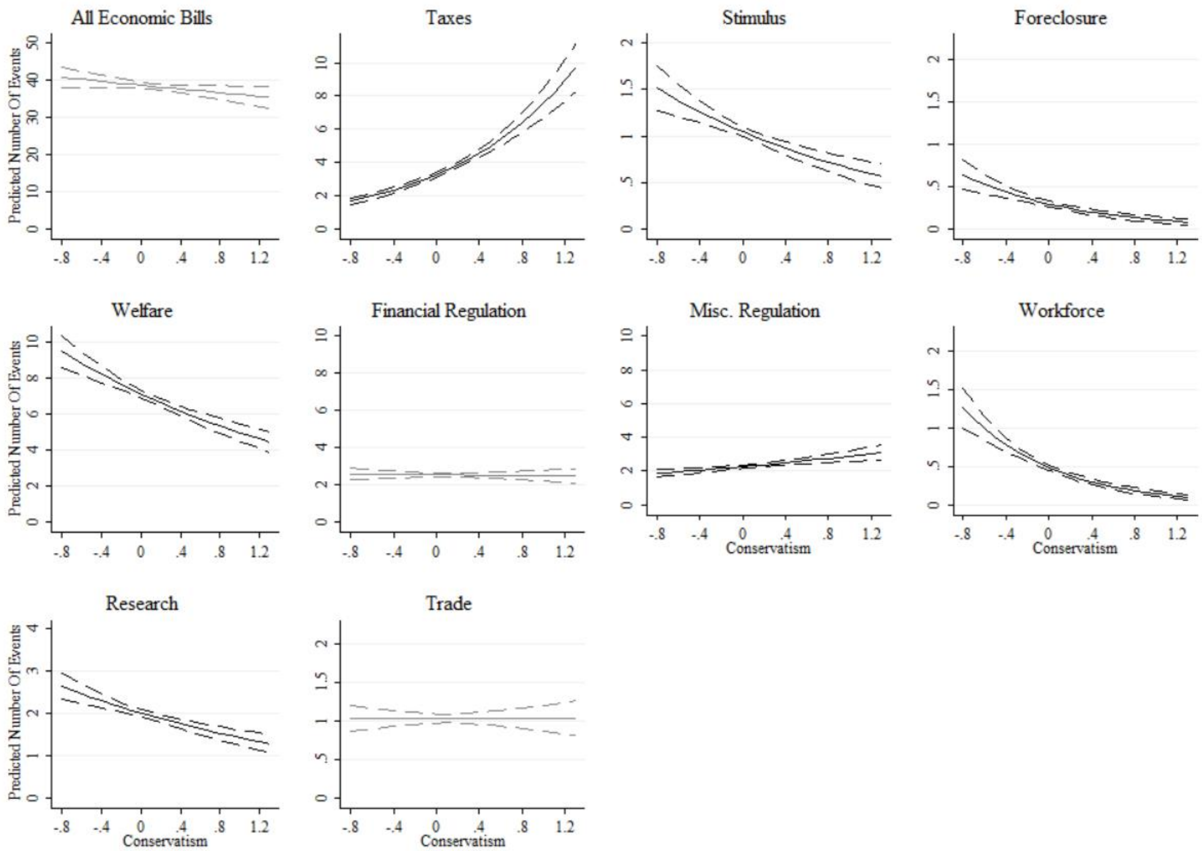



[7] There are descriptive ideological differences in sponsorship of stimulus, foreclosure aid and research.

The results also support the committee jurisdiction hypothesis. In nine out of ten models representatives belonging to at least one of the committees that has jurisdiction over a policy tool are significantly more likely to introduce bills using that policy tool. The only model where this is not the case, the one predicting all forms of direct foreclosure relief, is the one where the lines of committee jurisdiction are less straightforward. Table 3.2 presents the difference in the number of bills using each polity tool between lawmakers who are members of committees of jurisdiction and those who are not. For welfare and trade the values represent the effect of belonging to the Committee on Ways and Means. The other possible committees of jurisdiction included in the models presented in Table 3.1 have no discernable effect. Clearly committee membership is an important factor in which policy tools legislators use to alter economic policy. Representatives introduce, on average, at least one (and often more) bills using a given policy tool if they belong to a committee with jurisdiction over that means of government action. This shows that committee membership not only affects issue priorities, but also influences the choices representatives make about how to address economic policy.

Figure 3.4 plots substantive effects of ideology on patterns of economic cosponsorship. There is more support for the ideological solution hypothesis in cosponsorship, not just in the number of significant coefficients in the expected direction (see Table 3.2) but also in the magnitude of their effects. The most conservative members of the House cosponsor twice as many tax cuts as their most liberal colleagues, but they cosponsor half as many welfare and research bills, and roughly one third as many including stimulus, foreclosure aid, and workforce development.

Figure 3.4: Bill Cosponsorship and Ideology




**Discussion**

This chapter makes two contributions to scholarly understanding of Congress. First, natural, exogenous variation caused by the recession of the late 2000's adds to existing evidence that lawmakers are responsive in their issue priorities by showing that representatives whose districts were more severely affected by worsening unemployment sponsored and cosponsored more economic legislation. When a large number of districts are affected by economic hardship it can result in a substantial change in the legislative agenda, increasing the share of bills devoted to economic issues and showing leadership, interest groups, and the public, the House highly prioritizes these bills. If this micro-level pattern holds for less salient issues than the recession, then the geographic spread of a problem could contribute to its place on the agenda independently of its severity.

Second, classifying bills according to their means of influencing economic policy shows systematic differences in which lawmakers propose what kinds of policy change. Conservatives are more likely to introduce tax cuts, while liberals are more likely to introduce stimulus, direct aid to those facing foreclosure, workforce development, and research funding. Lawmakers are also more likely to introduce and cosponsor policies over which their committee assignment gives them influence regardless of ideology or district conditions.

These findings not only support expectations that ideology and institutional position influence how legislators respond to problems, they also have important implications for agenda and policy dynamics in the U.S. Understanding what the legislature does to respond to a problem likely depends on *where* that problem is located. The ideologies and committee assignments of the representatives whose districts are most affected likely influence the content of proposed solutions and quite possibly the national level response. While this finding is consistent with the distributive idea that districts with the greatest stake in a policy should have disproportionate influence, the durability of many laws written in response to problems of the day may grant lasting influence to the geography of those problems.

**Appendix 3A**

Table 3.1A: Policy Tool Introductions

| Policy Tool | Number of Bills | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min | Max | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trade | 2,362 | 0.76 | 3.41 | 0 | 57 | 3101 |
| Welfare | 1,364 | 0.44 | 0.94 | 0 | 14 | 3101 |
| Tax Cuts | 701 | 0.23 | 0.60 | 0 | 7 | 3101 |
| Financial Regulation | 560 | 0.18 | 0.57 | 0 | 7 | 3101 |
| Other Regulation | 472 | 0.15 | 0.46 | 0 | 4 | 3101 |
| Research and Development | 232 | 0.07 | 0.31 | 0 | 4 | 3101 |
| Stimulus | 226 | 0.07 | 0.32 | 0 | 6 | 3101 |
| Workforce | 117 | 0.04 | 0.20 | 0 | 3 | 3101 |
| Foreclosure Prevention | 110 | 0.04 | 0.20 | 0 | 2 | 3101 |

Table 3.2A: Committees of Jurisdiction

| Bill Type | Committee |
|---|---|
| All Economic | Any Economic Committee |
| Taxes | Ways and Means |
| Stimulus | Transportation |
| Foreclosure | Economic Committee |
| Welfare | Ways and Means |
| | Education and Labor |
| | Energy and Commerce |
| Financial Regulation | Financial Services |
| Non-Financial Regulation | Economic Committee |
| Workforce | Education and Labor |
| Research | Science |
| Trade | Foreign Affairs |
| | Ways and Means |

Economic Committees: Appropriations, Financial Services, Agriculture, Budget, Energy and Commerce, Education and Labor, Natural Resources, Ways and Means

# Chapter 4

## Economic Bill Success in Response to Crisis

In the previous chapter we saw that members of Congress whose districts experience worsening economic conditions become more active in introducing and cosponsoring economic legislation as a way to address constituents' needs, stake unique positions on a salient issue, and claim credit for legislative activity. In this chapter we will see how these patterns of dyadic responsiveness influence which bills actually emerge from committee and pass the House, asking whether constituency level change influences legislative success in addition to legislative priorities. The findings also make it possible to evaluate the importance of lawmakers' issue agendas. The most direct way to answer the question of whether responsiveness in legislators' priorities matters for policy representation is to measure the extent to which changes in lawmaker agendas influence which bills pass. The study also informs a larger puzzle on legislative success, helping to explain why some bills are more likely to pass than others.

In this chapter I use a dataset of all bills originating in the House of Representatives between 2006 and 2011 with information on their progress through the legislature, characteristics of the bills, and characteristics of their sponsors and the sponsors' districts, to test whether the factors that influence bill sponsorship also influence bill passage. By estimating the effect of the number of cosponsors on passage it also evaluates the significance of the other indicator of legislative priorities examined in chapter 3. The analysis presented here contributes to our understanding of legislative success, address an important question about whether success is responsive to constituents, and provide an important test of whether district level variation in economic problems influences policy outcomes in Congress.

