

The Meaning of Constituency in Senate Decision Making

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The concept of constituency is central to studies of congressional decision making that are normatively meaningful. For the most part, representational relationships are framed in principal-agent terms, with legislator/agents responding in some fashion to a range of principals, including the citizens and coalitions located within the boundaries of their formal “constituencies.” How much of an impact, scholars ask, do citizens and factions located within the constituency exert on the behavior of legislators relative to other non-constituency factors, such as the national parties, the preferences of chamber colleagues, or officials in the White House? To gauge the level of member responsiveness to constituency concerns, scholars usually rely on survey data or aggregate measures of district/state characteristics, and relate such measures to indicators of member behavior or the content of legislation.

The limitations of this approach are well known. For one, lawmakers have considerable agency in choosing which portions of their constituencies to consider. Typically, they do not represent districts or states, but instead focus on the demands of particular subsets of the geographic constituency (Fenno, 1978; Bishin 2009). Moreover, the best scholarship about public opinion formation and group mobilization has demonstrated that legislators and other elites shape both the opinions of mass constituencies and the lobbying agendas of organized coalitions (Converse, 1965; Zaller 1992; Achen and Bartels, 2016; Bauer et al., 1963; Baumgartner et al., 2009). Political theorists, such as Pitkin (1972), Mansbridge (2003), and Disch (2012), have portrayed representational relationships as complex, reciprocal, and performative.

Importantly, even if we embrace the oversimplifications of the principal-agent framework, the standard empirical indicators in the literature do not allow us to disentangle the independent impact of constituency-based considerations on legislative behavior, or for that matter of any other factor that may influence the process of member decision making. High levels of party voting, for example, are often cited as evidence that members weigh national partisan imperatives more heavily than constituency interests. Within each party caucus, however, House members and Senators represent fairly similar constituencies, and the districts/states of Democratic and Republican legislators tend to be very different across parties. So, does the partisan behavior that we observe derive from Washington arm twisting and party government, or from the partisan makeup of member constituencies? Major interest groups often align themselves more with one party than the other – perhaps party-line voting in Congress derives from the power of outside advocacy organizations. With the standard concepts and measures, there simply is no way to know (Jackson and Kingdon, 1992). The inter-relationships that exist between constituencies, parties, and other causal factors create daunting challenges of observational equivalence that confound the study of political representation.

Part of a broader project, this paper attempts to clarify the meaning and significance of constituency in member decision making process by harnessing a unique source of evidence – the transcripts of nearly a hundred interviews conducted by the author with top aides to 36 U.S. Senators during the 106th Congress (1999-2000). As part of the interviews, the staffers were questioned extensively about the factors that shaped the choices of their Senators on contemporaneous roll calls on the chamber floor. More concretely, for each of 20 votes, information was gathered about member decision making for a sample of 12 Senate offices equally divided by party. Combined with media accounts, press releases, and in some cases the personal papers of retired Senators, the results are fairly detailed portraits of 240 discrete roll call

decisions. The interview protocol was modeled on the questions employed by Kingdon (1973) in his classic study of member voting decisions in the House. A portion of the evidence was piloted in Evans (2002), and it formed the basis for a recent series of papers about Senate representation (Evans 2018b, 2018c). Here, my goal is to use these materials to clarify the role of constituency concerns in Senate decision making and to begin fleshing out the implications for representation theory.

Nature of the Evidence

Let's begin with some additional background about the evidence. First, although nearly two decades have passed, the 1999-2000 period provides a useful portal for exploring the role of constituency in roll call choice. For one, it constituted a transition of sorts between the less polarized chambers of the 1970s and 1980s and the intensely partisan Senates of recent years (Smith 2014). Major portions of the floor agenda during 1999-2000 featured sharp infighting along partisan and ideological lines and the prioritization of position taking over lawmaking, while others were more conducive to cross-partisan bargaining and the passage of legislation. Obstructionism was rife, and so was the heavy-handed manipulation of floor agendas by Senate leaders (Koger 2010). Looking back, much of what transpired during the 106th Congress will be familiar to observers of the contemporary chamber (Smith 2014). The passage of time also enables us to draw on the personal papers of former members of the chamber, other archival records from party leaders and the Clinton White House, and related scholarship that has appeared about the late 1990s and early 2000s (see especially Baumgartner et al., 2009 and the associated data archive), as well as other evidentiary sources that would not be available for more recent Congresses.

Table 1 lists the twenty issues from the floor agenda during the 106th Congress that comprise the issue sample. Table 2 denotes the three dozen Senate offices for which interviews were conducted and the number of issues targeted per Senator. The issues were selected as fieldwork ensued during 1999-2000, based on contemporaneous media coverage and advice from senior Senate staff about upcoming floor actions likely to be of consequence. The staff I spoke with in each office primarily were chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and other senior aides, and I often met repeatedly with multiple staff within each office. Many follow up exchanges took place via email or the telephone.

Unlike Kingdon, of course, I chose not to use the members themselves as my main informants. Relative to House members, it is harder to secure interview time with sitting Senators. Moreover, the decision-making process in the Senate is more staff-dependent than is the case for the House, and top aides are more likely to have intimate knowledge of the full range of pressures and considerations that shape position taking and roll call choice. The strategy of using knowledgeable staff as informants has also proven useful for other congressional scholars, including Hall (1999), Miler (2010), and Hertel-Fernandez et al. (2019).

My research design diverges from Kingdon's example in certain other ways. Kingdon was able to randomly select his sample of House offices. To promote candor during the interview portion of the study, I mostly relied on personal contacts and assembled the sample in a piece-meal

fashion.¹ From the extensive notes I compiled during and immediately after the interviews, it is possible to code a number of variables that tap into key elements of the decision-making process. Included are the importance of mass constituency opinion, advocacy organizations and interest groups, party leaders within the Senate, and the Clinton administration. The interview protocol is summarized in the appendix, as are the coding criteria for all variables utilized in this paper.

Along with the standard roll call considerations, I also tried to tap the importance of a lawmaker's "core attitudes" and of "Senate colleagues." In the interviews, I did not systematically ask questions about the impact of a Senator's policy beliefs or prior voting record on the roll call decision. Still, it was clear during the conversations that members often approached a roll call by consciously relating the matter to their underlying ideology or policy goals, and from the interview notes I can categorize the importance of a member's core attitudes and priorities. The associated criteria are likewise delineated in the appendix. The category for "colleagues" is meant to capture the extent to which the positions chosen and votes cast were substantially affected by contacts with or information about the actions of other Senate offices (Kingdon 1973, Matthews and Stimson 1975). Although such signals largely proxy for other (more fundamental) political forces, they do reveal something about the process of decision making, and the coding specifics also provided in the appendix.

Again, the research design employed here aims at disentangling the consequences of the various factors, or "touchstones," if you will, that shape decision-making by Senators. With office samples of 12 drawn for an overall issue sample of 20, the result is concrete information about touchstone significance for 240 separate decisions. One possible criticism, of course, is that for political or personal reasons, high-level staff may be reluctant to reference the impact of certain factors, such as party leaders or interest groups, as a major factor in roll call choice. There are several reasons, however, why such concerns are mitigated here. For one, the member and staff samples were constructed with an eye toward promoting candor. Interviews were conducted on a "not-for-attribution" basis, and it was understood that, due to the exigencies of scholarly publication, considerable time would pass before the results of my work appeared in print. Moreover, the question and coding criteria detailed in the appendix are very concrete, issue specific, and relate to observable and widely understood aspects of the decision process. The measures are not primarily attributional. Rather than querying about the influence of leaders or other touchstones more generally, in other words, I asked about tangible behaviors and considerations for a specific bill or vote, which is less likely to evoke reputational effects or concerns among interviewees. As you will see, when we consider the legislative context of individual measures, the presence or absence of constituency, group, or other effects are mostly consistent with expectations. Finally, the indicators derived from interviews can be juxtaposed with other evidence from local and national media accounts, the archived papers of rank-and-file Senators, contemporaneous whip records, other evidence from the papers of former Senate

¹ Most of the contacts were provided by the late W. Lee Rawls, then the chief of staff to Senator Bill Frist, and soon to be chief of staff to the Senate Majority Leader. This project would not have been possible without his help, guidance, and considerable stature within the Washington political community. Other staff contacts derived from my prior experience as an aide to the bicameral and bipartisan Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress during 1992-93. Early participants in the project also provided suggestions about offices to add and offered to act as intermediaries. Over the course of the fieldwork, chiefs of staff or legislative directors from more than a dozen of the offices included in this study also visited William & Mary (in some cases, multiple times) to speak with students enrolled in my courses there, which I think helped enhance the reliability of their input.

leaders, and items included in the presidential archive of Bill Clinton. As complementary measures are integrated into this research project, further steps will be taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the interview-based material.

Table 3 summarizes aggregate factor relevance across the entire decision sample. Cell entries include the number and percentage of member decisions across all issues where the importance of a factor or touchstone (each delineated by a separate column) was major, moderate, or minor (separate rows exist for each level of importance). First, notice that mass constituents (ordinary people, as opposed to the leaders of organized groups) were cited as a major factor in about one-third of the decisions, of moderate importance for about one-third, and of minor or no importance for the remaining third. Organized advocacy groups, in contrast, were a major factor for nearly one-half of the 240 decisions. The pervasive presence of organized interests also constituted a potential vehicle for constituency influence. More about this later.

As indicated in the table, party leaders were only a major factor for about 11 percent of the 240 decisions. The White House and other Senate colleagues were also of secondary importance, at least for these lawmakers and this subset of the floor agenda. It is not surprising, of course, that the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton would not hold much sway among Republicans, but even among Democrats the impeachment trial that opened the 106th Congress weakened Clinton substantially. Importantly, a member's core attitudes and personal policy priorities were mentioned as a major factor for roughly one-half of the observations, of moderate importance for about 28 percent, and of minor importance for the remaining 23 percent. Based on the coding criteria summarized in the appendix, members regularly relied on their broader policy views for guidance about how to make voting decisions. And since member policy priorities themselves are often rooted in the concerns of constituent audiences, the significance of core attitudes may also be a vehicle for registering state interests.

