

Measuring Legislative Effectiveness in Congress

Craig Volden^{*}
Alan E. Wiseman

The Ohio State University

October 2008

Abstract

We develop a method for cardinally ranking members of the U.S. House of Representatives on their abilities to advance bills through the legislative process. We apply our method to data drawn from the 97th-109th Congresses, and generate Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES) for all legislators who served in the House during this time period. We demonstrate that our measure correlates with numerous factors that would presumably be related to legislative effectiveness in the United States Congress, such as a legislator's party affiliation, seniority, and whether he/she served as a committee chair. We also demonstrate that our measure helps to predict legislators' career trajectories and/or their decisions to voluntarily leave Congress, and we suggest several other avenues for future scholarship on legislative effectiveness in Congress.

^{*} Earlier versions of this manuscript were presented at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association and the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association. The authors thank Scott Adler, Gary Cox, David Brady, Rick Hall, Keith Krehbiel, Michael Neblo, Kathryn Pearson, Carl Pinkete, Keith Poole, Eric Schickler, Wendy Schiller, Steve Smith, John Wilkerson, and Jack Wright and seminar participants at Columbia University, the Research in American Politics Workshop at the Ohio State University, Stanford University, and University of Wisconsin for helpful comments and conversations. We also thank Tracy Burdett, Chris Kypriotis, Brian Pokosh and Dana Wittmer for valuable research assistance. Comments and questions can be sent to the authors at 2140 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall, Columbus, OH 43210-1373, or through email (volden.2@osu.edu or wiseman.69@osu.edu).

Measuring Legislative Effectiveness in Congress

Regardless of profession, from salespeople to journalists to major league sluggers, some individuals outperform their peers. Lawmakers are no different. It takes a certain type of legislator (and the right political circumstances) to formulate a viable solution to a major public policy problem and to shepherd that legislation through committee, across the floor, and into law. While a wide body of theoretical literature has explored how legislative politics might be responsive to the different distributive considerations faced by legislators, the informational benefits that they can provide to the chamber as a whole, or the chamber's ideological composition, less scholarly attention has focused on how legislators' innate abilities to facilitate lawmaking can influence legislative politics and public policies.

While general theories of the determinants and consequences of legislative effectiveness do not exist, a perusal of classic works in legislative studies reveals numerous explicit references to its inherent value. Truman (1951, 344-345), for example, discusses how legislators' effectiveness influences the congressional agenda, in that it "creates its own following; less experienced or overly busy members will often be guided by the skilled veteran." Fenno (1978, 137) points to how legislative effectiveness is advertised by incumbents on the campaign trail, and how "to the extent possible – even if it requires a bit of imagination – members will picture themselves as effective users of inside power" when meeting with constituents. Moreover, as Mayhew (1991, 110) eloquently notes, legislative effectiveness is ostensibly a necessary precondition for political career advancement: "like power contenders in the Roman Republic who headed for Gaul or Spain to win battles, would-be presidents try to score points by showing they can actually do something – pass laws." Hence, one would naturally suspect that a legislator's ability to move bills through the legislative process would have a direct bearing on

the types of coalitions that he/she participated in, the scope of his/her electoral security, and the viability of his/her career progression onto higher office.

Our ability to meaningfully theorize about legislative effectiveness requires us to first identify certain stylized facts about its determinants and consequences. On this point, we find ourselves generally limited because of measurement considerations. A body of scholarship in the state politics literature has focused on individual effectiveness, typically (e.g., in studies of the North Carolina legislature), although not exclusively, relying on elite surveys to generate individual reputational rankings of legislative effectiveness (Meyer 1980; Hamm, Harmel, and Thompson 1983; Saint-Germain 1989; Weissert 1991a, 1991b; Miquel and Snyder 2006). And a number of scholars have taken important steps toward evaluating legislator effectiveness at the national level (e.g., Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Cox and Terry forthcoming; Frantzich 1979; Hall 1987, 1992; Matthews 1960; Schiller 1995; Thomas 1991; Wawro 2000). However, no effort to date has yielded a widely-accepted, generalizable metric of legislative effectiveness in the U.S. Congress.

We aim to fill this gap by developing a substantively meaningful measure of legislative effectiveness for Members of the United States House of Representatives. Drawing on data from the 97th-109th Congresses, we formulate a measure that allocates credit to Members based on the types of legislation that they introduce, in regards to substantive significance, and how far each bill that they introduce moves through the process in comparison to other legislators. We are able to demonstrate that our measure comports with conventional wisdom regarding how legislators' personal circumstances and institutional positions might influence their abilities to create laws. Moreover, we are able to demonstrate that our measure varies in reasonable ways in

response to significant institutional changes in Congress, and that it offers predictive power in assessing members' likely career trajectories.

The rest of our paper proceeds as follows. We first discuss how one might ideally devise a measure of legislative effectiveness. Next, we describe our data coding procedure, and the method by which we create such a measure, drawing on data from the 97th-109th Congresses. After creating our measure of effectiveness, we identify how it relates to legislators' different personal and institutional attributes, such as party affiliation, seniority, and committee appointments. We then identify how our measure might serve to capture legislators' latent abilities to facilitate lawmaking, as reflected in differences in their scores between their freshman and sophomore terms, and the relationships between their scores and their ultimate career trajectories. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the several directions we seek to take in future scholarship to apply these measures to other areas of study of legislative politics in the U.S. Congress.

