

## Maintaining Congressional Committees: Sources of Member Support

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*Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (May, 1998), 197-218.

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*Legislative Studies Quarterly* is currently published by Comparative Legislative Research Center.

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## *Maintaining Congressional Committees: Sources of Member Support*

Within the U.S. House of Representatives, standing committee recommendations are usually accepted by the full chamber. Although considerable attention has been paid to the extent that committee recommendations are ratified by the full chamber, relatively little research has addressed the sources of committee success. Committees usually win on the floor, but it is unclear why members of Congress support committee recommendations, or how we should account for variation in such support. One explanation for committee success is that members derive power from the committee system, and thus are reluctant to challenge committee recommendations. A second explanation is that committees themselves are partisan institutions, and thus members support committee recommendations out of partisan loyalty. A third explanation is that members support committees because committees recommend policies that are consistent with members' policy preferences. Unlike previous studies that have relied primarily on single-vote case studies, I use roll-call data from the 98th through the 100th Congresses (1983–88) to construct an aggregate measure of committee support and to test these three competing explanations of the sources of committee support. I conclude that with few exceptions, policy and partisan motivations have a stronger influence on member support for committee recommendations than do incentives stemming from members' institutional positions.

Ever since Woodrow Wilson wrote, "Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work" (1885, 69), numerous scholars have sought to document the extent of committee influence. For example, Fenno (1966) showed that the House Appropriations committee generally prevailed on the floor. Indeed, from 1947 to 1962, only 20% of appropriations amendments opposed by the bill manager were adopted by the full House. Fenno's observations have been reconfirmed by many others, including Dyson and Soule (1970) and Maltzman (1995). Dyson and Soule discovered that the majority of the House opposed the majority of the reporting committee only 10% of the time between 1955 and 1964. More recently, Maltzman assessed mildly contested amendment votes between 1975 and 1988 and found that the majority of the House opposed the majority of the reporting committee only 6% of the time. The evidence is clear: committees rarely lose on the House floor.

Although there is an extensive body of literature on what factors account for committee floor success in the aggregate (see Shepsle and Weingast 1994), we know relatively little about why individual members generally vote to support committee recommendations. Nor have scholars explored variation in committee support, or tried to account for it. Explanations of why members support committee recommendations generally follow one of three broad paths. First, some scholars argue that members support committee recommendations because those recommendations are generally consistent with their own policy preferences. Second, others suggest that members affirm committee recommendations because of their own institutional position. That is, members support committee recommendations either because they are members of the reporting committee, or because they hold a leadership position within the committee system. Third, others suggest that support for committee recommendations is based on partisanship: majority members support committee positions out of party loyalty. In this article, I test these three competing explanations of member support for committee recommendations, using House floor roll-call data from 1983–88, and find that variation in support for committee positions stems from partisan and policy motivations, rather than members' institutional concerns.

### Sources of Committee Support

#### *The Committee System*

There is good reason to suspect that a member's position within the committee system will influence his or her voting behavior on the House floor. After all, the committee system itself ensures the likelihood of certain policy outcomes and empowers subsets of members (Shepsle and Weingast 1981; Weingast and Marshall 1988). We might expect, that is, that members will vary in their level of committee support based on institutionalized relationships within the chamber. Relationships between members and the committees on which they do *not* serve and relationships among members of a single committee, both arguably affect members' support for committee recommendations. The logic of the two accounts differ, but both suggest that variation in committee support stems from institutional, rather than partisan or policy, concerns.

The first account involves the relationship between members and the committees on which they do *not* serve. All else being equal, we might expect members to be inclined to support recommendations of

other committees because deference to *other* committees serves to protect members' influence within their *own* committees. Because such influence within committee is not likely to be distributed evenly, we would expect those members who gain disproportionately from the committee system to show the highest levels of support for other committee recommendations. Some members would be expected to support other committee recommendations, that is, because of their incentive to protect their own power within the chamber.

Committee leaders most obviously gain disproportionately from a generalized norm of deference. Shipan (1996) summarizes (but does not endorse) the argument: "while all members receive certain benefits from their committee memberships and the committee system in general, some members—most conspicuously, committee chairmen—receive greater benefits than do members who do not hold such positions" (1996, 186). In other words, committee leaders may have a stronger incentive than other members to support recommendations from other committees on the floor. Although committee chairs are the most visible committee leaders, ranking minority members arguably also have a disproportionate interest in maintaining and protecting the committee system. Because a change in party control of the chamber would most likely make them a committee chair, and because chamber and party rules provide ranking members with more influence than the average minority party member, we might expect that ranking members would also show higher levels of committee support. Finally, a norm of committee deference might also particularly enhance the powers of members who serve on the most prestigious House committees. Because such committees have a broad and salient jurisdiction (Shipan 1992, 889), members of the most powerful House committees likely have a stronger interest than other members in supporting the recommendations of other committees on the floor.