Other Senate colleagues, in contrast, were a major factor in less than twenty percent of member decisions, of moderate importance for another twenty percent, and of minor or no importance for nearly sixty percent. In his House study, Kingdon found that representatives routinely relied on colleagues as low-cost sources of information about the political consequences of a vote. Chamber colleagues, in other words, were an indirect mechanism through which more foundational concerns affected roll call choice. By the late 1990s, however, Senate offices were much larger and Senators were more extensively staffed than had been the case for the House members interviewed by Kingdon three decades previously. Although roughly forty percent of the member decisions summarized in Table 3 were based in part on input from colleagues, a clear majority of the Senators made up their minds without weighing or otherwise collaborating with other members.

Constituency: Meaning and Impact

As mentioned, for this part of the broader project, our focus is on constituency. The “mass constituents” column of Table 3 clearly is relevant. But so, I would argue, is the adjacent column for “interest groups.” Obviously, there are strong incentives for reelection-minded lawmakers to pay close attention to organized interests with a strong presence in their districts or states. Even the most “special” of special interests will have some degree of grassroots

manifestation, which for politicians can become a source of opposition or support at election time. Group leaders are a source of electorally valuable resources, including donations and nonpecuniary campaign assistance. Through media contacts, advertisements, and other communications tactics, state-based groups also can shape public opinion back home. The day-to-day activities of Senators and staff bring them into regular and close contact with the interest group communities within their states. When deciding how to vote, Senate offices routinely touch base with representatives of the affected organized interests operating within their constituencies, searching for advice, solidifying relationships. Much has been made of the burgeoning nationalization of American politics, including within the interest group sector. But when Senators and their aides think about the constituency, they often do so through an organizational lens.

Indeed, many Senate offices refuse to see group representatives unless they are at least accompanied by constituents from home. National groups also recognize that their presentations will be more effective if they can demonstrate a strong local tie-in. For strategic reasons, they tend to approach lawmakers via an organizational presence within a Senator's state. As part of the interview protocol, I asked staff informants whether the source of any group activity they discerned for a vote was mostly national, mostly from the state, or a mixture of state and national activity. About a quarter of the 240 member decisions could not be categorized in this fashion – usually because organized interests were nonfactors to begin with. But for nearly three-quarters of the cases, such a categorization was possible. Importantly, the organizational presence that was identified was mostly state oriented for about 31 percent of the full sample, and for another 35 percent a mix of state and national activity was apparent. Less than ten percent of the 240 decision cases was associated with a group presence that was primarily national. And nearly half of those instances concerned just two issues – drug reimportations and Y2K liability – where the major corporate players were geographically concentrated. For the lion's share of decisions where organized interests mattered, there were strong links to the state of the relevant lawmaker. For this reason, then, when evaluating the role of constituency concerns in member decision making, we need to at least consider the relevant advocacy organizations.

Table 4 breaks down the summary evidence of Table 3 by issue area for the two most relevant touchstone categories – mass constituents and advocacy groups. Again, the factor importance data reported here underestimate the overall impact of constituency in Senate decision making because other touchstone (e.g., colleagues and core attitudes) may also capture local interests. Still, focusing on these two categories can clarify how and when constituency influences roll call choice, and thus inform our understanding of representation. For added context, the table also includes two rough indicators of partisan behavior for the roll calls associated with each item. If at least one of the votes was party line (one-half or more of one party opposed one-half or more of the other), the measure is denoted with a \surd . And if the majority Republican leadership conducted at least one whip count related to an item, the number of such counts is also included (Evans 2018a). So the education reauthorization, for example, was associated with a party-line vote and GOP leaders whipped three questions related to the measure.

In Table 4, items are ordered from highest to lowest in terms of mass constituent importance. As you can see, the issues for which mass constituents were most significant touch on education, abortion, social welfare, and health care reform – all of which resonate with ordinary voters.

Issues toward the bottom of the table, in contrast, were either highly technical and difficult for voters to understand (Y2K liability, bankruptcy reform), targeted particular producer groups rather than citizens more generally (the sugar subsidy repeal, the dairy compact), or dealt with issues that at the time were not a major priority for the general public (international trade). The ranking in the table is consistent with mass opinion surveys conducted during the period. According to the standard Gallup protocol asking respondents to name the most important problem facing the country, in January 1999, 13 percent mentioned education, 12 percent named the economy and unemployment, and seven percent mentioned health policy. Direct references to international trade or the Y2K computer problem barely registered, and aspects of agriculture were not mentioned at all. By March 2000, taxes had increased to 11 percent and education was up to 16 percent, with the others remaining low.²

Within the table, the issue ranking for group activity is a little different, and in ways that reflect our understanding of group interest across these policy areas. Advocacy organizations were particularly important for trade issues, Y2K liability, bankruptcy reform and agriculture – items where general voter interest often was low. These topics were priorities for producers and associated industry organizations and were heavily lobbied during the 106th Congress. Although there was some organizational presence for the marriage penalty tax, abortion, hate crimes, nuclear testing, and campaign finance reform, these items mostly operated at the grassroots level (abortion, the marriage penalty) or the group environment was relatively thin (campaign finance reform, the test-ban treaty). Overall, the distribution of group attention across the votes under focus gibes with evidence gathered by Frank Baumgartner and colleagues for the *Advocacy and Public Policymaking* project. The Baumgartner data pertain to both the 106th and 107th Congresses, and thus are contemporaneous to the evidence utilized here. Lobby expenditure data for the 106th Congress compiled by the Center for Responsive Politics are also largely consistent with the group ranking captured in Table 4.³

The issue specific variation for mass constituents and organized interests may be more interpretable in Figure 1, which portrays the average ranking of the two factors for the twenty issue items. To create the figure, “minor” was arbitrarily assigned a value of 1, “moderate” a value of 2, and “major” a value of 3, and for each issue and touchstone, I calculated the average value for the twelve Senate offices where interviews were conducted. Both mass constituents and groups were important for the cluster of items located toward the upper right quadrant of the figure. Included are the education reauthorization bill, drug reimportation, the Labor/HHS appropriations measure, and the so-called “Patients’ Bill of Rights.” Although located more toward the center of the figure, the proposed estate tax repeal also fits in this quadrant. For policy items located toward the upper left, mass constituents played a substantial role in the decision-making process, but the targeted votes were less heavily lobbied. Included here are the abortion item, the across-the-board tax cuts included in the 1999 reconciliation bill, marriage penalty repeal, and the amendment addressing hate crimes.

² Unless otherwise noted, opinion survey results cited in this paper are from the iPoll database compiled by the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

³ See Baumgartner et al., nd. For industry-based summaries of lobbying expenditures, consult opensecrets.org. As this project proceeds, I will devise more systematic indicators to buttress the validity of the ordinal categories reflected in Tables 3-4.

In contrast, the lower right quadrant of the figure includes votes where organizational presence was substantial, but mass opinion back home was not generally viewed as a major factor. Included are traditionally parochial policies like agriculture and trade, and also regulatory matters of primary concern to particular industries, such as bankruptcy reform and Y2K liability. The proposal to raise the minimum wage clearly activated interest groups, but also exhibited a somewhat stronger link to mass constituents than did other items in this quadrant. This also was the case for steel imports and farm assistance. But based on the overall distributions across offices, these items are most usefully considered along with the other group-oriented votes. Finally, organized interests were seldom a major factor for the nuclear test ban treaty and campaign finance reform, and here the level of interest among ordinary citizens was also less pronounced than for items in the upper portions of Figure 1.

Obviously, the boundaries between the quadrants of Figure 1 are somewhat arbitrary, and certain items are close to the dividing line for one or both dimensions. Yet, the four-fold categorization is helpful for expositional reasons. We can explore the nuances of constituency influence by considering the different quadrants of the figure in turn, and where appropriate referencing particular members and decisions as illustrations.

Mass Constituents And Organized Groups

Among issues with both a major public profile and significant lobbying, the education measure is the obvious place to start. As Zaller (1992) and other scholars have demonstrated, mass attitudes can be usefully conceptualized as psychological expressions of underlying schema, or “considerations,” that are firmly rooted in memory. Considerations, in turn, are feelings and beliefs that derive from an individual’s identity and day-to-day experiences. By strategically framing or priming an issue, typically via the media, elite political actors attempt to shape public opinion by influencing the relative weight that citizens assign to competing considerations (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987; Jacobs and Shapiro (2000). Senators, of course, are not well versed in the social psychological literature about attitude formation, but they do have a good intuitive understanding of concepts like issue framing and priming. Party leaders, for example, attempt to highlight on the legislative agenda policy areas that evoke considerations that are associated with positive evaluations of their own party and negative evaluations of the opposition. And within these issue areas, they craft specific proposals that call to mind favorable attributes of their party among targeted voters. These proposals in turn are integrated into communications strategies, called messages, aimed at influencing mass attitudes.

Education issues emerged as a voter priority in the late 1990s. Although survey respondents traditionally rated the Democratic party as more effective than the Republicans at handling education policy (Petrocik, 1996), by the end of that decade GOP leaders recognized that reform proposals could be crafted to address themes or considerations that advantaged Republicans. If the potential benefits of increased federal activism and spending are the primary consideration in the mind of the voter, they understood that the debate would favor Democrats. But other proposals dealing with state flexibility and parental choice could resonate favorably with the Republicans’ political and ideological identity, and thus enable the party to compete with Democrats for public support. In Spring 2000, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., brought to the floor legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

constructed around such proposals. Two key floor votes concerned a Democratic substitute structured around traditional Democratic themes and a centrist alternative offered by Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., that sought middle ground. For the twelve Senate offices interviewed about these votes, all were coded as “major” for mass constituent importance, and all but two were similarly coded for group activity.