Measuring Legislative Effectiveness

In devising a measure of legislative effectiveness, we are interested in identifying the differences across legislators in their ability to move bills through the legislative process from introduction to the ultimate signing into law. In defining legislative effectiveness in this context, one might ask “why are certain members better than others at moving bills through the ‘dance of legislation’”? While a monstrous number of bills are introduced for consideration in every congress only a small minority of those bills ever make it out of committee, and an even smaller

subsample are voted out of the House, passed through the Senate, and signed by the President.

Why are some legislators more effective at creating legislation than others?¹

In answering this question, we might suggest several reasons for why legislators' effectiveness might vary; and these reasons can be categorized as being related to a legislator's *personal* or *institutional* attributes. By personal attributes, we refer to those abilities that each legislator brings to the chamber upon election, independent of any potential advantage that he/she might acquire from holding any position(s) of parliamentary influence. As noted above, it is unambiguously true that across professions, some individuals are innately *better* than others at "getting the job done". We can cardinaly rank athletes based on their performances between the goalposts, in the pool, or on the jai-alai court; and we can rank salespeople on their ability to close deals, generate revenues, and the like. In a similar vein, some legislators might simply be better at moving their bills through congress based on their innate abilities to negotiate and strike deals, identify policy ideas with widespread popular appeal, and/or fine-tune legislation to generate sufficient support among their colleagues to ensure a bill's survival across the different hurdles that emerge between introduction and law creation. Legislators' personal attributes might stem from their experiences before they were elected, such as their prior occupations, their socio-economic backgrounds, and the like, and they can presumably be cultivated across time, throughout their career in Congress. That is, it seems reasonable that legislators can become better at legislating effectively across time, as a function of their innate abilities.

In contrast to personal attributes, one might think of institutional attributes as those components of legislative effectiveness that are directly related to the institutional positions that a Member holds. To the extent that one believes that majority party legislators can control the

¹ Krutz (2005) investigates a similar question in analyzing why some bills are more likely than others to proceed through the legislative process.

legislative agenda, ensuring that their legislation passes more often than minority-party-advocated bills (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 2002, 2005), one might consider majority party membership to be an institutional attribute that influences a Member's legislative effectiveness. Similarly, members of "power" committees, committee chairpersons (e.g., Denzau and MacKay 1983), and party leaders (e.g., Jones 1968, Rohde 1991) might also hold positions of institutional authority, which different theories would suggest would enable them to be more effective at realizing their legislative agendas than rank-and-file members of the House.²

Conditional on possessing different personal and institutional attributes that influence legislative effectiveness, the next question arises is: "how does one quantify *effectiveness*?" Given that we are explicitly defining effectiveness as Members' abilities to move bills through the legislative process, we could embrace existing approaches that engage similar questions. Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair (2003), Cox and Terry (forthcoming), and Hasecke and Mycoff (2007), for example, quantify legislative effectiveness, or *success*, as the number of bills that a legislator introduces that pass the chamber and/or pass out of committee. Alternatively, beginning with Matthews (1960) scholars (e.g., Frantzich 1979) have operationalized effectiveness as a legislator's "hit rate"—the percentage of bills that he/she introduces that are passed out of committee and/or passed out of the House.

Focusing solely on the number of bills that pass the House (or the analogous conversion rate), however, seems to neglect certain aspects of the legislative process that are also related to our conception of legislative effectiveness. While there is a good deal of variance across legislators' success rates (or the number of bills passed), there is even more variation across

² On a related note, being in a position of institutional influence might ensure that certain legislators are able to propose high priority legislation (e.g., appropriations, reauthorizations) that is presumably guaranteed to pass (i.e., Adler and Wilkerson 2005, 2007). Hence, holding such positions would clearly enhance these legislators' observed effectiveness at creating laws.

legislators in regards to their successes at other stages in the legislative process, such as having bills receive attention in committee, and the like. We think that these differences constitute important information which captures how different legislators might be more (or less) effective at making law and any measure of effectiveness should account for these differences.

To operationalize legislative effectiveness then, we embrace a multi-stage method of analysis wherein we consider the numbers of bills that each legislator introduces, and how many of those bills receive action in committee, pass out of committee and receive action on the floor of the House, pass the House, and ultimately become law.³ In devising our measure, we also account for variations in the substantive significance of the different bills that are introduced by legislators. The following section describes that data that we use to develop such a measure.

Data

To develop our measure, we first need to identify which legislator sponsored each bill, and what happened to those bills at each potential stage in the legislative process. While undertaking such a task could be incredibly cumbersome, the availability of electronically-accessible copies of the *Congressional Record* simplifies our task considerably. Computer code was written that collected the information from the Library of Congress website, THOMAS, for every public house bill (H.R.) that was introduced into the 97th-109th Congresses.⁴ For every bill, we were able to clearly identify its sponsor and every step in the legislative process as identified in the “All Congressional Actions with Amendments” section of the bill’s “summary

³ This method obviously does not account for legislators who do not sponsor many successful bills, but rather “work behind the scenes” to bring legislation to its fruition (or those who serve as effective obstacles to bill progress). While we believe that such legislators definitely exist and take an important role in lawmaking, it seems reasonable to argue that they comprise an extremely small minority of all Members of Congress. Hence, by focusing on the progression of the bills that Members actually sponsor, we feel that we are capturing the most transparent indicator of legislative effectiveness.