The second institutional account connects relationships amongst a committee's members with variation in committee support. Because committee members work closely together in a small group, some scholars have maintained that committee members support committee recommendations because they identify with those committees on which they serve. Committee members, that is, are said to be socialized to support their own committees. For example, Fenno (1966) argued that the "responsible" legislative orientation of its members, as well as its stable membership and the attractiveness of a seat on the committee, led members of the House Appropriations Committee to embrace a set of common norms. In particular, individuals appointed to the committee began to embrace the role of "guardians of the

treasury." It is this common set of goals that would lead committee members to support committee recommendations. According to Fenno, "should a member of the full Committee support an amendment [that is not a committee amendment], he can be chastised by his fellows for a violation of an internal Committee norm..." (1966, 444). Indeed, the support of Appropriations Committee members frequently provided the committee with the margin it needed to win on the floor. Like Fenno, Manley (1965; 1970) discovered that members' positions within the committee system could shape their behavior. Specifically, he concluded that the power and prestige members derived from a seat on the Ways and Means Committee led them to identify with one another, and to adopt the norm of "restrained partisanship."<sup>1</sup> To be sure, members may have an incentive to support their own committee's recommendations for more than the foregoing sociological reasons. Logrolls across committee members often get embedded within a committee's bill. Such deals give committee members a vested interest in committee bills, an interest that goes beyond concerns about disrupting committee norms or protecting their committees' power or their own general policy preferences.

Institutionally-derived explanations of committee support are not limited to examples from the "textbook congresses" of the pre-reform period (Shepsle 1989). More recently, LaRue and Rothenberg's (1992) study of the House of Representative's decision to ban smoking on domestic flights supports an institutional explanation of how committee concerns shape voting behavior. During floor consideration of the fiscal year 1988 House transportation appropriations bill, Richard Durbin (D-IL) introduced an amendment to prohibit smoking on domestic flights. Because it was commonly understood that the amendment belonged in an authorizing, rather than appropriations, committee bill, LaRue and Rothenberg (1992), as well as Shipan (1995) and Krehbiel (1996), argue that the vote on the amendment is a good test for determining whether institutional considerations shape behavior. After controlling for a variety of relevant constituent characteristics (such as the number of smokers and the size of the tobacco industry in each member's district), as well as members' ideology and party, LaRue and Rothenberg find that members of the committee whose jurisdiction was being raided (Public Works) were significantly more likely to oppose the Durbin amendment.<sup>2</sup> In spite of Durbin's eventual success, LaRue and Rothenberg interpret the significant impact of institutional position on voting outcomes as a demonstration of the influence of institutional factors on members' expressed preferences. Based upon this single case, LaRue and Rothenberg conclude:

...the willingness of members to consider institutional matters will contribute to the stability of Congress. Most importantly, the existence of leaders as enforcers should aid in preserving the mutually advantageous division of labor that characterizes the modern-day legislature (1992, 315).

Thus, House committee studies spanning thirty years suggest that a member's willingness to support committee recommendations is derived from his or her particular position within the committee system.

### *Policy Preferences*

Recently, many students of Congress have argued that members' support for committee recommendations is contingent on the distribution of policy preferences across the chamber. In other words, support for committee recommendations is based not on institutional considerations, but on a member's closely held policy preferences. For example, Krehbiel (1991) argues that committees recognize that they are constrained by the preferences of the median chamber member. As a result, committees usually report legislation and support policies consistent with the chamber median. Thus, committee floor success inevitably stems from the willingness of committees to report only bills that are consistent with the floor's preferences.<sup>3</sup>

Several recent case studies suggest the strength of a policy-based explanation. Shipan's (1992) analysis of a 1987 House vote on long-term health care costs, and Shipan's (1995) and Krehbiel's (1996) studies of the Durbin smoking amendment each support the argument that variation in support for committee recommendations stems from differences in members' policy positions. In contrast to LaRue and Rothenberg's (1992) treatment of the Durbin amendment, both Shipan (1995) and Krehbiel (1996) argue that members support committee positions because of their policy positions, not because of their particular institutional positions. A similar test case is examined in Shipan's (1992) treatment of a House floor vote when Claude Pepper (D-FL) tried to propose an amendment establishing a long-term care health program.<sup>4</sup> Because the Pepper amendment would have circumvented two committees with jurisdiction over long-term health care, many members perceived the procedural vote on whether to allow Pepper to offer his amendment as a vote for or against the integrity of the committee system. Shipan finds that after controlling for constituency preferences and ideology, members who arguably had the most power within the committee system were no more likely to oppose the violation of committee jurisdiction than were members who lacked such an institutional position. Shipan explains:

In general, almost no support was found for a link between institutional position, or expected gains from the committee system, and commitment to jurisdictional property rights. When members were forced to choose between individual interests and institutional imperatives, they chose the immediate and personal benefits (1992, 892).