For one moderate Democrat, education that year was “a big voter issue. We’re trying to pinpoint the concern more firmly. We’ve done a number of focus groups on education.... People proactively mention teacher salaries in focus groups. School safety is number two.... The groups have all been in.” The Senator himself met with all the major education groups in the state. The chamber of commerce for the largest city led a major yearlong study on school reform and briefed the Senator on the results shortly before floor action. Democrat Joe Lieberman, who took the lead in crafting the moderate alternative, viewed the issue as a major voter priority in Connecticut and in preparing his proposal met with all of the major advocacy groups on both sides of the issue. For one northeastern liberal, education was “a huge issue, lots of media.” The state fell within a single media market, and the largest newspaper had run a series about education the previous year. Over the course of Senate consideration, the office heard from teachers’ unions, non-profits, labor unions. “We see everybody involved in the education area,” with the Senator handling all of the instate connections and staff dealing with the rest. Early on in the decision-making process, the office had not heard much from the grassroots, so the Senator personally reached out to contacts at the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. For another Democrat who worked on the centrist alternative with Lieberman, education had been the central message issue in her campaign. According to a top aide: “We heard from everybody ... the state AEA, the teachers' unions, arts in the public schools organizations, the school guidance counselors organization, special learning groups.” Often the local contacts were “ginned up” by the national organizations.

Similar results obtained for the majority Republican side of the aisle, with the caveat that group importance was of somewhat attenuated importance for two highly conservative senators. Although there is widespread interest in education, staff to one of the conservatives stressed, “you need to gauge intensity, how issues are framed.” The office heard from the standard litany of national education groups, the state education association, and a conservative offshoot of that organization. But public educators were not core supporters and the impact of organized pressure on this member’s approach to education issues was somewhat muted. Likewise, staff to the other ideological conservative remarked that education was important to voters, and they also heard from the groups, but less so than the offices that were taking the lead. “Teachers tend to write [him] off,” remarked an aide, and most of the group contacts were at the staff level, with the Senator occasionally stepping in to say hello. For the other four Republican offices for which evidence was gathered about education decision making, mass constituents and advocacy groups were both major factors. According to a legislative assistant to one of them, education issues polled highly in [the state] and nationally. The office heard from the state school board and education association, and also from “what I like to refer to as ‘the blob’ – the Washington D.C. education bureaucrats.”

On education, two northeastern Republicans are particularly instructive cases, because both were relative moderates from states where public opinion was less overly conservative than was the

case for other Republicans. Both Senators experienced considerable cross-pressure on education. James Jeffords of Vermont, for example, was chair of the committee of jurisdiction and only received that leadership position after agreeing not to hold up legislation backed by the Republican leadership. In preparing the base bill brought to the floor, staff to Majority Leader Lott met with staff to GOP committee members without the chair's staff in the room. Education generally was a major issue in Vermont and Jeffords heard from all of the groups within the state and nationally because of his leadership position. The Republican leadership conducted three whip counts on the education bill, asking GOP members whether they would support the party position and oppose three Democratic amendments to strike portions of the party bill (see Evans 2018a for details). Jeffords responded as undecided for one and as opposed on a second, but for all three ended up voting with the leadership. Here, partisan pressures and (to some extent) his own policy priorities countervailed signals from home. According to staff for the other GOP moderate, "in polling data, in the papers, in other campaigns, [education] is the number one issue. A heavy volume of groups has been in, both state and national." This lawmaker was more oriented toward state control than was Jeffords, however, and thus experienced less cross pressure than her Vermont colleague. Although she worked along with Jeffords to moderate the measure, she was supportive of the party position during the whip and roll call stages on all three questions targeted by the leadership.

On education, in short, mass constituents and organized advocacy from within the state were generally major factors. Still, the issue illustrates how members themselves, especially through leadership agenda setting, the construction of alternatives, and strategic messaging, can affect the shape of public opinion back home and the configuration of groups that are active. Analogous dynamics were apparent on the drug reimportation amendment considered later that year. For a variety of reasons, ranging from price caps in other countries to price discrimination by the pharmaceutical industry, many drugs manufactured in the U.S. could be purchased more cheaply in Canada, Mexico, and other foreign nations. Only the drug companies could "reimport" these goods to the U.S. for sale at lower prices. In mid-July 2000, Senator Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., approached James Jeffords and suggested that they collaborate on an amendment to the FY 2001 agricultural appropriations bill aimed at loosening restrictions on the reimportation of prescription drugs (already approved by the Food and Drug Administration) and hopefully reduce the costs of these items to American consumers. The issue was salient with many people, especially in border states, because of the linkages to generalized concern about prescription drugs, and because of the intensive public relations campaigns that cropped up around the matter. Particularly in states near the Canadian or Mexican borders, one tactic was to organize van and bus trips across the border for the ostensible purpose of helping groups of elderly constituents purchase pharmaceuticals at lower costs. In response, the pharmaceutical companies rolled out an extensive, nation-wide communications effort aimed at countering the burgeoning criticism about drug costs, and also lobbied strongly against Dorgan-Jeffords.

Of the twelve offices for which evidence was gathered on this roll call, mass constituents were a major factor for nine and of moderate importance for three, which reflects the general salience of prescription drug issues among ordinary voters, as well as the public relations campaigns targeting drug prices and reimportation. Not surprisingly, public opinion in the state was a major factor for all of the border-state Senators included in the sample. A top aide to one border-state Democrat described the politics of drug importation in the following terms. "This is bigger

than managed care with the voters. This and the general subject of money for prescription drugs, Medicare drugs. [A member of the state's House delegation] is doing bus trips to Canada and drumming up lots of publicity in the state." According to staff to a Democratic moderate, "We haven't had the bus trips, but it's still a big issue. Even the well-off ... prices for drugs are still alarming to them. It's not a question of dog food versus drugs [or] will grandma be impoverished, but it still ticks people off." The aide continued: "The issue is so much more a part of the media game. More people are using pharmaceuticals. They cost more. We get lots of mail about this.... If you're not sick today, you think you might be tomorrow, [or they say] 'I heard about the costs from someone I play shuffleboard with.'" Senators from both parties recognized the actual and potential salience of prescription drug issues with the public.

The issue was also heavily lobbied and organized interests were a significant factor for six of the Senate offices, of moderate importance for four, and a minor factor for only two. Unlike education, though, the locus of the organizational presence for drug reimportation was mostly national, rather than primarily sourced within the state or a mixture of state and national pressure. As a result, the significance of both mass and group factors created the possibility of cross pressure, especially for GOP Senators from states near the Canadian border. The office of one plains state Republican received a "heads up" that the vote was coming from the GOP Policy Committee the day before the roll call occurred. Staff briefed the senator outlining similar votes he had cast in the past and the likely "yes" vote of his same state colleague, also a Republican.⁴ He heard from the major pharmaceutical companies, especially GLASCO, and was philosophically disposed toward their position. In the end, however, he voted with grassroots attitudes within the state, and thus in support of the amendment.

Voter opinion and groups were also generally important to member decision making on the Patients' Bill of Rights, a major health reform proposal during the 106th Congress. As indicated in Table 4, the impact of mass attitudes was split between the "major" and "moderate" categories. The presence of uninsured residents and the incidence of recent media coverage of the issue helped determine the overall significance level. Indeed, Senate staff often referred to media coverage when asked about voter attitudes. Consistent with scholarship about attitude formation, they recognized that public opinion is malleable and can be shaped by the media. The office of Republican Pete Domenici, R-N.M., for example, received extensive mail about this vote on both sides. Within New Mexico, there were large populations of Medicaid recipients and about one-quarter of the population was uninsured. The largest managed care provider in the state, Sun Health Care, was located in Albuquerque. Not surprisingly, there was extensive coverage of the issue in the Albuquerque Journal, which further primed the issue in the minds of ordinary voters. Domenici launched a major public relations effort within the state, including press releases and radio coverage, attempting to shape media coverage about the Senator's votes in favor of the national GOP position. To facilitate such efforts by Republican members, the leadership orchestrated party-backed second-degree amendments for all of the message amendments offered on the floor by Senate Democrats, thereby providing GOP members with something to vote for and a degree of cover back home. In the end, there was substantial editorial support for Domenici's stance within the state. For the twelve Senate offices interviewed about managed care reform, a mix of both state and national advocacy was cited, again with both sides of the matter heavily lobbied.

⁴ On relationships between same-state Senators, see Schiller 2000.

Of the remaining items where both citizen views and organized groups were important, the process of member decision making on the Labor/HHS appropriations bill was a blend of what we observed on education reform and the Patients' Bill of Rights. Since this appropriations measure encompasses health and education programs, that comes as no surprise. The overall salience of health and education issues makes the Labor/HHS bill potentially of significant interest to voters. As a spending measure, however, the organized lobbying that occurred was usually project based, and here the groups and advocacy organizations cited by staff were almost entirely state based. Together, the combination of public interest and organized pressure from within the state dominated member decision making on Labor/HHS.

The estate tax was another vote where constituent and group concerns were front and center. Intended to limit intergenerational transfers of wealth, by the late 1990s the tax affected estates larger than \$675 thousand, with the top rate set at 55 percent. After the GOP takeover of Congress in 1995, business and farm groups lobbied for repealing the tax and Republican leaders made the proposal a centerpiece of their overall tax reduction agenda. Even though the vast majority of voters were unaffected, the policy was intensely unpopular with small pockets of wealthy citizens and farm families, and opponents were able to rebrand it as "the death tax" for public consumption. As summarized in Table 4, for half of the Senate offices interviewed about the vote, mass opinion was a major factor, and for the remainder it was of moderate importance. Even though less than two percent of estates nationally were even subject to the tax, in other words, grassroots views were still a significant factor because of the intensity of the opinion. In Arkansas, for example, about one-third of the state economy was agricultural at the end of the 1990s. Since rice, wheat, and soybeans all could be grown on the same plot of land, the area was conducive to year-round farming, which in turn resulted in large farms with small profit margins. Estate taxes could preclude the inheritance of such farms, as well as many of the small businesses that also were integral to the Arkansas economy. For Blanche Lambert Lincoln, D-Ark, much of the constituency-based support for repealing the tax came from individual voters and families, independent of any organizational affiliations. Lincoln was also heavily lobbied about the matter by local businesses, the state Chamber of Commerce, and agricultural representatives. Prior to floor action, pro-repeal forces circulated lists of the citizens in each state who might be affected by the estate tax. Based on the broader office sample for this issue, the significant lobbying by advocacy organizations was almost entirely state based or a mixture of state and national pressure.