⁴ For the purposes of analysis, we confine our attention to House Bills, and discard all House Concurrent Resolutions, House Resolutions, and House Joint Resolutions.

and status” hyperlink. After collecting this information, we coded the dates and incidence of each major stage of each bill’s progression through the legislative life cycle. For example, we identified when the bill was introduced and referred to committee (and the identity of the committee or committees), as well as identifying if the committee held hearings, engaged in markup, sent the bill to subcommittee, reported the bill from committee, whether a rule was assigned to the bill on the floor, whether the bill was amended, whether it passed the House, whether it went to a conference committee, and many other steps.

Upon identifying the progress of every public House bill, we then matched each bill to its sponsor to identify how many bills each legislator sponsored as well as how many of those bills successfully completed subsequent steps in the legislative process in each Congress. To generate our measure of effectiveness, we focused on the following steps in the process: the number of bills that each member sponsored (BILL); and the number of those bills that received any action in committee (AIC), or received any action beyond committee (ABC) on the floor of the House. For those bills that received any action beyond committee, we also identified how many of those bills subsequently passed the House (PASS); and, for the portion of bills that passed the House, we identified how many were subsequently were signed into law (LAW). Given these data, we sought to calculate a Legislative Effectiveness Score for each legislator in each Congress.

It could be argued, correctly in our view, that not all bills are of equal importance, and thus might not be equally indicative of a member’s effectiveness. Naming a post office can be achieved with considerably less legislative skill than reforming Social Security. To account for such variation, we categorized all bills as being either *commemorative/symbolic* (C), *substantive* (S), or *substantively significant* (SS). Our categorization was based on the following coding protocol. A bill was deemed *substantively significant* if it had been the subject of an end of the

year write-up in the *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*.⁵ A bill was deemed *commemorative/symbolic* if it satisfied any one of several criteria, such as providing for a renaming, commemoration, a private bill, and the like. Finally, all other bills, and any erstwhile “commemorative/symbolic” bills that were the subject of a *CQ Almanac* write-up were classified as *substantive*.⁶ After classifying each bill into one of these three categories, we calculated a Legislative Effectiveness Score (LES), for each member i in each Congress t , as follows:

$$LES_{it} = \left[\begin{array}{l} \left(\frac{\alpha BILL_{it}^C + \beta BILL_{it}^S + \gamma BILL_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N BILL_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N BILL_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N BILL_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \\ + \left(\frac{\alpha AIC_{it}^C + \beta AIC_{it}^S + \gamma AIC_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N AIC_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N AIC_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N AIC_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \\ + \left(\frac{\alpha ABC_{it}^C + \beta ABC_{it}^S + \gamma ABC_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N ABC_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N ABC_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N ABC_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \\ + \left(\frac{\alpha PASS_{it}^C + \beta PASS_{it}^S + \gamma PASS_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N PASS_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N PASS_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N PASS_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \\ + \left(\frac{\alpha LAW_{it}^C + \beta LAW_{it}^S + \gamma LAW_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N LAW_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N LAW_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N LAW_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \end{array} \right] \left[\frac{N}{5} \right],$$

where the five large terms represent the member’s fraction of bills (1) introduced, (2) receiving action in committee, (3) receiving action beyond committee, (4) passing the House, and (5) becoming law, relative to all N legislators. Within each of these five terms, commemorative bills are weighted by α , substantive bills by β , and substantively significant by γ . The weighting of $N/5$ normalizes the average LES to take a value of 1 in each Congress.

Several features of this construction are worth noting. First, because of the differences in the number of bills that are introduced and the number of bills that advance to further stages, our operationalization necessarily give greater weight to Members who are more successful in latter

⁵ Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman (2003, 365) adopt a similar coding protocol in their analysis of legislative success in the 103rd Congress by denoting a bill as “hot” if it had been the subject of a cover story in a 1993-94 issue of *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*.

⁶ Hence, a small number of bills that had originally been designated as commemorative/symbolic were upgraded to be classified as substantive bills. Examples of such bills include H.R. 9 in the 97th Congress (“A bill to designate components of the National Wilderness Preservation System in the State of Florida”) and H.R. 47 in the 99th Congress (“A bill to provide for the minting of coins in commemoration of the centennial of the Statue of Liberty”).

stages of the process (e.g., having a bill become law) than earlier stages of the process (e.g., bill introduction). Hence, our measure captures how Members can be distinguished from each other based on their success at various intermediate stages, in addition to the introductory and concluding stages in the legislative process.

Second, throughout our analysis, we assign $\alpha = 1$, $\beta = 5$, and $\gamma = 10$, signifying that significant legislation exerts ten times the weight on the LES as commemorative legislation and twice as much as normal substantive legislation. These weights were chosen to reflect the view that passing a substantively significant bill is a stronger indicator of legislative effectiveness than passing general substantive legislation; and likewise, that passing substantive legislation is a stronger indicator of legislative effectiveness than passing commemorative/symbolic legislation. Beyond these weights having a degree of face validity, the 1-5-10 weighting scheme produces the greatest predictive value in the full econometric models below of all integer combinations of $1 \leq \alpha \leq 10$, along with $1 \leq \beta \leq 10$, and $1 \leq \gamma \leq 10$. Moreover, the findings presented below are robust to alternative specifications, with $\alpha < \beta < \gamma$, as discussed in detail in the Appendix.

Finally, the LES display significant variation, ranging from the “most effective” legislator, Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), who had an LES equal to 17.637 in the 109th Congress, to the 91 Members of Congress in our dataset who have LESs equal to zero.