Studying lawmaking during a crisis is particularly important for understanding policy and institutional change because it is during such events that the most significant shifts in public policy take place. Crises often lead to punctuations in policy dynamics by changing the definitions and salience of issues (Baumgartner and Jones 1993) and aligning perceived problems with political will to create a "policy window" (to borrow a term from Kingdon 1984). Severe crises such as wars and economic depressions can even change the character of government (Bensel 1990; Skowronek 1982). Studying economic bill progress during and after a crisis such as the one experienced by the American economy during the 2007-2009 period contributes to our understanding of the content of policy change during a policy punctuation. Like many crises, the Great Recession prompted a flurry of legislative proposals large and small. In addition to the major initiatives that garnered weeks of national attention there were numerous smaller policies, including narrow tax breaks, local construction projects, and particularistic regulatory adjustments. Studying which of these proposed changes passed, which did not, and how economic conditions in the sponsors' districts influenced bill progress will help scholars of representation and policy change understand how individual representatives responding to unique constituencies contribute to important shifts in economic policy.

I argue that we should expect district level conditions to influence bill success for a variety of reasons, and that whether or not these expectations hold affects the way we can interpret the importance of representatives' responsiveness in their issue agendas. I also test an expectation of heterogeneity in responsiveness based on the demand of constituents for policy representation and institutional opportunities for success. There is some evidence that worsening economic conditions in a district make the sponsor's legislation more likely to pass if it is reported out of committee, but do not affect its chances of being reported in the first place. Bills with more cosponsors are more likely to pass than bills with fewer cosponsors, but the size of the effect is modest. Taken together these findings show that economic change in the sponsor's district increase legislative success after the committee stage and that cosponsorship caused by changes on other lawmakers' districts increases the chances of progressing beyond committee. Other factors unrelated to local economic circumstances, such as the sponsor's position within the institution have a substantively greater effect on the chances of bill passage.

**What Passes the House?**

A large literature examines the characteristics of bills and their sponsors that make passage more likely. While we know a great deal about why some pieces of legislation are more likely than others to pass, we know less about what the pattern of legislative success means for the ability of individual lawmakers responding to their constituencies to influence public policy. In this chapter I analyze passage of economic bills from 2006 to 2011 to see if conditions in the sponsor's district influence passage and also to assess the degree to which lawmakers' responsiveness in their issue priorities makes them able to influence the direction of policy. The literature has identified two major reasons that bills are reported from committee and eventually pass the House. The first is that a bill passes the House if it has to. Legislation is much more likely to pass if it deals with a compulsory issue, is a renewal/reauthorization of an essential program (Adler and Wilkerson 2012; Walker 1977), or if it affects a salient issue (Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003). Adler and Wilkerson argue that even during periods of gridlock, Congress is usually able to pass legislation required to keep government running and to address immediate problems. Non-controversial minor and commemorative bills are also more likely to pass than bills that are substantively important, but not compulsory.

Second, bills are more likely to pass if the sponsor is a more effective lawmaker, either because of personal qualities or because she has some institutional advantage. There is an ongoing debate over the meaning of legislative effectiveness and how it should be measured (see Adler and Wilkerson 2012; Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Cox and Terry 2008; Matthews 1960; Olson and Nonidez 1972; Volden and Wiseman 2014), but there are some common findings about what kinds of lawmakers are more likely to sponsor legislation that passes. Spatial models predict that ideological proximity to the chamber median increases a lawmaker's ability to pass desired legislation (Black 1948; Downs 1957; Krebhiel 1991; 1998), and partisan cartel theorists expect that proximity to the majority party median and membership in the majority party promote success (Cox and McCubbins 1993; 2005). Models emphasizing the gatekeeping power of committees predict that membership in a committee of jurisdiction is similarly important (Denzau and Mackay 1983; Shepsle and Weingast 1994; Weingast and Marshall 1988). All of these expectations find at least some support in the research on bill passage. The sponsor's proximity to the chamber median, membership in the majority party, membership and/or leadership in a committee of jurisdiction and tenure increase the chances of bill passage (Adler and Wilkerson 2012; Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Cox and Terry 2008; Hasecke and Mycoff 2007; Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Krutz 2005; Miquel and Snyder 2006). Legislators' entrepreneurial activities also likely increase their effectiveness (Frantzich 1979; Krutz 2005; Weissert 1991). Other personal characteristics are also related to the success of proposals, such as race (Bratton and Haynie 1999), gender (Jeydel and Taylor 2003), and professional background (Volden and Wiseman 2014), with more experienced legislators being more effective than the average representative, mixed results for women, and evidence that African Americans are less successful at passing legislation because they are concentrated disproportionately in the liberal wing of the Democratic Party (Volden and Wiseman 2014), a position that limits black representatives' strategic options (what Frymer 1999 labels "minority capture").

All else equal we know a great deal about what kinds of lawmakers are more likely to introduce bills that make progress through the House. Scholars of the U.S. Congress do not, however, know whether the needs of the sponsor's district influence the chances that a bill will be reported out of committee and pass on the House floor. This question is a particularly important addition to the literature on dyadic representation. Whether lawmakers shift their legislative priorities in response to the demands of their constituencies only matters for public policy if these behavioral changes alter the content of public law. While introducing bills may serve a variety of purposes even if they are not passed, such as position taking (Rocca and Gordon 2010) and credit claiming (Mayhew 1974; Messing, Grimmer, and Westwood 2015), the most consequential possible result of sponsorship is enactment.

The small, but growing, literature on legislative success largely ignores the relationship between district needs and individual bills, focusing instead on institutional position and personal characteristics as overall predictors of legislative success. Analyzing legislative success at the level of individual bills makes it possible to control for lawmaker and constituency level factors, bill characteristics, and to test for interactions between bill and sponsor characteristics. In the previous chapter we saw that economic hardship at the district level leads to increased sponsorship of economic legislation, with variation by ideology and the type of policy. Here I will examine whether the influence of district conditions stops after bill introduction or influences the chances of success in various stages of the legislative process.

The congressional literature offers a variety of reasons to expect bills sponsored by representatives whose districts have a greater material stake in passage to succeed in the House. By institutional design and established norms the House defers on policy decisions to representatives whose districts are most affected. The structure of the committee system exists for precisely this reason (Denzau and Mackay 1983; Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988). Committees consist of demand outliers (Adler and Lapinski 1997) who monopolize, at least in the textbook version of bill passage, the agenda on policy under the committee's jurisdiction. In keeping with the practice of protecting members' electoral prospects by allowing them to tend to constituents' needs it could be that when constructing the floor agenda party leaders defer or give greater consideration to the proposals of lawmakers whose districts are disproportionately affected by the policy in question. In the case of the 2009 recession they may have treated the proposals of representatives whose districts were hit the hardest more favorably than the proposals of lawmakers whose districts were relatively less effected. On the other hand, because the recession was such a severe, salient national problem the leadership might have nationalized the response rather than defer to the most affected constituencies. For that reason, this study poses a hard test of whether the chances of a bill passing are affected by conditions in the sponsor's district.

Another reason that bills sponsored by representatives whose districts are more in need of the policy might be more successful has to do with the behavior of the sponsors. Members of Congress want to communicate to voters back home that they are working hard to pass legislation that would benefit them (Fenno 1978; Mayhew 1974; Messing, Grimmer, and

Westwood 2015), which leads them to participate more on issues that are particularly salient to their constituents (Hall 1996; Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010; Sulkin 2005, 2011). Credit claiming on an issue that voters care about is more believable the farther sponsored pieces of legislation advance, and is especially credible if the representative's bills pass and are enacted into law. The greater a district's demand for a particular problem to be addressed, the greater the payoffs of addressing it and the political dangers of failing to do so. Given these pressures, members of Congress whose districts have a material need for a given policy should not only introduce more legislation on that policy (as we examined in the previous chapter), but also should put more effort into helping their legislation clear institutional hurdles and move towards eventual passage and enactment.

During the 2007-2009 recession economic policy was salient nationwide, and the legislative response was largely nationalized, with the highest levels of party leadership arguing and (occasionally) bargaining over key recovery measures and economic reforms. At the same time, the effects of the recession on local conditions varied tremendously across the country, with some districts experiencing far worse conditions than the national average, and some barely registering a difference in local employment and housing conditions. The salience of the problem presents a hard test for the effects of these local differences because the most significant responses were coordinated by the national parties. The most high profile legislation was far from the only economic legislation introduced during the study period. Over 8,000 economic bills were introduced, the vast majority of which received little, if any, national attention. It is entirely possible that, despite the salience of the national economy, local conditions influence the effort individual representatives put into passing narrower pieces of legislation. If so then representatives of districts with greater need for economic assistance will be more successful at passing economic policy.

*Constituency Need Hypothesis*: Economic bills sponsored by representatives whose districts experience greater increases in unemployment and foreclosure are more likely to be reported and pass than economic bills sponsored by representatives whose districts experience lower increases in unemployment and foreclosure.

Research on representation has long acknowledged that representatives can take on a number of roles, only one of which involves matching policy-making behaviors to constituent preferences (Eulau et al. 1959; Eulau and Karps 1977). To the extent that constituencies vary in their preferences for the role of the representative, and to the extent that representatives are aware of these preferences, the amount of effort a lawmaker puts in to actually making laws should vary depending on how much her constituents desire this type of representation. Recent investigations of the demand side of representation find systematic differences in constituent preferences for policy representation (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Harden 2013, 2015), specifically that affluent, white voters are more likely to prefer policy representation over allocation and distribution, and that legislators' level of policy activity reflects the demographic makeup of their constituencies. If demographics affect the likelihood that members of Congress will work to pass the legislation they sponsor then they should affect the relationship between economic conditions in the district and bill success.