Voter Issues with Less Group Engagement

For certain items, public opinion at home was generally an important factor in member decision making, but the degree of organizational presence was less marked than for those discussed in the previous section. Again, the boundaries are somewhat arbitrary. Although mass attitudes were clearly a major factor for the partial birth abortion vote, for example, the difference in organizational engagement between that issue and the estate tax were not all that large. Still, given the centrality of constituent attitudes on the abortion measure, the item is discussed here, along with the other votes where the presence of organizational lobbying was secondary.

Rick Santorum was lead sponsor of the underlying legislation, which would have banned a procedure that physicians refer to as “dilate and extract,” but which pro-life forces brand as “partial birth abortion” to enhance public support for their side of the matter. This aspect of the issue, abortion opponents believed, polled well for their side of the broader debate, and thus was a useful toe hold for advancing their agenda. Pro-choice forces countered by labeling the procedure “late term” abortion and otherwise took steps to frame the issue in terms of women’s rights and maternal health. During Senate consideration, Democrats Barbara Boxer, Calif., and Tom Harkin, Iowa, countered the Santorum language with “sense of the Senate” amendments endorsing *Roe v. Wade*. Once again, via strategic agenda setting and associated communications tactics, Senators themselves attempted to shape both the direction and the intensity of public and group attitudes back home.

According to the Gallup organization, since at least the late 1980s about 60 percent of the public consistently opposed overturning *Roe*, with only about 30 percent favoring such a change. The prevalence of respondents reporting “no opinion” on abortion surveys is almost always low. Indeed, for the 1996 American National Election Study only 5 respondents (about .3 percent of the total sample) provided “no opinion” on the main abortion question (Norrander and Wilcox, 1999). In a 1999 Gallup survey, 19 percent of respondents stated they would only support candidates sharing their views about abortion, and 52 percent viewed it as an important factor in their voting decisions.⁵ In a 2003 Gallup poll, 68 percent of respondents favored making “late term” or “partial birth” abortions illegal (both brands were referenced in the question). This is an issue area, in other words, where mass opinion was fairly well-formed and nationally it favored Santorum’s side of the conflict.

Still, there were substantial differences by state, with consequences for the stances of individual Senators. Relying on the 1988-92 Senate National Election Study, for example, Norrander and Wilcox found that public support for abortion (“in all cases”) ranged from lows near 15 percent in Kentucky, Mississippi, and West Virginia to highs of about 40 percent in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, and Connecticut. Moreover, by early 1999, legislatures in 28 states had taken steps to ban partial birth abortions (Cohen and Saul, 1998). Senators were fully aware of all of this, of course, when the Santorum legislation was considered on the floor in October 1999, which created significant cross pressure for Democrats from pro-life states and Republicans representing constituencies oriented toward pro-choice values.

Not surprisingly, voter opinion was cited as a major factor for all twelve Senate offices interviewed about the roll call. Included among the sample were two Democrats from a state with strong pro-life sentiments. As mainstream Democrats with close ties to then Minority Leader Thomas Daschle of South Dakota, they confronted divergent signals from the national party, national groups, and constituent views at home. “Wicked politics,” remarked one aide: “70-80 percent of the voters are right to life, they care about it.” For that Senator, the decision to vote for the Santorum bill was straightforward given the constituency. Interestingly, the Boxer-Harkin amendments, aimed at putting pro-choice Republicans on the spot, actually created problems for Democrats from pro-life states by forcing them to cast difficult votes in favor of *Roe*. “The phones were ringing off the hooks,” the staffer continued. “The groups were in and spoke with the legislative assistants. [The Senator] does not want to see them.” The other

⁵ For details, see <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1576/abortion.aspx>.

Democrat from that state also voted yes on the legislation and the Harkin amendment. Remarkd a senior aide, the vote was, “politically difficult and uncomfortable, yes, but making up his mind was not hard.... [The state] is very anti-choice, very pro-life. The voters are overwhelmingly pro-life.” The office received large quantities of mail regarding abortion during Senate action on the legislation – thousands of letters, which is a large quantity given the population of the state. Group representatives also spoke with staff, but not the Senator himself. Contacts from right-to-life groups were mostly state-based, while lobbying on the other side from women’s groups was mostly national.

On the GOP side of the aisle, several moderates also faced a degree of cross-pressure because their states tilted pro-choice. Remarkd one staffer, “We had a referendum on partial birth abortions and there was a high turnout. The pro-choice forces prevailed by 55 to 44 or so.... [The Senator] is a pro-choice Catholic and struggled with the vote a lot, very conflicted.” That office was heavily lobbied on both sides, with the Senator meeting personally with the pro-life side and pro-choice contacts handled at the staff level. As a swing voter, the member worked closely with Santorum to broaden language regarding a health exemption, but in the end vote against the bill because the changes did not go far enough. For Peter Fitzgerald, a Republican Senator from Illinois, opinion in the state was mixed. Most of Illinois was pro-choice, including moderate Republicans, but Chicago was split, in part because of the strong Catholic presence. Downstate, conservative Democrats were also mostly pro-life. For Fitzgerald, the vote was fairly easy because of the Senator’s strong Catholic identity, with the divisions at home not sending a strong signal one way or the other. As Table 4 indicates, advocacy groups were a major factor for only three of the offices on partial birth abortions. Although there is substantial organizational presence on both sides of the abortion fight, Senators tended to view the issue more through the lens of the ordinary voter. Indeed, in only one of the offices was the group engagement primarily national – the remainder were either from state-based organizations or a mixture of state and national contacts.

The centerpiece of the FY2000 reconciliation package was a \$792 billion tax cut crafted by GOP leaders to please their electoral base and contrast the party position on taxes from that of national Democrats. From the beginning, Republicans understood that the measure would be vetoed by Bill Clinton, so the effort was almost entirely about message, party campaigning, and electoral advantage. Here, voter views were of major importance for seven of the twelve offices, of moderate importance for two, and a minor factor for three. All three of the offices where mass constituents were a minor factor were Democrats, and overall members of that party appeared to be less oriented toward voter attitudes than were their GOP colleagues. Tax cuts resonate more with Republican audiences, and thus the initiative was more important to the base on that side of the aisle. The Democratic posture was primarily defensive. For Republicans, this vote was usually easy and aimed at pleasing party supporters back home. Group lobbying was muted. On the Democratic side of the aisle, there was a caucus meeting where extensive public opinion data about tax cuts was presented in preparation for the vote. There also were strong signals from the leadership that rank-and-file Democrats needed to follow the party line and support the administration position. The proposal did not create substantial cross pressure for them because their own partisan base was not particularly interested in the GOP proposal, and group activity on their side of the aisle was also attenuated because of the largely symbolic nature of the exercise.

Similar dynamics were in play on legislation to reduce the so-called “marriage penalty” in the federal tax code. Here, both parties embraced proposals to reduce the taxes of married couples, but Republicans consistently pushed for more extensive reductions and in the end leaders of both parties opted for message over compromise and the initiative died. While Democrats are generally able to muster support within their base for opposing broad GOP tax packages, more targeted reductions like the estate tax repeal or the marriage penalty reduction can cause them problems at home. Constituents of all partisan stripes are skeptical about taxing “death” or “penalizing” marriage, and they tend to have only limited knowledge about the practical implications of such changes on distributional welfare. When the Gallup organization asked poll respondents in 1999 whether they favored removing the marriage penalty from the tax code, 62 percent answered “yes” and only 20 percent were opposed.⁶ Along with the cross-partisan reluctance to embrace middle ground on the marriage penalty and estate tax issues, the timing of floor action also was instructive. Both measures were brought to the floor contemporaneous to the two national party conventions.

According to staff to a newly elected Democrat from a swing state, the Senator was tempted to vote with the Republicans on both bills, but recognized that the floor fight primarily was about partisan public relations. The marriage penalty, in particular, resonated with voters back home. For that office, there was not much lobbying, but the issue did matter to ordinary citizens. The Democratic leadership arranged for party backed alternatives that gave Democrats from conservative states something to vote for, which in turn helped them stay loyal to the party message. For one Southern Republican included in the sample, the issue also was primarily viewed through the lens of his partisan base. His core supporters tended to be “married folks, small business types,” and they overwhelmingly viewed the marriage penalty as unfair. Staff recalled that there were two constituent cases in the office at the time of the vote where the penalty was substantial. One family had to pay \$1,600 more in taxes because of it, and the Senator cited the case as an example when discussing the issue. Targeted tax reductions were viewed as an easier sell to constituents because they could be more readily understood and communicated. There was some lobbying, but partisan electoral politics and base supporters at home were the primary drivers.

An amendment offered to the 2000 defense authorization by Democrat Edward Kennedy to expand federal hate crimes to cover sexual orientation also elicited strong constituent interest, but limited activity from organizations. The proposal evoked intense support from civil rights groups and adamant opposition from organizations associated with the religious right, but the Senate offices interviewed about the matter emphasized grassroots views. This was particularly the case for members from states where highly publicized incidents had occurred in the recent past. Hate crime coverage in the media primed voter concerns about the issue and built support for additional action by the federal government. Here, the torture and murder of Matthew Shepherd in October 1998 helped galvanize public concern about the issue. People generally favored stronger laws in this area – according to an October 2000 Gallup poll, for instance, 83 percent supported harsher penalties for hate crimes.⁷ But media coverage of particular incidents helped crystalize views and made the issue more salient at the mass level.

⁶ Gallup Poll, February 19-21, 1999.

⁷ Gallup Poll, October 25-28, 2000.

As indicated in Table 4, for the hate crimes vote, constituent views were of major importance for three offices and of moderate importance in eight. All three of the Senators for whom grassroots attitudes were major factors were Democrats. For Democrats, the issue was fairly easy and only one (Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia) voted against the Kennedy amendment. Republicans, however, were split 13-41 on the roll call, so the vote was partisan. GOP leaders did not lobby extensively against the bill – the “no” votes largely derived from grassroots opposition back home from ideological conservatives, and the members’ own programmatic concerns about the proper role of the federal government and whether or not such crimes should be singled out. Among the Republican members who sided with Kennedy, however, was freshman George Voinovich of Ohio. Voinovich generally favored a strong state and local role in criminal justice matters, but viewed civil rights as more of a federal responsibility. While mayor of Cleveland, he had developed close ties to the African American community and in 1994 received 40 percent of the black vote. So, although the roll call was a difficult one for him, his general stance made a “yes” position possible. Within Ohio, he knew that he was going to offend some voters either way. Portions of Ohio were highly conservative and generally opposed to singling out hate crimes, but overall the state was a microcosm of the country and for Voinovich no particular area dominated. He was lobbied (against) by conservative groups and also by some organizations supporting the Kennedy position. In the end, the politics of the matter was a wash. He went with his general programmatic views about the substantive need for the amendment and voted yes.