Analysis

Any measure of legislative effectiveness would ideally satisfy two broad criteria. First, the measure should be correlated with various factors that one would think would be related to legislative effectiveness. That is, to the extent that existing theories and conventional wisdom would suggest that legislative effectiveness is related to different personal and institutional

attributes, a meaningful measure of legislative effectiveness should exhibit such relations. Second, the measure would also hopefully be useful in explaining various political phenomena, such as legislators' career trajectories, how the legislature is organized, and the like, which would presumably be influenced by legislative effectiveness. In what follows we present different types of analyses to demonstrate how our measure satisfies these criteria.

Face Validity of Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES)

At the most fundamental level, if legislators actually possess "effectiveness", then one would suspect that a legislator's effectiveness should be correlated across congresses. In other words, regardless of whether his/her effectiveness is a function of personal or institutional attributes, how effective a legislator is today should be related to how effective he/she was yesterday. Hence, if our measure is capturing a legislator's ability for moving bills through the legislative process, then a member's LES in congress t should be strongly correlated with his/her LES in congress $t-1$. To test for this relationship, we regressed Member i 's LES in congress t onto his/her LES in congress $t-1$ using ordinary least squares regression with robust standard errors clustered by legislator; and results from this analysis are presented in Table 1, Model 1. As we can see, a legislator's LES in a given congress is unambiguously related to his/her LES in the previous congress, where the coefficient on the *Lagged Effectiveness Score* equals .700. Furthermore, we also see that the adjusted- R^2 of this regression is .44, implying that approximately 44% of the variance in a legislator's LES is a function of his/her LES in the previous congress.

While such analysis offers some support for the face validity of our measure, as noted above, one would naturally suspect that a legislator's effectiveness should be related to his/her personal and institutional attributes. On this point, a wide body of scholarship might suggest that

the following nine factors should be related to a legislator's ability to move bills through the legislative process.

Party Influence

A vibrant debate has developed over the past two decades regarding the extent to which political parties, and the majority party in particular, are influential in legislative politics (for early contributors, see Aldrich 1995, Cox and McCubbins 1993, Krehbiel 1993, 1999, Rohde 1991). Several theories posit different mechanisms of partisan influence, each with implications for the prospects of party members' legislative effectiveness. Broadly speaking, if the majority party is able to exercise influence over the legislative process at the expense of the minority party, then we would expect that members of the majority party would be more effective at moving bills through the House than members of the minority party.

Ideological Considerations

In contrast to the proponents of strong party theories, an alternative perspective argues that legislative politics is conducted in accordance with legislators' policy preferences, where parties exert very little (and possibly no) influence over voting behaviors and parliamentary procedures. Building on unidimensional median voter models (Black 1958, Downs 1957), a number of scholars argue that policies reflecting the preferences of the median voter are most likely to pass the House (e.g., Krehbiel 1991, Wiseman and Wright 2008). Hence, if legislators are proposing policies that are close to their ideal points, we would expect that the fates of bills supported by those legislators who are closest to the median voter would be more favorable than those of more extreme liberals and conservatives. Hence, more centrist legislators should be more effective.

Committee Deference

A wide body of literature (e.g., Denzau and MacKay 1983, Shepsle and Weingast 1987, Weingast and Marshall 1988) suggests that committees facilitate distributional politics. Members are appointed to committees that represent the issues they care the most about; they write legislation to favor key constituents in these areas; and other members of Congress defer to committee members, so that all legislators benefit from passage of their preferred policy in their most highly salient policy areas. Given this view of committee strength, some members of Congress may well benefit more than others. Committee chairs and members of the most powerful committees (Appropriations, Budget, Rules, and Ways and Means) should be disproportionately influential in comparison to the average member of the House. To the extent that such an argument is valid, we would expect that bills sponsored by committee chairs and members of the power committees would be more likely to be considered by their (and other) committees, more likely to reach the floor, and more likely to succeed in subsequent stages of the legislative process, which would result in greater effectiveness scores.

Race and Gender Considerations

Because they are drawn from demographic groups that are both currently and historically underrepresented in Congress (descriptively, speaking), female legislators and those from racial and ethnic minorities may be disproportionately active in advocating policies neglected by others (e.g., Gertzog 1984, Leader 1977, Mezey 1978). While a body of scholarship has analyzed the experiences of female legislators and those from racial and ethnic minorities in state legislatures with varying results (e.g., Hamm, Harmel and Thompson 1983, Saint-Germain 1989), practically no work exists that engages this question in a broad, congressionally-oriented framework.

Legislative Leadership

A subset of strong-party theories has focused on the ways in which party leaders, in particular, are able to exert influence over the legislative process. Whether they engage in coercive arm-twisting to compel members to vote in accordance with their demands, as presumably occurred in the era of “Czar” Cannon (e.g., Jones 1968), or if their influence is less heavy-handed and is tantamount to legislative “vote-buying” (e.g., Snyder and Groseclose 2000), one would expect that bills sponsored by majority party leaders would be more likely to be considered in committee, receive attention outside the committee, and pass the House. Alternatively, for bills sponsored by minority party leaders, we might expect the opposite, with their efforts being suppressed by counteractive pressure on the part of majority party leaders.