This set of case studies provides strong, though limited, evidence that institutional considerations may be insufficient to account for variation in members' support for committees on the floor.

### *Majority Party*

Members' partisan motivations are another potential source of committee support. Because committee seats are allocated on a partisan basis, and because the majority party numerically dominates House committees, some portray the committee system as an instrument of the majority party (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993). Cox and McCubbins explain that "the legislative process in general, and the committee system in particular, is stacked in favor of majority party interests" (1991, 2). According to this portrait of the committee system, House committees report proposals that are consistent with the majority party's policy platform and that will strengthen the party's reputation. To ensure that this occurs, the majority party caucus appoints committee contingents that either reflect its preferences or that are ideologically more extreme than its caucus (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Maltzman 1995).<sup>5</sup> As a result, we might expect majority party members to be more willing to support committee recommendations than their colleagues in the minority. This expectation should be especially true in the post-reform period, since the thrust of reforms in the 1970s was to make committees responsive to the preferences of the majority party caucus.

Existing evidence to this effect is mixed. Consistent with this interpretation is the argument that the House Democratic leadership aggressively used restrictive rules to protect committee recommendations when it controlled the chamber (Bach and Smith 1988; Smith 1989; Rohde 1991; Sinclair 1992, 1994, 1995). Clearly, the leadership's willingness to use such rules reflected a belief that committees were acting in the majority party's interest. However, studies that have used as their unit of analysis the votes cast by individual members have discovered that after controlling for policy preferences, party affiliation has almost no effect. For example, LaRue and Rothenberg (1992) and Shipan (1995) find that after controlling for policy preferences, partisanship did not affect members' decisions to oppose the Durbin amendment. Likewise, Shipan (1992) finds no statistically significant

party effect on members' willingness to oppose Pepper's attempt to circumvent the House Energy and Commerce and Ways and Means Committees. More recently, Krehbiel (1995) explored an effort to discharge a bill that would have undermined committee autonomy. Krehbiel argues that policy preferences of individual members and their institutional positions, not partisanship, influenced whether or not members chose to sign the petition opposed by majority party leaders.

In response to such studies, as well as his own research, Krehbiel (1993b) argues that members of Congress vote with their party because of "preferenceship," rather than "partisanship" (1993b, 262). It is important to remember, however, that the case studies pitting a partisan explanation against a preference explanation tap single (albeit salient) votes on the floor, or in the case of Krehbiel (1995) the decision to sign a discharge petition on one piece of legislation. It may be that partisanship, independent of policy positions, still affects members' support for committee recommendations over the range of issues brought to the floor in the post-reform period. Moving beyond case studies is clearly the next step for disentangling the effects of institutional, policy, and partisan positions in shaping members' support for committee recommendations (Shipan 1996, 187).

### Hypotheses of Committee Support

Each of these explanations of member support for committee recommendations leads to a different expectation about member behavior. If institutional, policy, or partisan factors contribute to the reluctance of the full chamber to reject committee positions, member support for committee proposals should vary systematically across members. Considering first, members' institutional positions, we should expect those individuals who hold the most power within the system to be the staunchest supporters of committees and their recommendations. Three hypotheses consistent with this institutional expectation follow:

*Hypothesis 1: Committee chairs, being uniquely empowered by the committee system, disproportionately support recommendations from other committees.*

*Hypothesis 2: Ranking minority members of the committees, being empowered by the committee system, are more likely than other members of the minority party to support committee recommendations.*

*Hypothesis 3: Members of more powerful committees, being uniquely empowered by the committee system, disproportionately support committee recommendations.*



As argued earlier, we might also expect to find higher levels of support for committee recommendations among the reporting committee's own members. Thus, a fourth explanation consistent with the institutionally-derived explanation is possible:

*Hypothesis 4: Committee loyalty leads committee members to support the positions of committees on which they serve.*

While obviously a majority of the committee members support the position taken by the majority of the committee, hypothesis 4 is based upon the premise that even after controlling for policy preferences, members of the individual reporting committees support their committees more than noncommittee members.

Two hypotheses can also be derived from our expectations about committee-party relations in the post-reform House. If committees are structured to report outcomes consistent with majority party preferences, we should expect to find that:

*Hypothesis 5: Members of the majority party disproportionately support committee recommendations.*

*Hypothesis 6: Majority party leaders disproportionately support committee recommendations.*

If members of the majority party and majority party leaders do not disproportionately support the position embraced by the majority of the entire committee, then claims that the committee system is stacked in the majority's interests are suspect.