Group Based Issues

To gauge constituency impact for the primarily group-driven roll calls in the lower right quadrant of Figure 1, we need to pay particular attention to the geographic locus of the associated activity on both sides of the relevant matter. For three of the items, the group presence was disproportionately state level – the dairy compact, sugar subsidy, and minimum wage. The dairy compact vote concerned an amendment to an omnibus appropriations bill that kept alive the Northeast Dairy Compact, an interstate commission enabling milk producers in New England to raise their prices. The chief sponsors of the amendment were Republican James Jeffords and Democrat Pat Leahy, both of Vermont. Members from New England all supported the compact, as did Senators from nearby states like Pennsylvania and New York, who hoped to join the arrangement in the near future. Midwesterners, led by Herb Kohl of Wisconsin, were adamant in their opposition because the compact disadvantaged their own producers. Southerners mostly supported the Jeffords-Leahy proposal because they wanted to form their own dairy compact. Members from other regions were less intense in their preferences and generally followed whatever signals they were getting from dairy interests in their states. In some circumstances, if dairy interests within a state were minor, or if there was a split within that sector on the question of the compact, members based their votes on the preferences of colleagues who cared more deeply about the matter. Of the Senate offices included in the interview sample for the dairy vote, grassroots views were only a major factor for Jeffords, largely because dairy was so important and dispersed throughout Vermont. Otherwise, voter opinion was a minor factor. For advocacy groups, state-based organizations were critical on ten of the twelve decisions, while the remaining two confronted a mix of state and national representatives. Roll call choice was driven by constituency-oriented concerns, but the imperatives were almost entirely group based.

Dairy interests are not as critical in Maine as they are in Vermont. Still there were nearly 500 dairy farms in the state during the 106th Congress. Susan Collins was contacted by dairy producers within her state in favor of the compact. There was some lobbying on the other side by Kraft Foods, which had a plant in Maine, but Collins in the end opted to stay with Jeffords and the other northeastern senators. Within one western state, the dairy industry was somewhat insulated from production decisions and prices elsewhere in the country. Here, the legislative assistant for agriculture for one Senator spoke with representatives for dairies located there. About half urged a “no” vote, but their preferences were not strong, and about half suggested voting yes because they might want to set up a similar compact in the future. The Senator was personally close to Leahy and Kohl, the Democratic leaders on each side of the fight. Early on, she spoke with her same-state colleague, who was leaning no. But in the end, according to knowledgeable staff, she believed that a “yes” vote could be more easily explained and she voted accordingly on the floor. The same-state colleague who initially had been opposed also ended up voting yes.

If anything, decision making on the amendment aimed at ending the sugar subsidy was even more parochial. The main beneficiaries of the subsidy were sugar cane producers in just a few states, especially Florida and Louisiana, as well as sugar beet producers largely located in the plains states. Producers of goods where sugar was an input – candy makers were a prominent example – were generally opposed. Although the subsidy raised food prices, the consequences for ordinary consumers were not readily discerned and public opinion was not much of a factor in roll call decisions about the matter. Given the extreme concentration of cane and beet producers, maintaining the support of other farm-state Senators was absolutely critical for the pro-sugar forces. The amendment was defeated because of the traditional logroll among farming interests. Other commodity groups lobbied against the repeal effort on sugar because they feared similar attempts might be made to remove the policies that favored their own crops. Senators from states with only limited agricultural presence, but including companies that relied on sugar as an input, voted against the subsidy, as did ideological conservatives who viewed it as a restraint on trade.

Democrat Max Cleland is a good illustration of strategic thinking ahead of the July 2000 roll call. Sugar producers did not have much of a presence in Georgia, but peanut growers traditionally have been critical to the agricultural economy in that state, and the same forces that periodically target the sugar subsidy also go after supports for the peanut industry. Cleland and other Senators from southeastern states, where peanuts are important, had an alliance with colleagues from sugar producing states to jointly defeat such efforts. There was some countervailing organizational pressure within Georgia from other industries – Coca Cola, for example, was against the subsidies. But the intensity of the interests on the peanut side made a “yes” vote by Cleland almost a forgone conclusion. For Rick Santorum, although agricultural interests were critical to the Pennsylvania economy, the crops produced there – dairy, corn, and apples – were not as reliant on subsidies as were sugar and peanuts. Moreover, his state included a number of snack food producers who wanted lower sugar prices – Hershey, for instance, was in the state. Santorum also was an ideological conservative, philosophically opposed to agricultural subsidies. The weight of group interests within the state and his personal policy views resulted in an easy vote for him against the subsidy.

The minimum wage votes also evoked strong advocacy group interest within the constituencies of members, but also resonated more with ordinary voters than did the other items discussed in this section. There were two key floor votes related to the minimum wage, considered as amendments to bankruptcy reform legislation during fall 1999. Democratic leaders, with Edward Kennedy sponsoring the main proposal, were pushing a substantial hike throughout the 106th Congress as a party defining measure. Republicans responded with an alternative offered by Pete Domenici of New Mexico that included a less generous increase and tax breaks for small businesses. One purpose of the GOP-backed alternative was to provide cover on the issue for Republicans from competitive states who were running in 2000. The issue also was somewhat important at the grassroots level within each party base. The key factors in member decision making, however, were the balance of group pressures within the relevant state, partisan messaging, and the member's personal views about the minimum wage. For Democrats, the balance of forces generally produced an easy "yes" vote on the Kennedy amendment and a "no" on the Domenici alternative. Interestingly, on the GOP side of the aisle, the main coalition building challenge for the leadership was convincing conservative elements within their party to back even the modest hikes proposed by Domenici. For example, the office of one GOP conservative was heavily lobbied against any increases by the restaurant industry, which sought to hold costs down. Unions had a nontrivial presence in the northern part of that state and generally supported an increase because their wages were tied to the minimum wage. Such groups, however, were not supporters of the Senator and had little impact. He also was philosophically opposed to a minimum wage hike, especially as an amendment to an unrelated bill. Initially, he was inclined to vote no on both proposals, including the Domenici amendment, but GOP leaders convinced him to support the party position to provide cover for Republicans running for reelection in 2000. Indeed, the whip count Senate GOP leaders conducted about their proposal (the Domenici substitute) before floor action indicated that four Republicans were no or leaning that way, and another dozen were undecided. The potential defectors tended to be from swing states or fervent ideological conservatives. On the roll call, however, every Republican except George Voinovich voted yes and in support of the party position.

For the three trade roll calls – Steel imports, permanent normal trade relations for China, and the Africa trade legislation, there was a degree of interest from ordinary citizens – above and beyond their group affiliations – because of the magnitude of the economic interests involved. For Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania, Peter Fitzgerald of Illinois, and Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia, mass constituents were a major factor on the steel vote because of the importance of steel to their state economies. But here, the key factors were group mobilization and the settled voting records and core policy attitudes of members on international trade. One of the steel state lawmakers, for example, heard from domestic mini-mills and the steel workers in favor of the proposed quotas, but also from users of steel within the state who were in opposition, including Caterpillar and John Deere. The Senator met with these group representatives personally, ultimately voted against the main proposal, and instead supported a more market-oriented alternative offered by Ohio Republican Mike DeWine. Another midwestern Republican discerned little grassroots interest in the Steel quota proposal, but was heavily lobbied by both sides. Two steel companies within the state stood to gain from the proposed quotas, but that was countervailed by strong opposition from auto makers. Since there was organized pressure on both sides, this Senator based the decision on his general orientation toward free trade and voted no.

The extension of normal trade relation status to China was more complicated. Here, there was little interest among ordinary voters. Lobbying for adoption, however, was a national coalition of business interests in favor of free trade. Organized labor took the lead in lobbying against passage, and as a major Democratic constituency was an important part of the decision calculus for members on that side of the aisle. There was also organized opposition from conservative groups opposed to closer ties to China. In the end, the measure passed by a lopsided margin of 83-15, largely because of strong support from the business community, the personal policy priorities of members, and lobbying by the Clinton administration. Party leaders within the chamber were not a major factor. Similar dynamics were at work on narrower legislation that removed quotas and lowered tariffs on goods imported from sub-Saharan Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean Basin. Most affected were imported clothes made with U.S. cloth and yarn. The measure also included unrelated trade provisions regarding bananas and beef. Not surprisingly, it was heavily lobbied by domestic producers, with their positions largely determined by the economic consequences for their industry. Organized labor was opposed, although they did not push very hard. One liberal Democrat, for example, switched his vote on the Africa trade measure from “no” on passage to “yes” on the conference report because he knew that he would be against the China trade measure, which was critical to his union base, but also did not want to be viewed as a protectionist. The “yes” vote on Africa trade mattered less to organized labor and helped him counter such perceptions back home.

Of the remaining three items in the lower right-hand quadrant of Figure 1 – farm aid, Y2K liability, and bankruptcy reform – the agriculture bill resonated the most with ordinary voters, but almost entirely in farming areas located in the upper Midwest and plains states. In 1999, Senate action on emergency farm assistance took the form of competing party proposals, with the Democrats trying to maximize the funding level and Republicans attempting to hold it down. The importance of farm assistance as a party matter was especially pronounced for the Democrats because Minority Leader Thomas Daschle of South Dakota hailed from an agricultural state that had been damaged economically by bad weather and plummeting commodity prices. Daschle, in particular, pushed the Clinton administration to embrace enhanced aid levels, and worked closely on the matter with prominent Democrats on the Agriculture Committee, especially ranking member Tom Harkin, D-Iowa. Democratic Senators from non-agricultural states, or representing constituencies with farm economies unaffected by the emergency, largely deferred to the parochial interests of their leaders. The more limited leadership effects apparent on the Republican side of the aisle largely resulted from GOP efforts not to be outflanked by the more aggressive tactics employed by the minority. As a result, voting decisions derived from a combination of group interests and party messaging. The lobbying that took place generally included both state and nationally based organizations, and primarily was in favor of the largest aid levels that could be obtained.