The Electoral Connection

As noted by Fenno (1978), legislators implicitly believe that their effectiveness in Congress is valued by their constituents. Such a relationship could be based on the position taking involved in bill sponsorship or cosponsorship, or on credit claiming for advancing bills toward their fruition in law (Mayhew 1974). To the extent that voters value such activities, one would expect a relationship between legislators’ effectiveness and their electoral security.⁷

Seniority Considerations

Consistent with a wide body of research (e.g., Fiorina 1977, Mayhew 1974), as legislators spend more time in Congress they are expected to become better, and more effective, at lawmaking. They have gained information and expertise regarding issues, other members’

⁷ The precise relationship, however, is not entirely transparent. If legislators are rewarded at the polls for their effectiveness, for example, one would expect that the most electorally safe legislators are those who are most successful getting legislation introduced and navigated through the lawmaking process. Alternatively, however, if we observe a positive relationship between legislative effectiveness and electoral safety, it might simply be because the more safe legislators are willing to commit the time and energy to the generally cumbersome lawmaking process, as opposed to spending more time campaigning. Furthermore, it is plausible that the relationship between legislative effectiveness and vote shares might actually be negative, with the most electorally vulnerable legislators expending the most energy (culminating in greater legislative effectiveness) in order to get in the good graces of their voters.

preferences, and the workings of the legislative process. As such, we would expect that more senior legislators would have a heightened ability to navigate the nuances of legislative politics.

Previous Legislative Experience

Consistent with the seniority considerations above, one might expect that legislators who have previously served in their state legislatures might be more effective than legislators without similar experiences. To the extent that effectiveness is a talent that can be acquired and cultivated across time, state legislatures might serve as a training ground for Members of Congress to develop skills that will help them in their future careers in the House. Because legislatures vary in their levels of professionalism, however, one might suspect that some legislatures serve as more rigorous proving grounds than others. Hence, we might expect the influence of previous state legislative experience to vary depending on different levels of state legislative professionalism.

Natural Coalition Partners

Finally, we might expect that the size of a state's congressional delegation influences how legislators experience varying degrees of success. Because legislators from the same state might be relatively ideologically similar to each other, and/or face similar distributive pressures in trying to represent their constituents, a legislator might find natural coalition partners among the members of his/her delegation. As such, one might suspect that legislators from states with larger congressional delegations would be relatively more effective than those from states with smaller delegations.

Multivariate Analysis

While the above list of variables is not meant to be all-inclusive, these factors collectively represent a body of considerations that we suspect would be related to a legislator's

effectiveness. To identify whether, and how, such relationships might hold, we conducted ordinary least squares regression analysis (with clustered standard errors), controlling for these different factors. Data on Members' party affiliation, gender, ethnicity, vote share in the previous elections, seniority, whether they had served in their state legislatures and/or held party leadership positions were drawn from various volumes of the *Almanac of American Politics*. Committee assignment data were drawn from Charles Stewart's committee data (see Nelson 1992, Stewart and Woon 2005) that he maintains on his website. State legislative professionalism was drawn from Squire's (1992) updated measure, which operationalizes professionalism as a weighted combination of the legislature's salary, staff, and time in session, relative to that of Congress. Finally, legislators' spatial preferences were measured by their Poole and Rosenthal first-dimension DW-NOMINATE scores. Our analysis from these regressions is presented in Models 2 and 3 of Table 1, where Model 2 considers all Members in our sample from the 97th-109th congresses, and model 3 excludes those legislators who do not have a lagged effectiveness score (so that the sample is identical to the one analyzed in Model 4 below).⁸

The results in Models 2 and 3 reveal that a member's LES is clearly higher if he/she is a member of the majority party, a committee chair, and more senior (though the impact of seniority is decreasing across a Member's career). Given that scores have been normalized to be mean 1 within each Congress, the magnitudes of the coefficients imply that majority party members and committee chairs are nearly twice, and three times more effective, respectively, than the average (non-majority) Member of Congress. Similarly, the coefficient on *Seniority* suggests that the majority party advantage is not completely overwhelming. More specifically,

⁸ The results reported below are substantively identical to those that emerge if analysis is conducted on logged LES as a dependent variable.

relatively senior minority party members (those that have been in Congress for more than six terms) are as effective as the average majority party Member.

Several of these findings comport with existing research. Drawing on various reputational rankings for the North Carolina legislature, Meyer (1980, 564), Weissert (1991b) and Miquel and Snyder (2006) demonstrate that majority party members and more senior legislators are perceived to be more effective lawmakers than more junior and minority party legislators. Frantzich (1979) demonstrates that majority party, and more senior, House Members have higher bill passage rates than minority party or less senior members; and his seniority finding is reinforced by Hamm, Harmel and Thompson's (1983) study of the Texas and South Carolina legislatures. More recently, Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier and Sinclair (2003) and Cox and Terry (forthcoming) have also found that majority party members, committee chairs, and more senior members have relatively more bills advance out of committee and pass the House than their more junior and minority party counterparts.

Our results also reveal that members of top committees (i.e., Appropriations, Budget, Rules, and Ways and Means) who are not chairs have lower LESs than rank-and-file members of the House. This finding likely follows from the fact that much of the high priority legislation that goes through these committees that is practically guaranteed to pass (e.g., Appropriations bills) are introduced by the committee chairs. To the extent that rank-and-file top committee members don't introduce as much legislation as the average House member, and/or that they are less successful at moving legislation that doesn't go through their committees, these tendencies will naturally contribute to lower LESs for these members.

With respect to gender, and race and ethnicity, we see that women have higher LESs, while African-American legislators have lower LESs, with no systematic differences between

Latino-American Members and the average Member of Congress.⁹ These findings are consistent with some strands of the gender and racial politics literatures. Saint-Germain (1989) and Bratton (2005), for example, find that female legislators experience higher rates of success than their male counterparts in several state legislatures; and Bratton and Haynes (1999) find that African-American legislators are less successful in several state legislatures. In contrast, Hamm, Harmel, and Thompson (1983) find that ethnicity is not heavily correlated with number of bills (or rate of bills) that are sponsored and passed in the Texas and South Carolina House of Representatives; and Thomas and Welch (1991) find that female state legislators are generally less successful than their male counterparts. In one of the few works that addresses these questions at the congressional level, Jeydel and Taylor (2003) find that legislative success is not clearly related to gender.