Finally, a seventh hypothesis follows from the expectation that votes on committee recommendations are shaped by members' general policy preferences:

*Hypothesis 7: Members' policy preferences, rather than institutionally-derived gains, structure member support for committee recommendations.*

### **Data**

In contrast to Shipan (1992; 1995), LaRue and Rothenberg (1992), and Krehbiel (1996), who undertook single vote case studies on salient floor debates, I construct aggregate "committee support scores" to assess member support over a broader, more representative sample of floor votes. I calculate six different committee support scores for the 347 members of the House who served in the 98th, 99th, and 100th Congresses.<sup>6</sup> Each support score is the proportion of mildly contested amendments on which a member voted with the majority of the committee with original jurisdiction over the bill under consideration.<sup>7</sup> When computing the committee support scores, amendments that are

used to compile the interest group scores that make up one of the independent variables are excluded (see note 12). Each committee support score is based on an average of 81 votes.<sup>8</sup> The scores are intended to capture the full array of policy votes that come under a committee's jurisdiction. I limit the analysis to amendments to bills reported from the House Agriculture, Appropriations, Armed Services, Banking, Education and Labor, and Interior Committees. This sampling of committees is intended to capture committees that have varied political and policy environments (Fenno 1973).

If preferences, party position, and/or committee position influence members' willingness to support committee recommendations, then variation in members' committee support scores should be related to a set of variables designed to capture members' policy preferences and their partisan and institutional positions. As independent variables, I use three measures to tap a member's role in the committee system. To test the first two hypotheses, I create separate dummy variables to identify members who were either a chair or ranking member on a standing committee during any of the three congresses used to calculate the committee support scores. To test whether members of powerful committees disproportionately support committee recommendations, I create another dummy variable to identify those members who served on either the Ways and Means or the Appropriations Committees.<sup>9</sup> To determine whether members of committees are more likely to support their own committee's positions, I create six more dummy variables to indicate whether a member belongs to any of the six committees for which I calculate a committee support score. Hypotheses 1 through 4 predict that each of these variables should be positively correlated with committee support scores.

Both the fifth and sixth hypotheses suggest that partisan considerations affect support for the committee system. To test for these relationships, I create two dummy variables. One indicates whether the member belonged to the Democratic party caucus. The other indicates whether the member served as an elected majority party leader (Speaker, Majority Leader, Caucus Chair, Vice Caucus Chair, Whip, Chief Deputy Whip, or Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chair) in any of the three congresses included in the committee support scores. If the committee system is designed to further the interests of the majority party, both of these dummy variables should have positive and statistically significant coefficients.

Testing hypothesis 7 is a bit more difficult. There is, unfortunately, no single, perfect measure of member policy preferences that is readily available (Krehbiel 1993a). Finding committee-specific

measures of policy preferences is even more difficult (see Hall and Grofman 1990; Maltzman 1995). Therefore, I use several different measures that can reasonably be considered proxies for members' policy preferences. On the assumption that members' policy preferences reflect the parochial interests of their constituents, I first employ variables related to each member's constituencies. For three committees (Agriculture, Armed Services, and Education and Labor), I use constituency variables that correspond to issues central to each committee's jurisdiction. In the equation used to predict agriculture committee support scores, I include the proportion of the district residents employed in the agriculture industry. For the Armed Services committee, I use the percentage of the district's residents who are members of the armed services. For the Education and Labor committee, I use the proportion of families in each member's district whose income is below the national poverty line.<sup>10</sup> I assume, for example, that the higher the proportion of district residents employed in the agriculture industry, the more likely a member's own policy preferences will match the interests of the agriculture committee. For the three committees (Appropriations, Banking, and Interior) with no single adequate constituency measure, I instead use a general district preference variable based on the average percentage of the popular vote received by Jimmy Carter in 1980 and Walter Mondale in 1984 in each district.<sup>11</sup> Since this measure is only marginally related to the issue-specific constituency measures, I also use these measures for the three committees where a committee-specific constituency variable exists.

Of course, constituency characteristics are an imperfect measure of members' policy preferences (see Krehbiel 1993a). For this reason, Krehbiel (1993b) argues that one should simultaneously employ constituency variables and interest group ratings. Thus, I also employ committee-specific interest group ratings as a proxy for members' policy preferences.<sup>12</sup> In particular, I use ratings by the National Farmer's Union (NFU) to assess members' policy preferences on Agriculture issues, the American Security Council (ASC) for the Armed Services Committee, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (CCUS) for the Banking Committee, the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education (COPE) along with the National Education Association rating (NEA) for the Education and Labor Committee, and the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) for the Interior Committee. Because of the breadth of the Appropriations Committee's jurisdiction, I use Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) ratings to assess members' attitudes towards government spending.<sup>13</sup> The combination of constituency variables and interest group ratings enable me to test hypothesis 7.