Of the twenty measures under focus in this study, the Y2K and bankruptcy proposals were the least likely to activate voter opinion. The Y2K bill was intended to curb liability for computer glitches related to year-2000 problems. There was very little voter interest, but the organizational presence was substantial. High tech companies, in particular, pushed for the protections included in the legislation. Trial lawyers, who are highly organized and important to Democrats, lobbied strongly on the other side. For the most part, the lobbying that occurred was

a mix of internal state and national organizations. The measure also had partisan dimensions. An aide to a Senate Republican commented: “The party was involved up and down the line. Look at the top of the Standard and Poor’s 500 and you see Silicon Valley and high tech. Members have figured out where the wealth is,” the staffer continued. “The purpose of the Y2K bill was to distinguish between the two parties, show who is most pro-business, pro-high tech. The Democrats are captives of the plaintiff’s bar and this bill forces them to choose between their long-time constituency and the new money in the high-tech community ... the vote is an easy one for us and we welcome the Democrats’ distress.”

Eventually, moderate Democrats cut a deal with Republicans, the Clinton administration backed away from a veto threat, and the measure passed with nearly all Republicans voting in favor, along with a dozen Democrats. Interestingly while the relatively moderate Diane Feinstein voted with the high-tech industry for passage, her California colleague, the more traditionally liberal Barbara Boxer, voted no. The high-tech industry, of course, is critical to the California economy and industry representatives worked both Senators hard in favor of passage. Trial lawyers, however, were more closely associated with the liberal Boxer, while the Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers (both pushing for adoption) had stronger relations with Feinstein. The votes of these two Senators, in other words, reflected their divergent ties within the advocacy community.

The bankruptcy reform bill also was a regulatory measure of primary interest to organized groups, with pressure coming from a mix of national and state sources. After two years of protracted negotiations, the measure was pocket vetoed by Clinton. Over the course of Senate consideration, two key amendments were considered, one offered by Democrat Chris Dodd of Connecticut and the other by Diane Feinstein. Although the roll call on the Dodd proposal was party-line, party leaders were not much of a factor. For eleven of the twelve offices sampled for this issue, ordinary voters were at best a minor factor, and for one liberal Democrat the importance of mass constituents fell in the moderate category. Instead, the field of forces was dominated by organized groups, with the core policy attitudes of members also playing a role. And here, because of the highly technical nature of the legislation, members often relied on intelligence provided by Senate colleagues. An aide to one member summarized the decision-making process on bankruptcy reform: “We’ve heard from the credit card industry, banks, the bankruptcy judges. His counsel on Judiciary helped write the bill. So, we heard from all the interested parties at the staff and member level. We heard from the unions and consumers about this, but mostly at the staff level. We had a few meetings with lawyers in the state. They met with [the Senator] – twenty in a room. It was national and state lobbying.” The major players all had a presence within this member’s state, and to some extent his votes were aimed at holding together a bipartisan package that he helped craft. On the Dodd amendment that would have further restricted the ability of credit companies to issue cards to minors, the member voted to table the proposal, while the other Senator from that state, also a Democrat, voted against the tabling motion. The two members simply placed different weights on the configuration of organized interests that they both faced.

Other Items

For the final two items in the issue sample, both mass constituents and organized groups generally were of secondary importance. In a paper about the importance of constituency-based factors on roll call choice, though, it is worth addressing what factors *were* determinative in the absence of strong signals from home. The Senate vote in October 1999 to reject the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was the culmination of a year-long struggle between the Clinton administration and Senate Republicans. The administration and most Democrats viewed the treaty as critical for containing the global arms race, but many conservatives believed it could not be effectively implemented and would weaken the national defense. Since the treaty required a two-thirds supermajority to be adopted, GOP conservatives were pivotal, and the administration was unable to convince enough of them to vote yes to achieve the threshold. Ordinary voters are generally in favor of limiting the international development of nuclear arms. In a poll conducted by NBC News and the Wall Street Journal around the time of the vote, 46 percent of respondents disapproved of the Senate's rejection of the test ban treaty, 28 percent approved, and 26 percent had no opinion or were unsure. But when the survey followed up with a question that briefly presented arguments on both sides of the matter, the result was very different – an even split, now, with 44 percent agreeing more with supporters and 43 percent siding with the opponents. Perhaps most telling, when given a list of measures that the Senate had failed to pass that year, only 10 percent of those surveyed responded that their biggest disappointment was the test ban treaty (compared to 21 percent for the Patient's bill of Rights and 20 percent for gun control).⁸

For the most part, the views of ordinary citizens were a moderately important factor in the roll call decisions made for the office sample on this item. Conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh attempted to mobilize grassroots opposition, but for the most part there were not a lot of calls and letters to Senate offices. The importance of organized groups was minor for six of the offices and moderate for the other six. There was some organizational presence, but not much – primarily a loose network of national peace and arms control groups advocating adoption and defense hawks lobbying no. As usual, national groups attempted to approach members via a local link. The decision process for one GOP moderate was typical for Republicans who ended up voting yes. Although member of a Senate committee with jurisdiction, he was still in his first term and had not dealt with the issue previously. As the vote neared, staff cleared his schedule so that he could focus on the matter. He was initially undecided. Overall, the state is fairly liberal, especially on defense issues, but the views of conservative opponents back home were more intense. Interest group lobbying was muted and dealt with at the staff level – group representatives did not see the Senator personally. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson met with him to lobby in favor of passage, but the Clinton administration did not have much of an effect on his vote. Although the Senator viewed the treaty as flawed and unenforceable, he voted yes to promote the moral position of the U.S. on arms control. More generally, for this issue the personal policy priorities of members were often a critical factor in the voting decision. The impact of party leaders was significant, but entirely focused on procedure and the agenda, rather than the substantive votes of members.

Campaign finance reform was an agenda perennial throughout the 1990s, with Senate politics on the matter usually focusing on various iterations of legislation championed by Republican John

⁸ NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll, October 1999.

McCain of Arizona and Democrat Russell Feingold of Wisconsin. After yet another protracted struggle, the Senate failed to invoke cloture on two amendments offered by Democratic leaders and the issue was pulled from the floor schedule in October 1999. In many ways, public opinion polls on campaign finance reform resemble the survey results for the test ban treaty. People are generally in favor of reform in the abstract. But the same NBC/Wall Street Journal survey cited for the treaty also asked respondents for their views about campaign finance reform, including in the question a brief summary for and against. Pitched in this manner, respondents split evenly between believing reform would be beneficial (43 percent) and believing that it would have no effect on the political system (44 percent). Only five percent claimed that they would base their vote on the issue, and only nine percent viewed the Senate's failure to pass campaign finance legislation as their biggest disappointment, about the same as for the test ban treaty. Not surprisingly, then, for the twelve Senate offices included in the sample for campaign finance, the importance of constituent opinion generally ranged between minor and moderate. There were significant interactions with the advocacy community for members who were leaders in this issue area (e.g., Democrat Carl Levin and Republican Fred Thompson), but for the most part advocacy organizations were a secondary consideration. Party leaders did not exert much influence on the substance of the vote and the administration was a non-factor. Here, members generally cast votes that were consistent with their previous records in the issue area. A subset of the membership cared deeply about reform and voters generally favored the concept, which kept the item on the national agenda. But for most members, campaign finance reform was not a priority.

The Act of Representation

This exploration of the meaning of constituency in Senate decision making makes a strong case, I think, that representation and responsiveness need to be reconceptualized, and that more nuanced measures are needed to adequately understand the relationship between roll call choice and interests back home. For one, members and their staffs fully recognize that public opinion often is not well formed. They know that ordinary voters have attitudes about the two political parties and about major political figures. They understand that mass actors have general tendencies on the major issues of the day. But as Converse demonstrated decades ago, the policy preferences of most citizens are not particularly coherent. Public opinion, as a practical consideration within the political process, is not a set of issue-specific distributions. Such conceptualizations of opinion are largely constructs of modern polling practices and the scholarly community (Achen and Bartels, 2016). Instead, political elites have an intuitive understanding of mass attitudes as *a process*, not a distribution of preferences or a set of answers to questions on a survey. Again, at an intuitive level, they understand the gist of recent scholarship about attitude formation, which emphasizes underlying considerations, personal identities, and the framing or priming strategies of elites as communicated via media. This is precisely why Senate staff often respond to questions about opinion in the state by referencing media coverage, rather than the results of surveys. When asked about mass opinion, they focus on the concrete, observable factors that they know shape the process through which mass opinion takes form. One consequence – Senators often have room to maneuver when deciding how to vote, and roll call choices are inseparable from the act of explanation and communications strategies more generally (Kingdon 1973, Fenno 1978).

The standard approach in contemporary empirical scholarship about congressional representation is to gauge the proximity between the votes cast by legislators and measures of exogenously determined public opinion for the relevant issue area. Sometimes these measures derive from surveys, and considerable effort has been allocated to implementing protocols where scholars can place elite and mass viewpoints in the same issue space for purposes of comparison. Alternatively, scholars often relate roll call choices on Capitol Hill to aggregate constituency characteristics, such as the economic makeup of a district or state, patterns of voting in presidential elections, or other measures that might proxy for constituent “preferences.” The principal-agent conceptualization inherent to such research designs, however, fails to capture the ways that elite actors themselves can shape the voter response via agenda setting, the strategic construction of alternatives, and careful messaging.

As most of the roll call decisions reviewed in this study demonstrate, the role of constituency related factors is often channeled through advocacy organizations. Across many issues, the Senate legislative process is largely group driven. Members recognize that constituency interests as channeled through organized advocacy tend to be more intense and politically meaningful than is the case for mass opinion. There are exceptions. Abortion issues are an obvious example, and as we have seen, Senate offices also viewed citizen attitudes as politically meaningful on education and health policy. But most often, Senators and their aides think about constituency through an organizational lens. Even when advocacy campaigns are driven by strategizing at the national level, groups seek to approach individual members via their presence in the relevant state. Most group engagement, we have seen, was viewed by member offices as state driven or a mixture of state and national contacts.