With respect to leadership positions, we find that majority party leaders have lower LESs, yet the difference is not statistically significant. In contrast, minority party leaders, and the Speaker of the House have lower LESs, with the differences being statistically significant. These findings are inconsistent with the work of Frantzich (1979), Hamm, Harmel and Thompson (1983), Miquel and Snyder (2006), and Weissert (1991b) who generally find that party and chamber leadership is positively related to various forms of perceived (or actual) legislative productivity and effectiveness. While the negative coefficient on *Speaker* is surprising at first glance, it is important to realize that our measure of effectiveness is based on how far legislators' bills advance in the legislative process. Because the Speaker of the House traditionally introduces few, if any, bills, and those bills that are offered are often controversial or represent

⁹ Further analysis (not included here) reveals that African-American legislators are significantly more effective than the average Member of Congress at moving commemorative/symbolic bills through the legislative process. This finding suggests that further study is necessary to understand the different strategies that are employed by different legislators to advance their policy agendas.

major portions of the majority party agenda (e.g., the *Contract with America* in the 104th Congress), it should not be surprising that the Speakers' bills might be less likely to advance than other bills. This is not to say that the Speaker is an ineffective legislator, but rather that the way we are conceptualizing effectiveness, as the ability of legislators to advance their bills through Congress, might not capture other notions of effectiveness, such as those which are (possibly) exerted by the Speaker.

Finally, we see that a legislator's vote share from the previous election, the size of his/her congressional delegation, whether he/she served in a state legislature (and its level of professionalism), and his/her distance from the chamber median are not statistically significant predictors of his/her LES. With regards to a legislator's prior state legislative experience, however, we see that our results for those legislators who served in more professionalized legislatures are on the cusp of statistical significance by conventional levels. Our null finding on vote share, combined with existing studies (e.g., Frantzich 1979, Miquel and Snyder 2006, Weissert 1991b) that have yielded contradictory findings on this matter, suggests that the true relationship between electoral success and legislative effectiveness may be far more complex than the simple linear relationship that we are positing, and may require much additional work to disentangle.¹⁰

As a further measure of face validity, Model 4 in Table 1 presents the results from a regression controlling for all of a legislator's personal and institutional attributes, as well as his/her lagged LES. As we can see from this model, a Member's lagged LES continues to be positively related with his/her LES in the current congress, even when controlling for a myriad of personal and institutional attributes. Likewise, the signs and significance of the coefficients on

¹⁰ This null finding for vote share holds if we simply control for whether the race was competitive, rather than employing a continuous measure for electoral competition.

the different personal and institutional variables are substantively similar to those when one doesn't control for a Member's lagged LES. That said, some interesting differences do emerge. We see that the statistical significance of the *Female* and *Committee Chair* coefficients increase, as does the coefficient on *State Legislative Experience x Legislative Professionalism*, which moves closer towards statistical significance (by conventional standards). Furthermore, we see that the adjusted- R^2 of this model is .56, suggesting that nearly 56% of the variance in a member's LES can be explained by his/her lagged LES score (i.e., how effective they were in the previous congress), and the personal and institutional circumstances that he/she faces in the current congress. Hence, our measure is clearly correlated with a variety of variables that we might expect would be related to a legislator's effectiveness.

Consistency across Time and Circumstances

Having demonstrated that our measure is correlated with a variety of personal and institutional attributes, a few additional comments are worthwhile. Thus far, we have argued that our measure captures legislators' abilities to move their bills through the legislative process, broadly construed. If this statement is true, then we would expect that a legislator's LES should be correlated across congresses, as we demonstrate above, and that this result should hold even when notable changes occur within the legislative system.

For example, to the extent that we are truly capturing legislators' abilities to navigate the legislative process, these skills should still exist even when they find themselves switching from being in the majority to being in the minority party (and vice-versa). Given that our data includes the regime change that occurred with the Republican takeover in the 104th Congress, we can investigate this point by identifying the correlation between Members' LESs in the 103rd and 104th congresses, when their majority-minority statuses were reversed. For both majority and

minority party members, we find that their LESs in the 103rd Congress are positively correlated with their 104th Congress LESs. That is, effective Democrats in the 103rd Congress were still relatively effective in the 104th Congress, even after they moved from being in the majority to being in the minority (and likewise for the Republicans). For Republicans, the correlation between their scores in the 103rd and 104th congresses is .33 (p-value < .001), whereas the correlation across congresses for Democrats is .21 (p-value = .004).

Another point to consider is how Members' LESs change when they become committee chairs. As suggested by the results in Table 1 (Models 2-4), committee chairs are significantly more effective than non-committee chairs, but one might ask whether committee chairs were always relatively more effective vis-à-vis other members even before they obtained their chairs? A simple way to engage this question is to identify the correlation between members' LESs in the congresses directly before they became committee chairs, and in first congress that they obtained a chair. Investigation reveals that the correlation between a Member's LES in the congress before he/she acquired a committee chair and the first congress when he/she was a chair is positive (.20) and significant (p-value = .07). Hence, even without their chairs, these future chairs were among the more effective legislators in the chamber.