## Results

Table 1 presents ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results for separate equations for each committee.<sup>14</sup> These statistical results provide little indication that those in leadership positions within the committee system are more likely to support committee recommendations. For only two of the six committees (Appropriations and Armed Services) is the coefficient for the chairmanship variable statistically significant. Contrary to hypothesis 1, committee chairs are no more likely to support committee recommendations than other members without a committee leadership position.<sup>15</sup> One possible reason why committee chairs are more deferential to the Appropriations Committee is that they recognize that they need the Appropriations Committee's cooperation to pursue their policy goals within their own committees. Thus, they might be reluctant to challenge the decisions of appropriators on the chamber floor.

By contrast, ranking minority party (Republican) members are significantly more likely to support the recommendations of five of the six committees (Agriculture, Appropriations, Armed Services, Banking, and Interior). That ranking members disproportionately support committee positions embraced by the majority party may indicate both the weakness of the minority party in shaping member behavior, and the fact that ranking members derive extra benefits from a system of strong committees. In only one of the six equations was the impact of being on a "powerful" committee statistically significant, providing little evidence for hypothesis 3. The fourth hypothesis asserts that members of a committee should be more likely to support their own committee proposals than noncommittee members would be. Membership on a "relevant" committee affects support for only two of the six committees (Appropriations and Banking). Overall, then, I find only limited support for the hypotheses derived from expectations about institutional motivations and committee support.

Turning to the question of partisanship and committee support, for five of the six committees, Democrats are significantly more likely to support committee recommendations than are Republicans. This pattern is consistent with hypothesis 5. The party coefficient for the Armed Services merits brief attention: Democratic members are more likely to support Armed Services Committee recommendations than are Republicans. Since this committee had one of the few Democratic contingents that was significantly more conservative than the Democratic caucus (Mayer 1993; Groseclose 1994; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Deering 1993), this finding highlights the fact that

TABLE 1  
Relationship between Support Scores, Interest Group Ratings, and Institutional Position

Independent Variables	Agriculture	Appropriations	Armed Services	Banking	Education & Labor	Interior
<i>Policy Preferences (Interest Groups/Constituency)</i>						
NFU	8.70** (4.19)	—	—	—	—	—
ADA	—	32.98**** (2.66)	—	—	—	—
ASC	—	—	51.72**** (1.23)	—	—	—
CCUS	—	—	—	-75.23**** (3.87)	—	—
COPE	—	—	—	—	71.02**** (3.96)	—
NEA	—	—	—	—	28.68**** (3.91)	—
LCV	—	—	—	—	—	20.56**** (3.72)
Farmers	68.90** (31.91)	—	—	—	—	—
Soldiers	—	—	-0.11 (16.78)	—	—	—
Poverty	—	—	—	—	-28.08*** (9.32)	—
President	00.00 (0.00)	00.00 (0.00)	-0.18 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)

(continued)

TABLE 1 (continued)

Independent Variables	Agriculture	Appropriations	Armed Services	Banking	Education & Labor	Interior
<i>Committee System</i>						
Chair	1.74 (2.08)	7.70**** (2.01)	3.44*** (1.32)	0.79 (2.08)	-1.89 (1.54)	0.74 (2.70)
Ranking Member	5.91*** (2.34)	11.33**** (2.17)	3.31*** (1.42)	4.81** (2.25)	0.39 (1.69)	8.25*** (2.88)
Powerful Committee	1.74* (1.16)	-1.72 (1.62)	1.66*** (0.75)	-0.68 (1.16)	0.82 (0.87)	1.38 (1.51)
Relevant Member	1.94* (1.47)	13.70**** (1.94)	1.58* (1.12)	5.22**** (1.56)	1.00 (1.35)	-0.76 (2.31)
<i>Majority Party</i>						
Party Affiliation	7.87**** (2.42)	13.54**** (1.77)	3.72**** (1.05)	13.66**** (2.08)	2.11* (1.51)	28.77**** (1.97)
Party Leader	6.37** (3.46)	10.27*** (3.33)	3.25* (2.19)	4.64* (3.42)	2.39 (2.53)	10.09** (4.44)
Constant	53.01**** (2.34)	30.61**** (1.99)	37.16**** (1.93)	90.62**** (4.45)	1.53 (1.59)	33.70**** (2.75)
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.2496	.7965	.9258	.8865	.9564	.6754
Number of Cases	347	346	347	347	347	346

Note: The dependent variable for each committee is every member's modified committee support score. This score is based on all attempts to amend legislation reported by a particular committee. Amendment votes that are used by the relevant interest group to calculate each member's interest group rating are excluded from committee support score. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).