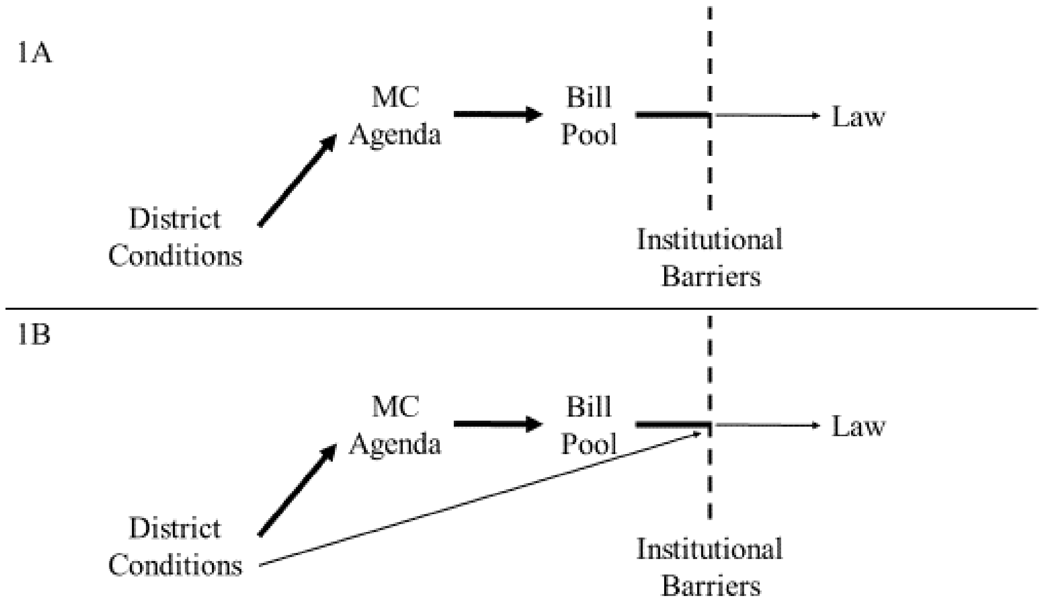
*Policy Demand Hypothesis*: The effect of change in the unemployment or foreclosure rates on bill passage is greater among bills whose sponsor represents an affluent district than among bills whose sponsor represents a less affluent district.

Another factor that could influence the importance of constituency needs is the representative's institutional position. Members of committees of jurisdiction and representatives with leadership positions in the chamber have more opportunities to influence the passage of legislation and will be more effective at advancing their own bills than their colleagues who may be equally motivated but have less influence in the chamber. Members of the committee of jurisdiction can directly influence the gatekeeping decisions on their panels and steer their own legislation to the floor, and members of the majority party can influence the legislative agenda and expect more favorable treatment than members of the minority party. If economic hardship in their districts leads members of Congress to work harder to pass their economic legislation, the effect of the constituency on legislative progress is likely conditioned by the representative's position in the chamber.

*Institutional Position Hypothesis*: The effect of change in the unemployment and foreclosure rate on bill progress is greater among members of Congress who belong to the committee or jurisdiction or hold a leadership position than among members of Congress who do not occupy those institutional positions.

Whether or not conditions in the sponsor's district influence bill success suggests two different relationships between dyadic representation and policy change in the United States. A great deal of research, including the previous chapter, find that conditions in the district influence the issue agendas of individual members of Congress and affect the content of the legislation they sponsor. If district conditions do not also influence bill progress then the relationship between district conditions and policy change is more like the diagram in panel A of Figure 4.1. Economic conditions in the district influence the issue agendas of individual members of Congress, which influence the pool of bill proposed. These bills are then filtered through the legislative process according to the preferences of party and committee leaders, with a select few passing the institutional gatekeepers to become law. A null result for unemployment and foreclosure rates on bill progress (and null findings for all three hypotheses) would be consistent with this model. If instead economic conditions in the sponsor's district influences the progress of a piece of legislation then the relationship between dyadic representation and policy change is better reflected in Figure 4.1 panel B. In this model district conditions not only influence the pool of bills introduced via individual lawmakers' agendas, but also by influencing the chances of bills clearing successive institutional barriers on the way to becoming law (or at least being sent to the Senate).

Figure 4.1: Two Models of Constituency Influence




An analysis of the relationship between constituency conditions and bill passage is an important addition to the voluminous literature on dyadic representation. The empirical and normative literature on representation is full of arguments that the preferences, actual or potential, of individual voters and districts should be represented in legislatures. Theorists assert that voter power is a necessary condition for democratic representation (Dahl 1956; Key 1964; Mansbridge 2003; Pitkin 1967).[8] As soon as reliable studies of dyadic representation became

[8] Mansbridge includes this criterion in two, possibly three of her four types of representation. Promissory and anticipatory representation include an explicit role for voter preferences in creating public policy. Gyroscopic representation includes voter power in the "quality of deliberation" in the political system, but not directly over policy outcomes.

possible (with Miller and Stokes 1963), an empirical research agenda on representation formed that is overwhelmingly preoccupied with evaluating public influence over policy making (see Burstein 2003 for a review). This research is motivated by the expectation that in a democracy public opinion, writ large, should drive public policy, and characterized by a debate over the extent to which this is true. There is less study of the relationship between the representation of individual constituencies, as defined by U.S. legislative institutions, and policy change. The dyadic literature assumes that if individual representatives are "representing" then constituents have a voice. The collective representation literature says little about dyadic relationships except to assume that collective representation is the sum total of the actions of responsive lawmakers (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002; Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Wlezien 1995), with policy change representing some average of preferences. However there is little evidence showing whether or not this is the case. There are few studies of whether and under what conditions micro responsiveness matters for macro outcomes, and those that exist are framed as studies of committee (Denzau and Mackay 1983; to an extent Hall 1996; Shepsle and Weingast 1994), party (Aldrich and Rohde 2000; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Schickler and Rich 1997), or veto player power (Krehbiel 1998) and are not connected explicitly to dyadic responsiveness. Furthermore, a great deal of the literature on legislative organization, emphasizing the power of gatekeepers, agenda setters, veto players, and procedural cartels, would suggest that dyadic responsiveness does not usually affect policy except through the few key actors that have power over a decision. Studies of whether success is responsive complete the narrative tested by the dyadic literature, asking whether responsiveness in issue priorities on the part of individual lawmakers actually affects the law. It also adds to the literature on collective representation by shedding light on how individual lawmakers' actions are aggregated.

**Economic Bills, Sponsor Characteristics, and Conditions in the Sponsor's District**

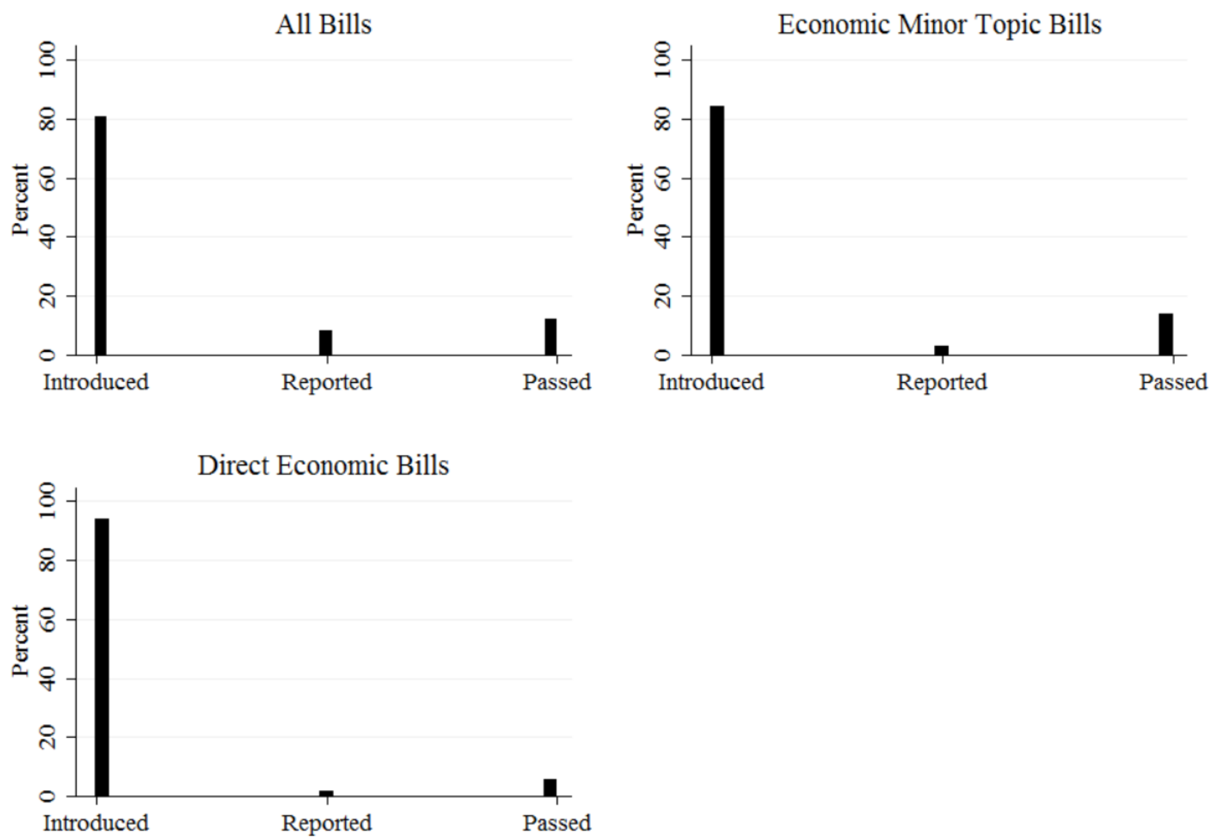
To identify all economic bills proposed during the economic crisis I use data on all bills originating in the House of Representatives between 2006 and 2011 from the Congressional Bills Project. The Congressional Bills data includes major (general) and minor (specific) policy codes from the Policy Agendas Project (PAP), as well as bill summaries from the Congressional Research Service (CRS) and links to additional information. These bills were coded in two different ways. First, I identified all Policy Agendas minor topics that are related to economic policy, including taxes, regulation, domestic spending, trade, and energy (see Appendix 4A for a complete list). Second, I coded each bill according to whether it included direct intervention in the economy and the means of achieving its policy goal based on the summaries provided by the CRS, for example through cutting taxes, federal grants for research etc. Bills only receive one of the latter codes if their content made it clear that they were intended to have some direct effect on the economy. Many bills that are coded as economic using PAP codes do not receive a code in this latter scheme. For example some bills coded by PAP as relating to taxes do not include a tax cut, but instead change procedures for the IRS (see ch. 3 for a more thorough discussion of the coding). This second class of codes is reserved for bills with a concrete effect on private actors in the economy. Additionally a handful of bills that were not coded as economic based on their PAP minor topics were found to be related to economic policy using the second coding framework. Out of 17,259 House bills introduced during the study period, 40% (6,910 bills) had minor topics related to economic policy. There was the most economic activity in 2010 when 47% of bills were economic. Using the codes based on concrete economic effects 4,199 (or 24.3%) of all bills were directly aimed influencing economic conditions.