As a result, constituency “responsiveness” should not be conceptualized as some tradeoff between public opinion back home, on the one hand, and group demands, on the other. When it exists, grassroots opinion often takes form and gets registered via organized pressure. Within states and across issues, of course, the views and interests of certain subsets of the constituency likely will be underrepresented within the advocacy community, and such distortions will be closely scrutinized as this project proceeds. In making up their minds about how to vote, legislators weigh the often-divergent sentiments emanating from subsets of their voters, and the different signals they are receiving from organizations, both nationally and within the state. They make roll call choices to balance the often-competing demands of these audiences, and then attempt to sell their decisions back home (Jacobs and Shapiro, 2000). Members, in a sense, construct their constituencies on an issue-by-issue basis. Principal-agent frameworks, proximity analysis, and the standard conceptualization of responsiveness do not really capture how representation plays out on the ground.

Along those lines, recent scholarship demonstrates that congressional staff – and presumably the members themselves – often have inaccurate, even distorted perceptions of politically important characteristics of their constituencies (e.g. Hertel-Fernandez, 2019; Miler, 2010). Often, these distortions are explained with social psychological concepts about cognitive biases or information search, perhaps highlighting the unrepresentative character of the organized pressure system in shaping the misperceptions of elites. No doubt, behavioral economics and related concepts can inform our understanding of how Senators make voting decisions. But the way that Senate offices perceive their constituencies may not seem so systematically inaccurate if we

consider the personal goals of lawmakers. The way they view their constituencies may simply reflect the practical exigencies of representation in the real world of congressional politics. Again, Senate offices do not view public opinion the way demographers and survey analysts do. Perhaps their perceptions of constituency place disproportionate weight on organized pressure precisely because group mobilization is often the main vehicle through which constituency interests are articulated and registered in the representation process. And it's the perceptions of members and other political elites that we need to highlight to understand behavior.

Although not the focus of this particular paper (but see Evans 2018c), parties also are an important element of the decision-making process. By structuring the agenda and devising alternatives, leaders help shape which audiences are activated or otherwise relevant in an issue area, and thus the effective constituency that rank-and-file members confront. But the standard distinctions that political scientists make between the impact of member preferences, on the one hand, and party influence, on the other, do not inform our understanding of lawmaking or representational relationships more generally. Often, the impact of partisan imperatives is felt through the construction of constituency, the formation of member policy positions, and the role that national party messages play in the explanation of Washington activity (see also Lee 2009, Evans 2018a). Importantly, although most of the roll calls that were targeted as part of this study were party line, the primary cause was not leadership lobbying or arm-twisting. Constituency factors, often exerted through the organized advocacy community, were the central factor in most of the roll call decisions considered here. Even in an era of high partisan polarization, constituency is central to member decision making, and much of the partisan behavior we observe is not rooted in leadership lobbying or collective choice within party caucuses. Instead, it derives from important intra-party continuities (and inter-party differences) in the ways that members forge representational relationship with outside audiences. Much roll call partisanship is constituency driven.

I would push the argument a step further. A large and influential scholarly literature exists about the impact of internal chamber procedures on member behavior and the content of legislation. Typically, scholars view procedure as an endogenously determined constraint that can alter the spatial location of outcomes. Theories of party government in Congress, for example, are rooted in the majority's procedural prerogatives over the agenda (Cox and McCubbins, 2005; see also Hartog and Monroe, 2011). But my exploration of Senate voting decisions emphasizes agenda setting more as a vehicle for messaging and the construction of narrative. Recall the 1999 floor vote on abortion. Poll questions about overturning Roe skewed results toward the pro-choice view, while questions about the partial birth procedure tilted responses toward the pro-life stance. As Zaller demonstrated, question wording is akin to issue priming. As a result, pro-choice groups emphasized the protection of Roe in their communications tactics and programmatic agendas, while pro-life organizations tried to shift the focus to proposals like partial birth that polled favorably for their side. Not surprisingly, when GOP leaders brought abortion to the Senate floor in 1999, their base bill concerned partial birth abortion. Pro-choice Democrats responded with substitutes aimed at changing the subject to Roe v. Wade. The wording of survey questions, group tactics, agenda setting on the floor, and the votes of members – It all lined up. Senate agenda setting, in other words, is as much about issue framing and the construction of narrative for outside consumption as it is about inducing equilibria over the content of policy.

Finally, as Pitkin (1972) argued decades ago and Disch (2012) has emphasized more recently, representation is most properly conceptualized as an act and individual Senators exert agency in forging representational relationships with voters and groups. To understand such relationships, we need to consider them in part from the perspective of the office enterprise (Shepsle and Salisbury, 1981). The overriding goal of the project of which this paper is a part is to open up the black box of member decision making, and thereby illuminate the ways that Senators exert agency as they form positions and cast votes.

Table 1. Issue Sample, 106th Senate

Measure	Targeted Roll Calls
Y2K Liability	Passage
Steel Imports	Cloture
Patients' Bill of Rights	Passage and major amendments
Emergency Farm Aid	Main substitutes on FY 2000 Agriculture spending bill
FY 2000 Reconciliation	Passage and conference report
Northeast Dairy Compact	Cloture during FY 2000 Agriculture spending debate
Africa Trade/CBI	Passage
Minimum Wage	Kennedy and Domenici amendments on Bankruptcy bill
Bankruptcy Reform	Dodd and Feinstein credit amendments
Partial Birth Abortions	Harkin amendment and passage
Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty	Passage
FY 2000 Labor/HHS	Passage and conference report
Campaign Finance Reform	Cloture on Daschle and Reid amendments
ESEA Reauthorization	Lieberman amendment and Democratic substitute
Hate Crimes	Kennedy amendment to FY 2001 Defense authorization bill
Marriage Penalty	Passage
Estate Tax Repeal	Passage
China/PNTR	Passage
Drug Re-importation	Jeffords-Dorgan amendment to FY 2001 Agriculture spending bill
Sugar Subsidy Repeal	McCain amendment to FY 2001 Agriculture spending bill

Table 2. Decision Observations

Republican Senators	Number of Observations
Spencer Abraham, Mich.	6
Susan Collins, Maine	10
Larry Craig, Idaho	4
Pete Domenici, N.M.	10
Peter Fitzgerald, Ill.	10
Bill Frist, Tenn.	10
Chuck Hagel, Neb.	7
Orin Hatch, Utah	1
Tim Hutchinson, Ark.	3
James Jeffords, Vt.	10
John Kyl, Ariz.	2
Richard Lugar, Ind.	8
Don Nickles, Okla.	4
Rick Santorum, Penn.	10
Jeff Sessions, Ala.	10
Gordon Smith, Ore.	6
Fred Thompson, Tenn.	4
George Voinovich, Ohio	5
Democratic Senators	Number of Observations
Joseph Biden, Del.	2
Jeff Bingaman, N.M.	9
Barbara Boxer, Calif.	9
Max Cleland, Ga.	9
Kent Conrad, N.D.	5
Byron Dorgan, N.D.	6
John Edwards, N.C.	9
Diane Feinstein, Calif.	6
Bob Graham, Fla.	8
Tom Harkin, Iowa	9
Carl Levin, Mich.	9
Joseph Lieberman, Ct.	9
Blanche Lincoln, Ark.	3
Jack Reed, R.I.	4
John D. Rockefeller, IV, W.V.	1
Paul Sarbanes, Md.	10
Robert Torricelli, N.J.	9
Paul Wellstone, Minn.	3
TOTAL	240

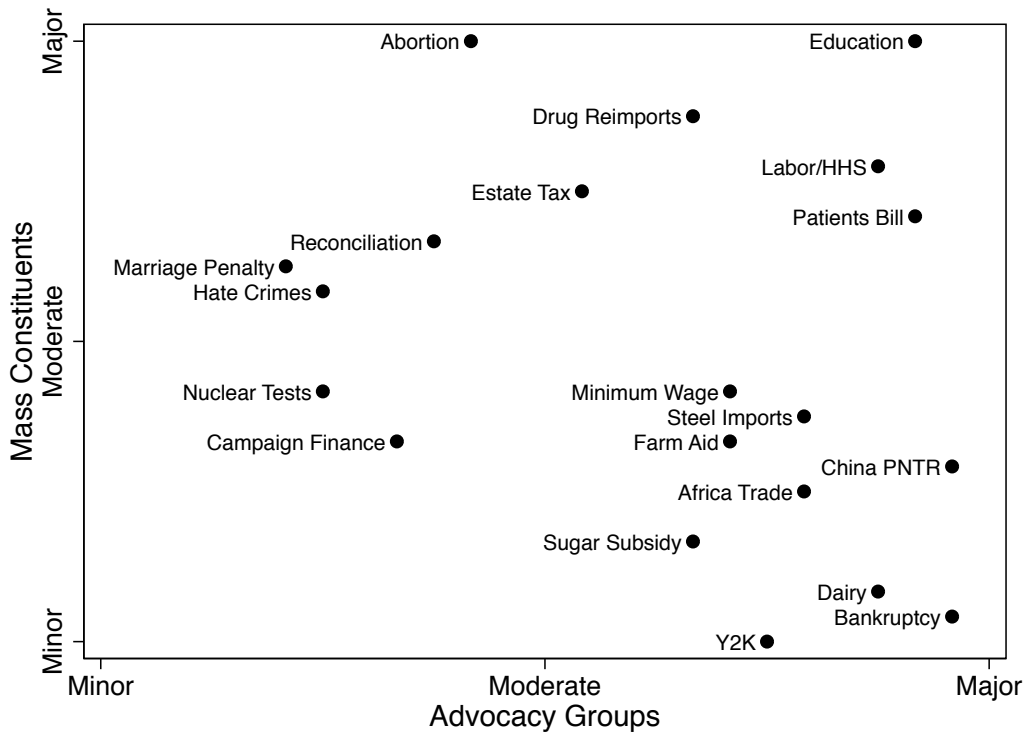
Table 3. Touchstone importance, all measures