\* $p < .10$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*\* $p < .001$ , one-tailed test.

after controlling for policy preferences, majority party members find the committee system disproportionately biased in their interest. The importance of the partisanship variable is reinforced by the finding that Democratic party leaders are statistically more supportive of three of the six committees (Agriculture, Appropriations, and Interior) than are rank-and-file Democrats. This pattern provides mixed support for hypothesis 6.

With respect to the relationship between policy preferences and committee support, for every committee at least one of the preference-based variables is related to the committee support scores. The only surprising result is that members who represent a large proportion of poor families tend to oppose one of the House's more liberal committees, Education and Labor.<sup>16</sup> These results and the insignificance of the committee position variables are consistent with hypothesis 7. While only two of the constituency-based measures of preferences are statistically significant, this finding stems in part from the collinear relationship between constituent-based and interest group-rating-based measures of constituent preferences. For example, the correlation between the presidential vote variable and ADA is .65. This collinearity may disguise the significance of the constituency-based measures of policy preferences.<sup>17</sup>

### Discussion and Conclusions

The capacity of the committee system to generate support for committee proposals is said to operate in two ways. First, committee members protect committee recommendations out of committee loyalty. Second, committee leaders recognize that they are uniquely empowered by a system of strong committees, and thus are predisposed to support recommendations made by other committees. The importance that has traditionally been ascribed to the committee system and its capacity to shape outcomes should not be underestimated. Arguably, the combination of institutionally derived support and the procedural advantages afforded committees has led to a system in which even committees that are policy outliers are able to garner chamber support (Weingast and Marshall 1988). However, the findings here suggest that House members' institutional positions per se have little to do with their support for committee recommendations. Instead, committees' overwhelming floor success seems to stem from the alignment of committee-chamber policy preferences and from the support that the majority party is able to generate for committee recommendations.

Overall, there is little evidence that members support committee recommendations because of advantages they derive from the committee system. Neither committee chairs, members of the most powerful committees, nor even members of a committee disproportionately support their own committee's recommendations. Indeed, for only two committees (Appropriations and Banking) do committee members disproportionately support their own committee recommendations. During the 1960s, Fenno (1960) and Manley (1965; 1970) maintained that committee integration was central to the success of the Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees. During the 1980s, however, the reluctance of the floor to overturn committee recommendations stems for most committees from something besides committee integration. Since different committees have different relationships with the chamber and party caucuses (Fenno 1973; Deering and Smith 1997; Maltzman 1997), and since the post-reform Congress is sociologically and institutionally different than the pre-reform Congress (Loomis 1988; Rohde 1991; Davidson 1992; Uslander 1993; Sinclair 1997), it is difficult to determine whether my conclusions differ from Fenno's (1960) and Manley's (1965; 1970), either because their findings are dated, or because their findings are not generalizable beyond Appropriations and Ways and Means. Nevertheless, one of the two committees where I discovered committee members disproportionately supporting their own committee is the same committee where Fenno found integration over 35 years ago.

Although I found little support for the institutional position hypotheses, Republican Committee leaders did disproportionately support Democratic-controlled committees. This suggests that these leaders realize that their institutional position provides them with substantial benefits. For this reason, the reluctance of ranking Republicans to support their party conference's attempts to weaken the committee system is not surprising.<sup>18</sup> The tendency for ranking members to bolt their own party and support the majority clearly contradicts the thesis that members of both parties are pressured to support their party's platform. To the extent that such pressure exists during the period studied, it is felt by members of the majority, not minority, party.

The importance of policy preferences in generating member support is consistent with Krehbiel's (1991) and Maass's (1983) claims about the committee system in general, and with Fenno's (1966) and Manley's (1970) claims about the Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees in particular. Finally, the importance of party affiliation in influencing members' willingness to support committee proposals



suggests that members of the majority party clearly believe they derive greater benefits from the committee system than do most minority party members. Even after controlling for policy preferences, majority party members disproportionately support committee recommendations. This is consistent with Cox and McCubbins's (1993; 1994), and Kiewiet and McCubbins's (1991) general conceptualizations of the committee system, but is inconsistent with the findings reached by Krehbiel (1993b), LaRue and Rothenberg (1992), and Shipan (1992; 1995). Since the committee support scores used in this analysis are not limited to the few salient votes where one expects party to have the most significance (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Maltzman 1997), these results provide particularly strong evidence that a member's voting pattern is broadly influenced by partisan pressures. When one moves beyond case studies, majority party support for the committee system is one of the reasons committees are rarely rolled on the floor. Inevitably, one reason majority party members are more supportive of committee recommendations is that the majority party frequently uses its committee appointments to pull committee medians away from the floor median and closer to its own caucus median (Maltzman 1995). Whether this phenomenon is an artifact of either the reforms of the early 1970s or of changes in party cohesion documented by Rohde (1991) remains to be determined.