Data on the progress of each bill come from the Legislative Actions data are provided by Legislative Explorer and the Center for American Politics and Public Policy. Using the legislative actions data bills were coded according to progress they made towards passage, with the most significant steps being whether or not the bill was reported from committee and passed the House. Most bills never move beyond committee, and most that are reported out of committee go on to pass the House. Whether or not each bill was reported out of committee and passed the House are the dependent variables in this chapter. The key independent variables are changes in the unemployment and foreclosure rates, as well as the levels of unemployment and foreclosure, from the U.S. Census and aggregated from RealtyTrac respectively. The moderating variable for the policy demand hypothesis is the percentage of the district's population with a college degree from the U.S. Census Bureau. Data on committee assignments provided by Charles Stewart III[9] make it possible to test the institutional position hypothesis.

Figure 4.2 reports the percentages of all bills, bills with economic minor topics, and bills that actively intervene in the economy that were introduced but never reported out of committee, were reported by their committee but never passed, and that passed the House. Economic bills make slightly less progress than non-economic bills over the whole time period, but those economic bills that were reported by their committees of referral were very likely to pass, as evidenced by the fact that more of each coding of economic bills passed than were reported but failed to pass.

[9] http://web.mit.edu/17.251/www/data_page.html

Figure 4.2: Furthest Progress by Bill Type




How do bills reported and passed compare to all bills introduced in the economic conditions of sponsors' districts? Table 4.1 reports the mean unemployment and foreclosure rates for bills in each category that were introduced, reported, and passed. The significance tests are for a two-tailed t-test of the difference of means between bills that made it through each stage of the process and those that did not. For example the first cell in the middle column reports that average change in the unemployment rate of the sponsor's district was 0.929 for all bills reported out of their committee, and that the difference in change in the unemployment rate for all reported bills is statistically distinguishable from the mean change in unemployment for bills that were introduced but not reported (Note: The significance test is not comparing the values in the cells. The first cell in the first column reports the average of all bills introduced, even if they were reported from committee or passed).

Table 4.1: Economic Change across Bill Type and Progress

| | | Introduced | Reported | Passed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economic Bills | Unemployment Change | 0.825 | 0.754 | 0.815** |
| | Foreclosure Change | 0.028 | 0.041 | 0.054** |
| Economic Actions | Unemployment Change | 0.603 | 0.931** | 0.984 |
| | Foreclosure Change | 0.033 | 0.006 | 0.008 |
| Non-Economic Bills | Unemployment Change | 0.766 | 0.750 | 0.769 |
| | Foreclosure Change | 0.034 | 0.057** | 0.067** |

** $p < 0.05$ on a two tailed t-test of the difference between the mean conditions of bills that cleared each stage of the legislative process and those that did not.

There is some evidence that descriptively economic bills progress further in the legislative process if their sponsor's district experienced worsening economic conditions. Bills with economic minor topic codes that passed had sponsors whose districts experienced greater increases in unemployment and foreclosure than those bills that were introduced or reported but failed to pass. Bills that contained one of the direct intervention in the economy coded in the previous chapter and were reported out of committee were sponsored by lawmakers whose districts saw greater increases in unemployment, but there is no statistically discernable difference for passage and no pattern of success across changes in the foreclosure rate. For comparison I tested for a difference in economic change across progress for bills that are not related to economic policy. We would expect the progress of such bills to be unrelated to economic conditions. This is indeed what we see for changes in the unemployment rate, but more successful non-economic bills were sponsored by representatives of districts with larger increases in the foreclosure rate.

I control for other district, lawmaker, and bill characteristics. *Electoral Vulnerability* is the other party's share of the district-level, two-party presidential vote. Presidential vote shares are used instead of the vote for the House incumbent because they are a more accurate reflection of the underlying partisanship of the district (Griffin 2006) and they avoid the measurement error/selection bias that result from using/excluding vote shares in uncontested races. More electorally vulnerable members of Congress have a greater incentive to respond to district needs (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001a), and to be provided with credit claiming opportunities by their party leaders (Volden and Wiseman 2014). Having described dependent and key independent variables we now turn to a careful examination of the relationship between them. *Pct. College Grad* is the percentage of district residents with at least a bachelors' degree. There is evidence that more educated, higher socio-economic status voters prefer policy representation over other forms (Harden 2013), so it is possible that representatives of more educated districts will put more effort into passing the legislation that they sponsor. Education is used instead of poverty or income, also associated with preferences for policy representation, because unlike those economic factors, education is exogenous to unemployment and foreclosure.

Sponsor characteristics controlled for in the model are majority party membership, position as a leader (chair or ranking member) of any committee, membership on a committee to which the bill was referred, seniority, extremism, and legislative activity. Majority party membership, committee leadership, membership in a committee of referral (all dummy variables) and seniority (the number of terms served in the House) all provide increased opportunities to influence legislation and should increase the chances of legislation being reported out of committee and passing the chamber (Adler and Wilkerson 2012; Volden and

Wiseman 2014). Extremism is the sponsor's ideological distance from the chamber median using first dimension DW-NOMINATE scores. Bills sponsored by more extreme representatives, because they are further from the median voter (Downs 1957), should be less likely to progress beyond committee or pass. Legislative activity is the total number of bills introduced by the sponsor in the same congressional term. Some evidence suggests that lawmakers who sponsor more bills tend to have greater success at passing those bills (Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Frantzich 1979; Hasecke and Mycoff 2007), but another prominent bill-level analysis finds the opposite to be true (Adler and Wilkerson 2012).

Two bill-level characteristics are also included as controls. A dummy variable for whether a bill is minor (as defined by the Congressional Bills Project, minor bills including the naming of federal buildings and post offices, land transfers) because the unimportant, non-controversial nature of the legislation makes it more likely to pass. Having more cosponsors also makes a bill more likely to pass because substantial cosponsorship often reflects the quality of the legislation and signals to leadership that it has wide support among the party or chamber (Koger 2003). Controlling for the above factors is necessary to the extent that any of them are correlated with economic conditions and economic changes in the district.

**Analysis of Bill Progress**

Bill progress is modeled using multilevel logistic regression. Members of Congress usually sponsor multiple bills in a term, so bills are nested within sponsors. Multilevel models make it possible to include sponsor-level variables with more accurate standard errors around the estimated effects. I model two key outcomes for legislative progress: whether each bill is reported from committee and whether it passes the House. Making it through committee, which the overwhelming majority of legislation must do before being considered on the floor, is the most difficult hurdle between introduction and passage in the House. Only 13% of bills introduced during the study period were reported out of committee, but of those nearly 88% were passed by the House. Understanding which bills progress beyond this stage and which do not is a crucial aspect of bill success. The second outcome is passage on the floor, the substantively most important stage because it is the final step that sends bills to the Senate (all bills analyzed originate in the House), at which point the ability of individual members of the House to directly influence progress becomes much more limited. All models of bill passage only include those bills that were reported out of committee. Tables 4.2-4.4 present tests of each of the three hypotheses.