	Mass Constituents	Advocacy Groups	Party Leaders	Executive Branch	Core Attitudes	Colleagues
Major	76 (31.7)	118 (49.2)	27 (11.3)	18 (7.5)	117 (48.8)	46 (19.2)
Moderate	81 (33.8)	75 (31.3)	55 (22.9)	32 (13.3)	68 (28.3)	52 (21.7)
Minor	83 (34.6)	47 (19.6)	158 (65.8)	190 (79.2)	55 (22.9)	142 (59.2)

Table 4. Touchstone importance by issue: Mass constituents and advocacy groups

Measure	Mass Constituents			Advocacy Groups		
	Major	Moderate	Minor	Major	Moderate	Minor
ESEA Reauthorization ^{√3}	12	0	0	10	2	0
Partial Birth Abortions [√]	12	0	0	3	4	5
Drug Re-importation	9	3	0	6	4	2
FY 2000 Labor/HHS [√]	7	5	0	10	1	1
Estate Tax ^{√1}	6	6	0	3	7	2
Patients' Bill of Rights ^{√4}	5	7	0	3	4	5
FY 2000 Reconciliation ^{√1}	7	2	3	2	5	5
Marriage Penalty [√]	4	7	1	0	5	7
Hate Crimes [√]	3	8	1	1	4	7
Minimum Wage ^{√2}	1	8	3	6	5	1
Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty [√]	1	8	3	0	6	6
Steel Imports [√]	3	3	6	8	3	1
Campaign Finance Reform [√]	1	6	5	2	4	6
Emergency Farm Aid [√]	3	2	7	7	3	2
China/PNTR	0	7	5	11	1	0
Africa Trade/CBI	1	4	7	8	3	1
Sugar Subsidy Repeal	0	4	8	5	6	1
Northeast Dairy Compact	1	0	11	9	3	0
Bankruptcy Reform [√]	0	1	11	11	1	0
Y2K Liability [√]	0	0	12	6	6	0

Figure 1. Average touchstone importance by issue: Mass constituents and advocacy groups



Appendix: Interview Protocol and Coding

In deciding what questions to ask the respondents, I worked off of John Kingdon's research design in *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*. Indeed, I found that his core questions still work remarkably well. A preliminary questionnaire was developed and pretested with two Senate chiefs of staff that I knew and trusted. I spoke with them at length and on repeated occasions about question wording, topics to address, the likelihood of candid responses, etc. After lengthy discussions, I settled on the following set of questions.

1. Was the vote on _____ a hard one, or fairly easy? How did [the Senator] go about making up his/her mind on the matter?

Typical follow-ups: Was the vote ever in doubt? When did he/she make up his/her mind? Was the Senator briefed by staff before the vote?

2. What was the view in the state on this one?

Typical follow-ups: Did you consider how the vote might be used in a campaign? Who in the state was paying attention? What was the mail like? Is there any concern that constituent views on this might evolve or change? What about public opinion on this matter nationally?

3. How about interest groups? Were organized groups a factor?

Typical follow-ups: What did the groups want? Did any lobbyists come in? Did they meet with the Senator or at the staff level? Were the groups mostly national or local? Was any grassroots mobilization undertaken? What else were the groups up to on this issue? How's your relationship generally with these groups?

4. Was the party leadership active on this issue? What role did the leadership play?

Typical follow-ups: Did your boss speak directly with Lott/Daschle, one of the whips, or another leader? Were party conference/caucus meetings conducted about this issue? Did they have much of an impact on your boss's thinking? Do you think the leadership influenced other Senate offices?

5. Did your boss talk to any other Senators about this vote — Senators outside of the leadership?

Typical follow-ups: What kind of impact did these conversations have? Was he/she lobbied personally by any other members? Were there any offices that he/she looked to for information or guidance? Were there any important contacts at the staff level with other offices?

6. How about the administration? Did the Clinton administration play a role in your boss's decision on this issue?

Typical follow-ups: Did he/she hear from anyone in the executive branch? What were these contacts about? Do you think the administration influenced other Senate offices?

Variable Coding Criteria

The following is a comprehensive delineation of the specific criteria used to code the touchstone relevance variables utilized in this paper. For each factor, certain of the criteria are not mutually exclusive and multiple criteria often are apparent in the interview notes. If multiple items are indeed apparent, rather than aggregate them in some way, I instead assigned the highest appropriate level. For example, if for the "Mass Constituents" factor both criteria H (associated with "moderate" importance) and O (associated with "major importance") are mentioned, the relevance level for this decision observation and factor is coded as "major."

Mass Constituents

Minor

- A. Not referenced
- B. Calculations about average or typical voter played no significant role
- C. Public not interested in or not paying attention, no local tie-in

Moderate

- D. Reference to a bloc or pockets of interested voters even if not large, separately from organizations or lobbyists
- E. Some grassroots interest, but not extensive or clearly orchestrated
- F. Influential people in communities paying attention, that is, elites who other people pay attention to
- G. Public is inattentive on this bill, but could be engaged by issue in future, perhaps in a campaign
- H. Senator conducted “events” on the issue or reference to light media coverage
- I. Reference to general constituency viewpoint (e.g., state is pro export or pro trade), or item as being good or bad for state

Major

- J. Significant concern to large number or substantial bloc of voters
- K. Reference in detail the views of different voter blocs
- L. Mention that large numbers of constituents are affected by or care about the issue
- M. Numerous conversations occurred about it between voters and the Senator, or heard a lot from back home
- N. Reference to extensive and significant grassroots activity
- O. Mention as an important “voter” issue in past or future campaign
- P. Reference to base being activated or caring a lot about the matter
- Q. Reference to significant ads, media buys or substantial press coverage about the item in the state; or to important “focal” events occurring in the state
- R. Poll data referenced and emphasized

Interest Groups and Advocacy Organizations

Minor

- A. Not referenced at all
- B. Lobbying activities described as very limited, perhaps a few calls or less
- C. Only sporadic astro-turf tactics occurred and were discounted as such

Moderate

- D. Mention relevance of issue to groups firms, industries, or another organized constituency
- E. Lobbying occurred, but not extensive
- F. Lobbying occurred, but contacts primarily were as part of more general visits to the office (e.g., group “lobbying days”)
- G. Senator or staff “took some calls” from group representatives, separate from grassroots contacts, but little more
- H. Strong organized interest that was very narrow (e.g., one relatively small firm)
- I. Reference to group activity, but without much pressure or “not pushing it much”

Major

- J. Reference significant group or organizational presence in state or national constituency
- K. Politics of issue largely described in group terms
- L. Heavy lobbying took place
- M. Member worked closely with advocacy community in crafting alternatives or planning strategy
- N. Referenced significant interaction due to committee or other leadership role

Party Leadership

Minor

- A. No reference
- B. Heard nothing from leadership
- C. Not a leadership issue, or interacted with member of leadership purely outside his/her leadership role
- D. Leadership knows where we are in this area, perhaps only sounded out
- E. Leadership only mentioned regarding procedural tactics that did not affect Member's substantive deliberations

Moderate

- F. Referenced as a leadership issue
- G. Discussion in caucus referenced as noteworthy or a factor
- H. Conversations about bill occurred at member or staff level with leaders or leadership staff, but pressure not referenced as significant
- I. Leadership crafting of agenda or procedural situation mentioned as noteworthy and had substantive implications (e.g., provided political cover)

Major

- J. Significant pressure exerted by leadership on member, either directly or throughout staff
- K. Senator worked closely with leadership on the matter, or simply deferred to leadership requests
- L. Discussion in caucus referenced as a major part of decision-making process
- M. Leadership pressured the member not to offer a relevant amendment that would have affected substantive deliberations
- N. The electoral interests of co-partisans "in cycle" were a major concern

Executive Branch/Administration

Minor

- A. No reference
- B. Nothing from administration
- C. We don't pay attention to them on these issues, the administration doesn't come to us
- D. Received correspondence from administration, but not referenced as noteworthy

Moderate

- E. Some contact from administration staff, heard from them
- F. Referenced relatively routine interactions at the staff or agency/department level
- G. Administration participation in caucus meetings referenced
- H. Administration factored into voting decision as a strategic consideration (e.g., a threatened veto that altered the substantive calculus, or member efforts to strengthen the administration's leverage or resolve)

Major

- I. Information from or persuasive efforts by the administration referenced as a significant part of the decision
- J. President, White House staff, or cabinet secretary communicated directly with and lobbied the Senator
- K. Administration presentations during caucus meetings referenced as a significant factor in the decision

Core Attitudes

Minor

- A. Not alluded to in any way

Moderate

- B. Mentioned general position or broader attitude in passing or after other factors and in a manner that did not indicate emphasis

- C. Related decision to group interest that is central to Senator's broader policy agenda (e.g., pro-labor or pro working people)
- D. Reference to member being comfortable or uncomfortable with the position for policy reasons
- E. Mention importance of outside policy experts

Major

- F. Clear ideological or other policy dimensional reference that was emphasized (e.g., importance of "Freedom to Farm" approach)
- G. Emphasized relationship of issue to an attitude, value or principle that matters to the Senator (e.g., pro-trade, pro-growth)
- H. Decision directly related to an important, longstanding policy position (e.g., pro-choice or pro-life)
- I. Decision closely related to a policy priority of the Senator

Senate Colleagues

Minor

- A. No reference, or reference to being cue givers rather than takers
- B. Nothing beyond typical, mostly routine conversations

Moderate

- C. Referenced noteworthy communications with other offices at the staff level
- D. Referenced Senator speaking with a colleague about the issue or mentioning a colleague without substantial emphasis
- E. Position of a colleague is "generally considered" by member on these issues
- F. Worked on relevant task force, but individual members not referenced by name
- G. Worked with colleague on minor part of bill, or worked closely with that colleague on the issue in a prior Congress

Major

- H. Deferred to a colleague
- I. Looked to a colleague as an important cue or for significant guidance
- J. Senator knew he/she would be "with" a particular colleague on the vote
- K. Worked closely with a colleague on a closely related substantive alternative
- L. Worked on a relevant task force and non-leadership members referenced by name
- M. Lobbied personally by a colleague and gave serious consideration to the persuasive effort
- N. Referenced Senator as speaking with "many" or "a lot" of colleagues about the issue

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