Although I find that both partisan and preference-based theories help account for committee success, correlations between policy preference measures and party affiliation are high. For example, the correlation between a member's ADA rating and the party dummy is .79.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the analysis here does not lead me to reject Kingdon's (1989, 142) and Krehbiel's (1993b; 1995) claims that a good deal of the party regularity in party voting is attributable to the different policy preferences of Democrats and Republicans. Indeed, when I run the same models using only constituent demographic measures of policy preferences, the significance of the party affiliation variable is even stronger. Since the use of interest group ratings is a superior measure of policy preferences (Krehbiel 1993a), this suggests that when better measures of preferences are used, the influence of party declines. Whether a "perfect" measure of policy preferences would render the party variable insignificant remains an unanswerable question. Still, the analysis here suggests strongly that both political parties and policy preferences jointly help structure member support for congressional committees.

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## NOTES

An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1996 annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association. I wish to thank Sarah Binder, Chris Deering, Keith Krehbiel, Eric Lawrence, Chuck Shipan, Lee Sigelman, Steve Smith, Paul Wahlbeck, and Jack Wright for their comments and suggestions, and Scott Lovitz for his assistance in collecting the data.

1. Of course, both Fenno (1966) and Manley (1970) noted that committees refrained from reporting bills that would obviously be defeated on the House floor, helping to account for their high rate of success.

2. Shipan's (1995) analysis of the vote on the Durbin amendment addresses two questions. First, were members of Public Works more likely to oppose the amendment? Second, were committee chairs more likely than others to oppose the amendment? On the first question, Shipan reaches the same conclusion as LaRue and Rothenberg (1992). On the second question, Shipan finds that committee chairs were not more likely to oppose the Durbin amendment. See also Krehbiel's (1996) analysis of the same vote.

3. Such a portrait of committees is consistent with Maass's (1983) portrayal of the committee system, with Manley's (1970) portrait of the Ways and Means Committee, and with Fenno's (1966) analysis of the Appropriations Committee and the strategic calculations made by its members.

4. For a comparable Senate test case, see Shipan (1996).

5. Because committees are bipartisan, a party caucus that seeks a representative committee may try to counter-balance the other party's committee contingents by appointing an extreme contingent. For example, House Democrats in 1977 loaded the Budget Committee with liberals to counterbalance the Republican delegation's conservative bias (Schick 1980).

6. I aggregate across three congresses to obtain enough committee-specific votes to create reliable support scores for all six committees. For this paper, I limit myself to the 347 members who served in all three congresses. In two instances, one of the 347 members voted on fewer than four roll-call votes that are part of the committee support score. In these few instances, I dropped the member from the analysis. To ascertain whether the decision to exclude members who did not serve in all three congresses distorts my results, I re-ran the analysis including any member who served in any of the three congresses and voted on at least four roll-call votes. Thus, each model was based on between 476 and 537 cases. These results resemble those reported in this paper and are available from the author.

7. Jurisdiction is based upon whether a bill was referred to, reported by, or discharged from a particular committee as indicated by *Legi-Slate*. If two committees acted on a bill, I attribute the amendment to one of the two committees by matching the substantive content of the amendment with each committee's formal jurisdiction. In the few instances where a bill originates from two committees and the substance of the amendment can reasonably be claimed to fall within both committees' jurisdictions, the amendment is dropped from the analysis. Bills whose jurisdiction is claimed by more than two committees are also excluded from the analysis.

I define "mildly contested" as meaning that the vote is recorded and that the majority position consists of 90% or less of all the votes cast in the chamber. The

sample is truncated to eliminate purely symbolic votes that disproportionately occur when debating certain types of legislation. Frequently, these votes are called because of the electoral benefits that can be derived from position-taking (Mayhew 1974). While the 90% threshold is convention, it is important to note that it is arbitrary. Because the analysis in this paper is of *who* supports committee recommendations, rather than whether the chamber as a whole supports committees, the decision to truncate the sample only affects the results if some members systematically join the majority on uncontested votes, and other members systematically vote against the majority on this same type of vote.

I use the *Congressional Directory* for the 98th, 99th, and 100th Congresses to determine each committee's membership. The position taken by the committee majority and each individual member on each amendment is based on Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) roll-call data.

8. The Agriculture Committee score is based on 30 votes, the Appropriations Committee 186 votes, the Armed Services Committee 159 votes, the Banking Committee 41 votes, and the Interior Committee 14 votes.

9. I limit my powerful committee variable to Appropriations and Ways and Means members because these are the two prestige committees that routinely report nonprocedural legislation.