Table 4.2 presents models testing the *constituency response hypothesis*. These models use changes and levels of the unemployment and foreclosure rates, as well as controls discussed above to predict whether a bill is reported out of committee (2.A) and passes the House (2.B). The findings for this hypothesis are mixed, and overall do not lead to the conclusion that worsening conditions in the sponsor's district increase the chances that a bill will be passed. When the unemployment rate increases in a lawmaker's district, her bills are more likely to pass the chamber if they are reported out of committee, but they face no better odds of being reported than other legislation. Representatives of districts with higher levels of unemployment (regardless of whether the levels are increasing or decreasing) are less likely to move their proposals through the committee or have them passed on the floor. Part of the cause for this could be that voters in worse economic circumstances tend to prefer that their representatives focus on distribution and allocation instead of policy representation (Griffin and Flavin 2011; Harden 2013). Foreclosures do not appear to affect bill progress.

The effects of controls are broadly consistent with the literature. Bills sponsored by more vulnerable representatives are more likely to make it through committee, but less likely to pass on the floor, and bills sponsored by members of the majority party, committee leaders, members of the committee of referral, and more senior lawmakers are more likely to be reported out of committee by experience no better, or even worse, odds of being passed than other reported legislation. Bills sponsored by more active lawmakers are less likely to be reported, but bills with more cosponsors have better than average chances. Minor bills are also more likely to be both reported and passed.

Table 4.2: Constituency Response Hypothesis

| | Reported | Passed |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Change | 0.028 | 0.124** |
| | (0.025) | (0.057) |
| Foreclosure Change | -0.148 | 0.277 |
| | (0.129) | (0.324) |
| Unemployment Rate | -0.053** | -0.110** |
| | (0.022) | (0.045) |
| Foreclosure Rate | -0.065 | 0.184 |
| | (0.095) | (0.190) |
| Electoral Vulnerability | 0.012** | -0.022** |
| | (0.005) | (0.010) |
| Pct. College Grad | -0.007 | -0.015 |
| | (0.006) | (0.011) |
| Majority | 1.067** | -0.956 |
| | (0.265) | (0.564) |
| Committee Leader | 1.232** | -0.066 |
| | (0.176) | (0.302) |
| Committee Member | 1.318** | -0.447 |
| | (0.099) | (0.274) |
| Seniority | 0.047** | -0.015 |
| | (0.013) | (0.023) |
| Extremism | 0.121 | -0.900 |
| | (0.404) | (0.778) |
| Legislative Activity | -0.016** | 0.008 |
| | (0.006) | (0.012) |
| Log(Cosponsors) | 0.277** | 0.033 |
| | (0.030) | (0.067) |
| Minor Bill | 2.824** | 2.444** |
| | (0.147) | (0.522) |
| Intercept | -3.297** | 5.397** |
| | (0.582) | (1.250) |
| Sponsor-Level ($\sigma^2$) | 0.395** | 0.123 |
| | (0.083) | (0.238) |
| N | 8,350 | 1,105 |
| Wald $\chi^2$ | 1012.28** | 90.98** |
| LR test vs. Pooled Model | 63.86** | 0.31 |

All models are logit with a random intercept for the bill sponsor. Values are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$

Figure 4.3 shows the substantive effect of change in the unemployment rate on the probability that a bill reported by a committee will also pass the House. While a majority of bills that make it out of committee end up being passed by the chamber, among the economic bills analyzed here, those sponsored by representatives whose districts experienced increases in unemployment of 3 to 4 percent were 10 percentage points more likely to pass than those sponsored by representatives of districts where unemployment decreased by 3 or 4 percentage points.

Figure 4.3: Effect of Unemployment Change on Probability of Passage

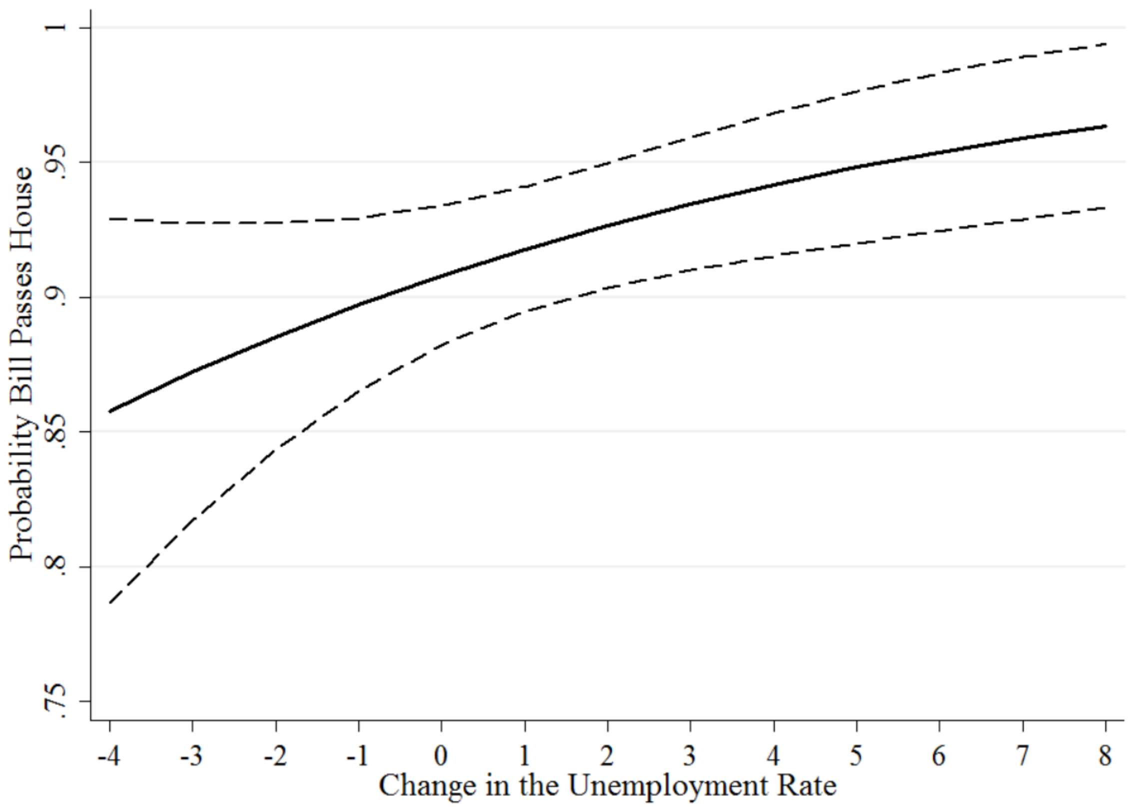



Figure 4.4 plots the predicted probability of a bill being reported from committee as the number of cosponsors increases. Because most bills have no, or very few cosponsors but there are a handful of outliers with hundreds of cosponsors the number of cosponsors is logged in all

models presented, and the spacing on the x-axis in figure 4.4 reflects the spacing of those values on the logarithmic scale. The range presented encompasses 97 percent of the data. Although impossible to attribute causation to cosponsorship which depends on many unobserved characteristics of the bills in question, legislation with more cosponsors is more likely to clear the committee stage. Bills with one cosponsor are almost one percent more likely to be reported than bills with no cosponsors. Bills with 10 cosponsors have an almost seven percent chance of being reported, and bills with 100 cosponsors have an almost 12 percent chance, more than double the probability of a bill with no cosponsors. If this change in the predicted probability represents an independent effect of cosponsorship it is evidence that lawmakers are more likely to collaborate when their districts face similar economic conditions. While the difference in bills' chances of being reported across the presented range of cosponsors is substantial, the median number of cosponsors for economic legislation is three, so the effect of cosponsorship should be viewed as modest.

Figure 4.4: Cosponsorship and Reporting from Committee

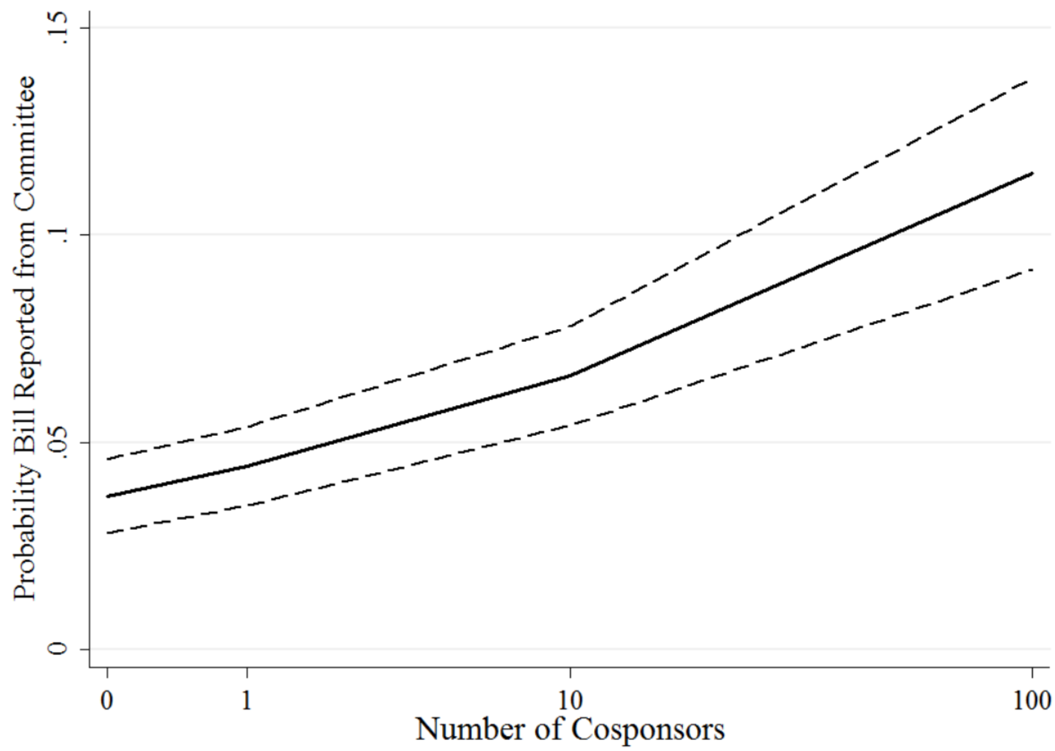



Table 4.3 presents models testing the *policy demand hypothesis*, finding no support for it at either stage of the legislative process. These models are identical to those presented in Table 4.2, except that they include an interaction between change in the unemployment rate and the percentage of the district with a college education.[10] The insignificant interaction term indicates that the effect of change in the unemployment rate does not differ between the least and most educated districts. More educated voters may indeed prioritize policy representation, but this analysis does not provide evidence that the effect of economic hardship on passage is greater for bills sponsored by representatives of educated districts.