Predictive Value of Legislative Effectiveness Scores

Having defined our measure and demonstrated that it correlates with a variety of factors that would presumably be related to a legislator's effectiveness at moving bills through the process, we would like to conclude with a consideration how our measure could be used as a predictive tool. That is, consistent with the works of Mayhew, Fenno, and others, we are interested in learning whether legislative effectiveness is related to political career advancement

and other aspects of legislative and electoral politics. More broadly speaking, does a Member's LES correlate with future activities in a meaningful way?

One natural place to look in advancing this inquiry is Members' LESs during their freshman terms in office. If the LES captures a Member's ability to engage in lawmaking activities, then his/her freshman term score should be the clearest indicator of his/her raw ability, which is not enhanced or impaired by various factors that might arise in later terms. One question that naturally emerges, then, is how constrained is a Member by his/her freshman LES? That is, do Members generally enter the chamber with a set of skills that ultimately influences their long-term prospects for legislative effectiveness? To address this question, we can compare Members' freshman and sophomore term LESs to see whether where legislators start (in their freshman term) is positively related to where they go (in their sophomore term). As we can see in a simple cross-tabulation in Table 2, there is a clear connection between Members' freshman and sophomore term LESs. Members who were above the freshman median LES in their party in their first term were more likely to be above the sophomore median LES in their party in their second term. Likewise, those Members who were below the freshman median LES in their party during their first term were more likely to stay below the median in their cohort (in their party) when they move into their sophomore terms. These results suggest that legislators come to the chamber with a certain set of skills, and those that are successful early on continue to be successful, while those who are not effective will remain relatively ineffective in future terms.

That said, one might wonder how early patterns of effectiveness are related to longer-term career prospects. In considering freshman LESs, cursory analysis reveals some interesting findings. If we consider the most effective freshmen in the 98th Congress, for example, we can identify several individuals who continue to be prominent members of Congress (or the Senate),

and/or have advanced onto higher office. As demonstrated in Table 3, we see that those Members who were in the top 10% of their freshman class included Rick Boucher (D-VA) and Alan Mollohan (D-WV), both of whom continue to be prominent Members of the House of Representatives, as well as Bill Richardson (D-NM) and Barbara Boxer (D-CA), both of whom have moved onto higher office. Note, also, that none of the members of the top 10% of their freshman class voluntarily retired from Congress. Consideration of other entering classes reveals other “rookie sensations” in the top 10% of their entering classes who continue to be prominent in public life, including Barney Frank (D-MA) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) in the 97th Congress, David Price (D-NC) in the 100th Congress, and Roy Blunt (R-MO) in the 105th Congress. While these examples are suggestive, one might wonder whether more systematic evidence can be established regarding the relationship between freshman effectiveness and career prospects.

Table 4 addresses this question head-on by identifying how many members who were above the median in their freshman cohorts (within their party) chose to seek higher office during their careers in Congress. For the purposes of analysis, we define “higher office” to be either a Senate seat, a governorship, the presidency or vice-presidency, or a mayor of a major city.¹¹ Our analysis demonstrates that those Members who were in the upper half of their parties’ freshman cohorts in terms of LES had 55% greater odds of seeking higher office at some point in their congressional careers (81/350) than below average members (58/389). Hence, consistent with Mayhew (1991), legislative effectiveness seems to be a precondition for aspiring to higher office.

An alternative way to engage this question is to ask whether relatively ineffective Members of Congress are more likely to retire voluntarily. Table 5 presents similar analysis to Table 4 by identifying how many members who were above and below the median LES in their

¹¹ We thank Daniel Butler for generously providing us with these data.

freshman classes (by party) chose to voluntarily retire during their time in Congress. As we can see, those Members who are below the median freshman LES in their cohort within their party, have 46% greater odds of retiring voluntarily (92/355) than those members who were more effective during their freshman terms (65/366). Hence, not only does effectiveness seem a necessary precondition for career advancement, but early patterns of ineffectiveness are clearly related to Members' choices to leave office altogether. Whether these members leave because they are frustrated by their lack of effectiveness, or because they are offered fewer opportunities for career advancement by other influential members in the chamber, is an open question and worthy of further study. The fact that even the limited LES freshman snapshot helps to predict Members' long-term career choices, however, provides further evidence of the inherent value of these scores in enhancing our understanding of the legislative process.

Conclusions and Future Directions

A central question in political inquiry (i.e., Lasswell 1936) is “Who gets what, when and how?” In studying legislative politics, one might engage this question by asking the following: “Who are the most influential legislators in Congress?” “When do Members of Congress attain their positions of influence?” And, “How do these factors come together to facilitate lawmaking?” In trying to answer these types of questions, scholars have advanced several competing theories that suggest how political parties, distributive considerations, and ideological (preference-based) pressures might influence the lawmaking process. Another possible explanation, however, follows from the argument that some legislators are generically more effective than others at navigating the lawmaking process. As such, one would expect that institutional positions, coalition formation, career trajectories and other political phenomena

would be related to legislative effectiveness. While various scholars have intimated at such relations, more systematic study of these topics has been hindered by a lack of wide-spread and well-accepted effectiveness metrics.

In this paper we have aimed to develop such a measure that can be used to advance our inquiry regarding the causes and impacts of legislative effectiveness in congress. Our metric is based on data regarding the cumulative progress that legislators' bills make through the legislative process within each congress, and we have demonstrated how our measure comports with a variety of factors that would presumably be related to legislative effectiveness. We have also provided cursory analysis to demonstrate how our measure might help to predict various political phenomena, such as career progression, voluntarily retirement, and the like. That said, a more expansive engagement of the LES will allow scholars to investigate a wide range of questions that go beyond the scope of the current analysis. We take this opportunity to highlight a few possibilities.