10. These variables are based on 1980 census data (U.S. Department of Commerce 1983). For the Appropriations, Banking, and Interior Committees, I do not use any committee-specific constituency variables, because there are no attainable constituency variables directly related to each committee's jurisdiction. Although some scholars have used the percentage urban to tap the Banking Committee's jurisdiction over housing and urban development, most Banking Committee votes during the time period under study were not germane to this area of the committee's jurisdiction. Although some scholars have used the percentage rural (or a dummy variable to signify West Coast congressional districts) as a measure of constituency support for the Interior Committee, these measures are inappropriate for assessing the committee in the late 1980s. The rural measure primarily identifies districts with large agricultural interests that frequently have little interest in public land issues. Although most public lands are located in the West, most West Coast congressional districts are highly urbanized.

11. The 1984 presidential vote is from Barone and Ujifusa (1985). Because the 1980 presidential election occurred before the 98th–100th Congressional districts were drawn, the 1980 presidential vote score is based upon *Congressional Quarterly* (1983) estimates of how the post-redistricted districts voted in 1980. Erikson and Wright (1993) demonstrate that a district's presidential vote is a good proxy for its ideological orientation. They show that for 1988 there is a strong correlation between the percentage of a district voting for the Democratic presidential candidate (Dukakis), and the district representative's American Conservative Union (ACU) and Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) interest group ratings.

12. Unfortunately, interest group ratings, like demographic data on congressional districts, are imperfect measures of member preferences. One problem with interest group ratings is that even issue-specific ratings are not based upon votes that coincide with any single committee's jurisdictional authority (Hall and Grofman 1990). Another problem is that interest groups rarely choose votes that have lopsided outcomes, and frequently look for votes that distinguish their friends from their enemies

(Fowler 1982, 406). As a result, these ratings "exaggerate the degree of extremism in the distribution of legislators' ideal points" (Snyder 1992, 340). For a response to both Snyder's, and Hall and Grofman's concerns regarding the biases that result from the use of interest group ratings, see Krehbiel (1994). Krehbiel demonstrates that under certain conditions interest group ratings are reasonable measures of legislative preferences. Because of the problems with interest group ratings, I use both demographic characteristics and interest group ratings to tap members' preferences.

Because interest group ratings and the dependent variable are based upon roll-call votes, the reader may ask whether there is a discriminant validity problem. It is this concern that led me to employ constituent-based measures of ideology that are independent of roll-call. Nevertheless, to control for this problem, I employ a "modified committee support score" as my dependent variable. For the equations reported in Table 1, roll-call votes that are used by the committee-specific interest group to calculate the group's rating are excluded from the relevant committee support score. For example, the Armed Services modified committee support score is the percentage of the time each member of the House voted with the majority of the Armed Services Committee on 159 of the 174 mildly contested amendments to bills reported from the Armed Services Committee during the 98th, 99th, and 100th Congress. Fifteen of the mildly contested amendment votes are excluded because they were used to calculate American Security Council (ASC) rating. Although I only report the results for the modified support scores, these results are nearly identical to the results obtained for the unmodified committee support scores.

13. The ratings are taken from the *Legi-Slate* data base. *Legi-Slate's* ratings may deviate slightly from the official ratings released by each interest group. Since *Legi-Slate* only includes in its analysis roll-call votes that are either for or against an interest group's position on a rated vote, unlike some interest groups, *Legi-Slate* excludes absences from its analysis.

14. The models were run using SPSS 6.1. To assess the robustness of the results reported here, I also used Stata 5.0 to calculate robust standard errors for all of the models. None of the inferences changed when robust standard errors were used. I also checked to see if the predicted values fell outside of the 0–1 range that is appropriate when the dependent variable is a percentage. For the 2080 observations, only 6 predicted values were out of this range. This suggests that a linear model fits the data well.

15. The same results hold when the analysis is rerun using either committee or subcommittee chairs.

16. In part, this occurs because southern districts are disproportionately poor and conservative. Where on average 11% of families in southern districts fall below the poverty line, the average district outside of the South has a poverty rate of 8.3%. This difference is significant at the <.001 level. The conservatism of the South is demonstrated by the region's tendency to support Republican presidential candidates in both 1980 and 1984.

17. When the analysis is run without interest group ratings, four of the six committees have statistically significant constituent variables. These results are available from the author.

18. For example, despite pressures from the House Republican Conference to support cuts in congressional staff, several ranking minority members in the 103d Congress joined then-Democratic committee majorities in protesting cuts in committee staff (Jacoby 1994).

19. Such a high correlation also raises a concern about multicollinearity. Since both the policy-based and party measures are significant, it is clear that in this instance both a member's policy preferences and party affiliation are useful for explaining a member's decision to support a committee recommendation, and thus should be included in the model.

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