[10] Other models interacting change in the foreclosure rate with education level also provided no support for this hypothesis.

Table 4.3: Policy Demand Hypothesis

| | Reported | Passed |
|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Change | -0.011 | 0.123 |
| | (0.062) | (0.136) |
| Foreclosure Change | -0.149 | 0.277 |
| | (0.129) | (0.324) |
| Unemployment Rate | -0.053** | -0.110** |
| | (0.022) | (0.045) |
| Foreclosure Rate | -0.061 | 0.184 |
| | (0.095) | (0.190) |
| Electoral Vulnerability | 0.013** | -0.022** |
| | (0.005) | (0.010) |
| Pct. College Grad | -0.009 | -0.015 |
| | (0.006) | (0.011) |
| Majority | 1.069** | -0.956 |
| | (0.265) | (0.564) |
| Committee Leader | 1.227** | -0.066 |
| | (0.177) | (0.303) |
| Committee Member | 1.318** | -0.447 |
| | (0.099) | (0.274) |
| Seniority | 0.047** | -0.015 |
| | (0.013) | (0.023) |
| Extremism | 0.124 | -0.900 |
| | (0.404) | (0.778) |
| Legislative Activity | -0.016** | 0.008 |
| | (0.006) | (0.012) |
| Log(Cosponsors) | 0.276** | 0.033 |
| | (0.030) | (0.067) |
| Minor Bill | 2.820 | 2.444** |
| | (0.147)** | (0.522) |
| Unemployment Change X Pct. College Grad | 0.001 | 0.000 |
| | (0.002) | (0.004) |
| Intercept | -3.273** | 5.397** |
| | (0.583) | (1.252) |
| Sponsor-Level ($\sigma^2$) | 0.396** | 0.123 |
| | (0.084) | (0.238) |
| N | 8,350 | 1,105 |
| Wald $\chi^2$ | 1012.24** | 90.98** |
| LR test vs. Pooled Model | 63.91** | 0.31 |

All models are logit with a random intercept for the bill sponsor. Values are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$

The models presented in Table 4.4 test the *institutional position hypothesis*, which fails to find support in any of them. The effect of change in the unemployment rate on bill success only depends on institutional position in model 4.A, but the effects are in the *opposite* of the expected direction. Bills sponsored by members of the majority are more likely to be reported out of committee than bills sponsored by members of the minority party when the district unemployment rate does not change, and bills sponsored by members of the minority party are more likely to be reported if unemployment has increased in the sponsor's district. However as district unemployment increases, bills sponsored by members of the majority are less likely to make it out of committee than they would have been had unemployment not increased. The effect of unemployment change on passage does not depend on majority party membership, nor does the effect differ for either stage of the process depending on whether the sponsor is a member of the committee of jurisdiction.

Table 4.4: Institutional Position Hypothesis

| | Reported | Passed | Reported | Passed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unemployment Change | 0.131** | 0.114 | 0.013 | 0.321** |
| | (0.047) | (0.151) | (0.038) | (0.127) |
| Foreclosure Change | -0.165 | 0.278 | -0.145 | 0.215 |
| | (0.130) | (0.324) | (0.129) | (0.327) |
| Unemployment Rate | -0.048** | -0.111** | -0.053** | -0.110** |
| | (0.022) | (0.046) | (0.022) | (0.045) |
| Foreclosure Rate | -0.071 | 0.184 | -0.065 | 0.185 |
| | (0.094) | (0.191) | (0.095) | (0.190) |
| Electoral Vulnerability | 0.009 | -0.021** | 0.013** | -0.023** |
| | (0.005) | (0.010) | (0.005) | (0.010) |
| Pct. College Grad | -0.007 | -0.015 | -0.007 | -0.015 |
| | (0.006) | (0.011) | (0.006) | (0.011) |
| Majority | 1.041** | -0.962 | 1.066** | -0.988 |
| | (0.263) | (0.571) | (0.265) | (0.561) |
| Committee Leader | 1.228** | -0.065 | 1.234** | -0.091 |
| | (0.175) | (0.302) | (0.176) | (0.301) |
| Committee Member | 1.320** | -0.446 | 1.296** | -0.324 |
| | (0.099) | (0.274) | (0.107) | (0.281) |
| Seniority | 0.049** | -0.015 | 0.047** | -0.011 |
| | (0.013) | (0.023) | (0.013) | (0.023) |
| Extremism | -0.095 | -0.892 | 0.121 | -0.988 |
| | (0.408) | (0.787) | (0.404) | (0.777) |
| Legislative Activity | -0.015** | 0.008 | -0.016** | 0.008 |
| | (0.006) | (0.012) | (0.006) | (0.012) |
| Log(Cosponsors) | 0.278** | 0.033 | 0.277** | 0.037 |
| | (0.030) | (0.068) | (0.030) | (0.067) |
| Minor Bill | 2.821** | 2.443** | 2.823** | 2.461** |
| | (0.147) | (0.523) | (0.147) | (0.525) |
| Unemployment Change | -0.141** | 0.011 | -- | -- |
| X Majority | (0.055) | (0.161) | -- | -- |
| Unemployment Change | -- | -- | 0.024 | -0.243 |
| X Committee Member | -- | -- | (0.045) | (0.137) |
| Intercept | -3.131** | 5.398** | -3.289** | 5.446** |
| | (0.581) | (1.250) | (0.582) | (1.249) |
| Sponsor-Level ($\sigma^2$) | 0.374** | 0.123 | 0.395** | 0.114 |
| | (0.081) | (0.238) | (0.083) | (0.240) |
| N | 8,350 | 1,105 | 8,350 | 1,105 |
| Wald $\chi^2$ | 1018.72** | 91.00** | 1012.49** | 91.75** |
| LR test vs. Pooled Model | 58.42** | 0.31 | 63.85** | 0.26 |

All models are logit with a random intercept for the bill sponsor. Values are logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$

Figure 4.5: Probability of Being Reported Across Change in Unemployment by Party

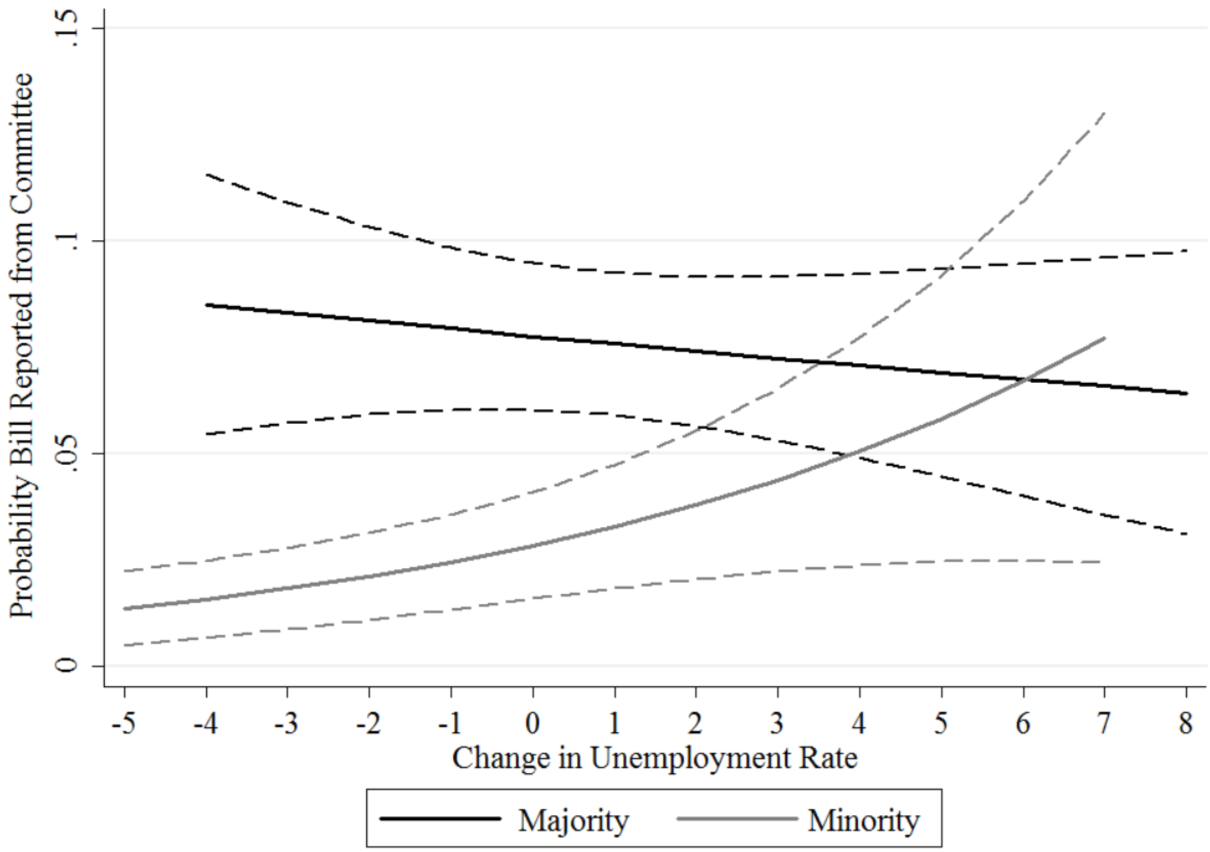



Figure 4.5 shows how the effects of change in the unemployment rate differ between members of the majority and minority parties. The change in the predicted probability that a bill sponsored by a member of the majority is reported from committee appears to decrease slightly across the range of unemployment change, but the slope is not statistically significant. However bills sponsored by members of the minority party are more likely to pass the more unemployment increases in the sponsor's district. Bills sponsored by minority-party representatives whose constituents experienced dramatically improving unemployment rates had only a 2% chance of being reported from committee, if the unemployment rate remained unchanged the chances improve to 3%. If unemployment increased between 3 and 8 percentage

points the minority-party bills have between a 5 to 9 percent chance of being reported, which is statistically indistinguishable from the chances of majority-party bills.

Based on the results of this analysis the effects of change in district-level economic conditions on the chances of bill success are limited. Bills that are reported out of committee and were introduced by representatives of districts experiencing rising unemployment have a better chance of passage than other bills reported by committee, but whose sponsors represent districts not experiencing worsening employment conditions. This finding alone supports the *constituency need hypothesis*, but that hypothesis finds no support at the committee stage or based on the null effect of changes in the foreclosure rate. The results do not support the *policy demand hypothesis*, or the *institutional position hypothesis*. While the effect of worsening economic conditions on bill success does vary between majority and minority sponsored bills, the effect is in the opposite of the expected direction. Majority party status, membership in a committee of referral, and a committee leadership position do directly affect legislative success, but they do not, for the most part, moderate the effect of district-level economic change.

**Discussion**

This chapter has examined the impact of dyadic representation on Congress' response to economic crisis by asking whether, and under what conditions, bills sponsored by lawmakers representing the hardest hit districts are more likely to pass the House. This is a key question because it assesses the substantive importance of lawmakers' responsiveness in their issue agendas. A large body of work, including the previous chapter, finds that members of Congress adapt their issue priorities to changes in their constituencies by, among other things, introducing legislation that addresses pressing issues. Most studies of responsiveness focus on two dimensions, the issue positions and priorities of legislators. This chapter poses a third, issue success and argues that it is useful for evaluating the impact of lawmakers' priorities.

The evidence presented above suggests that district economic conditions have, at most, a limited effect on bill progress and legislative success. Bills sponsored by representatives of districts where unemployment is spiking are more likely to pass the House if they make it through committee, but are no more likely to be reported, and there is no comparable effect for foreclosure rates, another indicator of economic wellbeing. This is more consistent with panel A of Figure 4.1 than it is with panel B. Possible reasons for this are that while lawmakers sponsor bills based on the needs of their constituents, they are either do not work harder to pass those bills than other representatives, or their efforts are unsuccessful. Thus, the primary effect of district economic conditions on legislative outcomes is via their influence on the pool of proposed bills. Once bills are proposed the legislative process does not, for the most part, account for conditions in the sponsor's district.

## Appendix 4A: Policy Agendas Project "Economic" Minor Topics

I code the following policy agenda minor topics as being related to economic policy on the grounds that they involve taxes, government spending, and regulation of a major economic sector or employ large numbers of people.

| PAP Code | Topic | PAP Code | Topic |
|---|---|---|---|
| 100 | General Macroeconomics | 1098 | Transportation Research |
| 101 | Inflation, Prices, Interest | 1205 | Prisons |
| 103 | Unemployment Rate | 1300 | General Social Welfare |
| 104 | Monetary Policy | 1301 | Food Assistance |
| 105 | National Budget | 1302 | Poverty Assistance |
| 107 | Taxes | 1303 | Elderly Assistance |
| 108 | Industrial Policy | 1304 | Assistance for Disabled |
| 110 | Price Control | 1400 | Housing General |
| 400 | General Agriculture | 1401 | Housing and Community Dev. |
| 401 | Agricultural Trade | 1403 | Urban Development |
| 402 | Government Subsidies | 1404 | Rural Housing |
| 404 | Agricultural Marketing | 1405 | Rural Development |
| 408 | Fisheries | 1406 | Low Income Housing |
| 498 | Agricultural Research | 1407 | Veterans Housing |
| 500 | General Labor | 1409 | Homelessness |
| 502 | Employment Training | 1410 | Secondary Mortgage |
| 503 | Employee Benefits | 1500 | Banking and Finance General |
| 505 | Fair Labor Standards | 1501 | U.S. Banking System |
| 506 | Youth Employment | 1502 | Securities and Commodities |
| 600 | General Education | 1504 | Consumer Finance |
| 601 | Higher Education | 1505 | Insurance |
| 604 | Vocational Education | 1507 | Bankruptcy |
| 607 | Educational Excellence | 1521 | Small Business |
| 609 | Arts and Humanities | 1524 | Tourism |
| 698 | Research | 1525 | Consumer Protection |
| 703 | Waste Disposal | 1600 | Defense General |
| 710 | Waterway Conservation | 1609 | Veteran Affairs |
| 798 | Environmental Research | 1610 | Military Procurement |
| 800 | General Energy | 1611 | Military Installations |
| 802 | Electricity | 1616 | DOD Civilian Personnel |
| 803 | Natural Gas and Oil | 1698 | Defense Research |
| 805 | Coal | 1707 | Broadcast Industry Regulation |
| 806 | Alternative Energy | 1798 | Tech Research |
| 807 | Energy Conservation | 1800 | General Trade |
| 898 | Energy Research | 1802 | Trade Negotiations |
| 1000 | General Transportation | 1803 | Export Promotion |
| 1001 | Mass Transit | 1806 | U.S. Competitiveness |
| 1002 | Highway Construction | 1807 | Import Restrictions |
| 1003 | Air Travel | 2008 | Government Property |
| 1005 | Railroads | 2013 | Census |
| 1006 | Automobiles | 2100 | Public Lands General |
| 1007 | Maritime Travel | 2103 | Natural Resources |
| 1010 | Public Works | | |

# Chapter 5

# Conclusion

Two popular, but contradictory, images of congresspersons prevail in the United States. One views them as pandering to constituents and desperately doing whatever it takes to win reelection. Depending on one's point of view this can lead to wasteful spending and irresponsible parties or to democratic representation of the country's diverse interests. The other popular image views lawmakers as committed ideologues who place their party's interests over that of the country, trust their worldview over the opinions of voters, and eschew compromise with other duly elected representatives. This dissertation shows that the truth is somewhere in the middle. By leverage variation in economic change at the congressional district level I have evaluated dyadic responsiveness in issue positions, priorities, and legislative effectiveness, finding more evidence of responsiveness in some cases and more evidence of ideological or partisan behavior in others. Members of Congress often do change their behaviors, including reversing previous policy positions and changing their legislative priorities, in response to changing conditions at the district level, but they are selective in how they do this. Responsiveness is most likely to occur in actions that are less consequential and less challenging to the party leadership's control over the legislative agenda. The studies reported above shed light on representation in economic policy, and the nature of the dyadic relationship in the contemporary, polarized Congress.

Assessing responsiveness is a central task in the field of representation, with major normative implications for the quality of the relationship between the public and the officials who speak for them, and with major scientific importance for scholarly understanding of why legislators behave as they do. I define responsiveness as a change in policy making behavior following a change in conditions at the constituency level. This has been difficult to study in previous work because of the lack of frequently measured district level conditions and the difficulty of comparing legislative behaviors over time. The three studies reported in this dissertation take advantage of recently available data sources which create an unprecedented ability to measure legislative responsiveness to district level change. Studies of this kind of responsiveness are a necessary addition to the field of representation. Most work in this area measures the correspondence between district characteristics and legislative behavior, or measure the relationship between district characteristics and the stability or instability of behavior. While research of this nature is very important, I have argue that it does not assess the extent to which lawmakers respond to their districts because in order to do so, change must be measured on both sides of the equation. Changes in legislative behavior must be related to changes in constituents' opinions or material conditions.

These studies complement the only other research design that measures responsiveness: those using demographic changes due to redistricting to predict legislative behavior (e.g. Glazer and Robbins 1985; Hayes, Hibbing, and Sulkin 2010). Studies using redistricting to assess responsiveness document how lawmakers change their behavior when they get a partially new district with an altered demographic profile. These studies make an important innovation by identifying the independent effects of the district's and lawmaker's characteristics. By leveraging an exogenous economic shock the studies reported here document how lawmakers change their behavior when conditions change in their preexisting districts. Unlike redistricting, the economic shocks used as the independent variables in this project were not scheduled in advance and are of less obvious electoral significance than factors such as race and partisanship which change in a predictable fashion when district lines are redrawn. Below I summarize the findings in each empirical chapter and explore the overarching implications.

## Summary and Conclusion

Chapter 2 identified repeated roll call votes on policies aimed at addressing the economic crisis and recession from 2007-2009. Although only three economic policies had repeated roll call votes at distant enough intervals to measure the effects of district level change, the three policies analyzed were important and different in some interesting respects. They were an emergency rescue measure for the financial sector, direct aid to the unemployed, and a regulatory package intended to prevent repetition of the crisis. In it I find that members of Congress change positions on specific issues when local conditions change on final passage votes of the simple, distributive issue. They are less likely to respond on more complicated policies that only affect voters indirectly and on procedural votes. The total lack of responsiveness on procedural votes for all three policies is a key finding. It suggests that while lawmakers often respond to the public's needs on highly visible actions (even when doing so comes with the risk of being labeled a "flip-flopper") they do not address the same economic needs on less visible, but equally (if not more) important procedural votes. These findings also suggest that evidence of ideological or issue-position change in prior research using roll call scores is not explained to a significant degree by reversing previously stated positions, but rather by leaning in a more liberal or conservative direction on new questions that arise.

Chapter 3 examines another dimension of responsiveness, issue priorities. Using the same district-level economic indicators I examine their effect on lawmakers' sponsorship and cosponsorship of economic bills. Another contribution of the chapter is that it analyzes not just the amount of attention to economic policy, but the content of bills introduced and cosponsored by lawmakers in different contexts. This chapter is the first study, to my knowledge, that explains how members of Congress choose from among alternative policy tools to address the same problems. I find that while members of the House introduce and support (through cosponsorship) more economic policy when unemployment worsens in their districts, they do not promote all types of legislation equally. Worsening conditions cause them to introduce more tax cuts, financial and non-financial regulation, and welfare spending, and to cosponsor more welfare, regulation of all kinds, and fewer bills relating to trade. Expected findings of responsiveness are exclusively limited to changes in the unemployment rate. Lawmakers do not appear to respond comparably to spikes in foreclosures when other economic conditions, district characteristics and lawmaker traits are taken into account. The nature of responsiveness to foreclosures, or the reasons for a lack of it, are subjects for future research. This chapter finds that ideology and institutional position explain a lot of the variation in the tools lawmakers use to address the same economic problems. Conservatives respond to increasing unemployment with more tax cuts and less workforce development. Ideological differences are more pronounced in cosponsorship, a lower cost way of expressing support for an economic policy. Conservatives cosponsor more tax cuts while liberals cosponsor more stimulus, regulation, welfare policy, workforce development and research. As in chapter one, responsiveness appears to be greater for the less important behavior. District level economic change is more reflected in cosponsorship, which never required more than signing one’s name to a bill, than sponsorship which often requires lawmakers and their staff to invest time and effort in writing legislation. Of course, sponsorship is not always costly as lawmakers often sponsor bills written by interest groups or other actors in the policy process.

Chapter 4 looks for a relationship between district level change and legislative success. The effort lawmakers put into passing bills on the issues they prioritize can be interpreted as another dimension of representation in addition to the content of individual priorities. Whether or not one agrees with the characterization of legislative success as a separate dimension of representation, it does provide an assessment of the importance of legislative priorities. If lawmakers' issue agendas to not influence the content of bills passed by the House and the laws that are enacted, then their representativeness is substantially less important than it should be if we subscribe to the argument that voters needs should shape policy through the dyadic relationship.

This chapter finds some evidence for the consequences of issue priorities (which were found to be largely responsive in chapter 3). Bills introduced by representatives of the districts most affected by the recession were no more likely to be reported out of committee than those introduced by representatives of the least affected districts. However, among the bills that do make it through committee, those sponsored by lawmakers from the hardest hit districts are more likely to pass, perhaps reflecting better draftsmanship or more intensive coalition building on the part of the sponsors. These effects do not appear to depend on the propensity of districts to prefer policy representation, or the lawmaker's institutional position. Bills with more cosponsors are somewhat more likely to be reported out of committee, the single greatest hurdle to passage, but once a bill is reported from committee cosponsorship does not appear to further increase the chances of passage.

Lawmakers issue priorities do have some influence over the legislative agenda. Of course a bill cannot pass if it is never introduced, so changes in bill sponsorship behavior have enormous potential significance.  However changes in economic conditions in the sponsor's district have only a limited effect on legislative success and this effect is key for determining whether bills sponsored in response to economic change are becoming law. The effect of changing economic conditions appears to help bills pass if they can make it through committee but does not help them get through committee. Cosponsoring legislation increases the chances that the bill will make it through committee, but the effect is slight.

To return to another key question that motivated this study, what implications do the findings have for policy dynamics in the United States? Previous research has found that policy changes in response to aggregate changes in public opinion (Stimson, Mackuen, and Erikson 1995; Wlezien 1995) and national conditions (Baumgartner and Jones 2015). Modelling responsiveness among individual legislators, as this dissertation has attempted to do, unpacks the mechanism behind aggregate level policy change. National level responsiveness could occur because individual lawmakers respond to their unique constituencies and the aggregate result approximately follows aggregate opinion or economic conditions. This is the mechanism that we would expect of members of Congress were motivated primarily by the "electoral connection" (Mayhew 1974). If on the other hand lawmakers' actions are effectively coordinated by party leaders who craft a policy agenda that both responds to salient national problems and is consistent with the ideological dispositions of a majority of their caucus, we would see partisan and ideological factors driving behavior and a lesser role for district level change. This would also produce responsiveness to national conditions because party leaders, in an effort to protect their party brand and compete for majority status would ensure that the legislature attempts to solve the most salient problems. Under this model aggregate responsiveness would take place in a manner consistent with the partisan theories of Cox and McCubbins (1993; 2005), Aldrich and Rohde (2000; Rohde 1991), and Lee (2009), rather than Mayhew (1974).

The three empirical chapters take an important step in parsing out the relative importance of each possible mechanism, both of which find support from different behaviors. The results reveal a pattern of selectivity in when lawmakers represent their districts and when they follow the party. District conditions tend to be reflected in more visible, but also more symbolic actions. On final passage votes partisanship is the most important factor, but lawmakers will switch positions in response to district level change, especially on a policy that is simple and provides direct aid to constituents. On equally important procedural votes partisanship is virtually deterministic, limiting dyadic responsiveness. Lawmakers will place greater emphasis on economic policy by sponsoring and cosponsoring legislation, but the content of the legislation they sponsor depends, in part, on their ideology even controlling for district ideology and other factors. Worsening economic conditions in a sponsor's district lead to a greater likelihood that a bill reported from committee will pass possibly because they inspire the lawmaker to work harder on securing the needed support on the floor, and cosponsorship modestly increases the chances that a bill will be reported from committee, but membership in the majority party remains a major determinant of legislative success regardless of district conditions or other behaviors in support of a bill. Responsiveness in bill sponsorship is not enough to influence legislative outcomes, and cosponsorship behavior, which is more responsive to the district than sponsorship is even more limited in its effects.

Another key finding across the empirical chapters is that responsiveness does not appear to depend on factors suggested by previous literature such as competitiveness (Griffin 2006; Sullivan and Uslander 1978) or the prevalence of "policy demanders" (Harden 2015). All of the chapters failed to find support for hypothesized heterogeneity in lawmakers' reactions to district level change in the policy-making behaviors studied here. The fact that this finding seemingly contradicts a substantial amount of evidence is grounds for further research. It could be the case that there is heterogeneity in how lawmakers respond to other conditions relating to other policy areas or during other time periods. On the other hand, it could be the case that lawmakers who vary a great deal in all sorts of behaviors tend to respond similarly when their districts are affecting by tangibly worsening conditions. In any case, these studies do not provide evidence that dyadic representation varies by demographics or competitiveness for the behaviors studied.

What are the implications for how policy changes over time? The House's response to national problems is more than the simple aggregation of the individual actions of largely autonomous, reelection motivated, representatives. One of the motives for conducing the studies reported here was to gain a better understanding of how lawmakers' actions are aggregated to produce policy change. It appears that legislative responses to national problems are coordinated by the majority party with influence at the margins by rank-and-file members of the House, but that the content of the majority party's response is shaped by the ideologies and institutional positions of lawmakers representing the most affected districts. An economic downturn that disproportionately affects, for example, conservatives on the Ways and Means committee will lead to an increase in the number of tax cuts considered by the House and will increase their chances of passage, while a downturn that disproportionately affects liberals with seats on Transportation and Financial Services will do the same for stimulus and financial regulation. Testing these implications for the legislative agenda and policy dynamics will be an important extension of this research.

In the contemporary era of polarized parties, members of Congress have to be selective about when they change behaviors on behalf of their constituents. The electoral connection persists, but it is limited by partisan warfare over control of the levers of institutional power. As a result members of Congress are more likely to respond to constituents needs when doing so does not require interfering with their party's control over the agenda.

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