Effectiveness as a Valence Characteristic: In studying electoral competition, one factor that presumably influences voters' decisions are candidates' valence characteristics – qualities that are viewed as uniformly positive across voters, regardless of candidates' partisanship, ideological platforms, or other factors. Scholars often interpret these valence characteristics to connote a legislator's attractiveness, seniority, or effectiveness in lawmaking, for example. While several theories offer explicit predictions regarding the interactions among candidates' valence characteristics, their policy positions, and their prospects for victory (e.g., Calvert 1985, Groseclose 2001, Londregan and Romer 1993, Wiseman 2006, Wittman 1983), no widely accepted measure of effectiveness currently exists to capture this concept of candidate valence. The LES developed here clearly fills this gap in the literature by providing a meaningful metric

for testing numerous implications of these valence models, thereby enhancing our understanding of contemporary electoral politics and its implications for lawmaking.

Effectiveness and Political Polarization: Numerous scholars (e.g., Fiorina et. al 2006; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006) have pointed to the fact that the U.S. Congress has become increasingly polarized between the parties over the past thirty years. While a substantial body of research has investigated how this polarization might follow from ideological sorting in the electorate, institutional rules within Congress, partisan gerrymandering, and several other sources, less scholarship has clearly addressed polarization's influence on lawmaking. While scholars are quick to argue that this polarization has increased the tendency towards legislative gridlock, differences regarding the precise definition of gridlock undermine attempts to test such a claim.¹² With reasonable measures of legislator effectiveness, however, one might investigate this question by analyzing members' individual effectiveness across time to identify how they have changed in response to congressional polarization. To the extent that polarization contributes to legislative gridlock, one would expect certain (minority party or ideologically extreme) members' effectiveness to decrease as polarization increases, and the LES can also be used to facilitate such comparisons. More broadly speaking, the LES can be used to identify how shocks to the American political system (e.g., economic recessions, the 1991 Gulf War, President Clinton's impeachment) influence legislators' lawmaking abilities.

Progressive Ambition and Effectiveness: In describing the career trajectories of members of Congress, much attention scholarly attention (e.g., Copeland 1989, Hibbing 1986, Rohde 1979) has focused on the ways in which legislators pursue different opportunities to attain higher positions both inside, and outside, of Congress. While the dominant body of research has focused on how legislators have capitalized on good (or poor) electoral trends, vacancies in more

¹² For a consideration of the different definitions and operationalizations of legislative gridlock, see Binder (2003).

prestigious offices (e.g., Senator, Governor, President), or vacancies in leadership posts (e.g., party whips), less research has focused on the different legislative strategies and activities undertaken by legislators as they try to position themselves for these higher offices. Our analysis, thus far, has demonstrated that more effective freshman legislators are more likely to run for higher office and less effective freshman are more likely to retire voluntarily. Further analysis will allow us to engage the progressive ambition thesis head-on, by identifying how legislators systematically enhance and change their legislative activities in anticipation of attaining higher offices or more prestigious institutional positions.

Effectiveness and Federalism: Since the debates of the Founders of the U.S. Constitution (e.g., Federalist Papers 46 and 51), students of American government have extolled the virtues of federalism. Among its many benefits is the possibility that members of minority factions or parties could find support for their ideas and attain political strength at lower levels of government. If their ideas prove successful there and gain widespread support, these policymakers could rise to the national level and quickly find success there as well. Our analysis has suggested that legislative effectiveness is weakly correlated with whether a Member served in a professionalized state legislature. Further analysis would allow us to identify how the political environments in these state legislatures, and the positions held by these legislators, influenced the scope of their effectiveness in Congress. One could also assess whether these skills are particularly useful in bringing new and successful ideas to the national stage, through a type of vertical policy diffusion.

Taken together, these are but a sample of topics that can be rigorously explored by drawing on our LES metric. In trying to identify "who gets what, when, and how" in the U.S.

Congress, the use of Legislative Effectiveness Scores promises to shed new light on the wide array of topics that make up legislative politics.

References

- Adler, E. Scott, and John Wilkerson. 2005. "The Scope and Urgency of Legislation: Reconsidering Bill Success in the House of Representatives." APSA Conference Paper.
- Adler, E. Scott, and John Wilkerson. 2007. "A Governing Theory of Legislative Organization." APSA Conference Paper.
- Aldrich, John H. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Anderson, William D., Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, and Valeria Sinclair-Chapman. 2003. "The Keys to Legislative Success in the U.S. House of Representatives." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 28(3): 357-386.
- Binder, Sarah A. 2003. *Stalemate: Causes and Consequences of Legislative Gridlock*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Black, Duncan. 1958. *The Theory of Committee and Elections*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bratton, Kathleen A. 2005. "Critical Mass Theory Revisited: The Behavior and Success of Token Women in State Legislatures." *Politics and Gender* 1: 97-125.
- Bratton Kathleen A, and Haynie KL. 1999. "Agenda Setting and Legislative Success in State Legislatures: The Effects of Gender and Race." *Journal of Politics* 61(3): 658-679.
- Calvert, Randall L. 1985. "Robustness of the Multidimensional Voting Model: Candidates' Motivations, Uncertainty and Convergence." *American Journal of Political Science* 29(1): 69-95.
- Copeland, Gary W. 1989. "Choosing to Run: Why House Members Seek Election to the Senate." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14 (4): 549-565.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2002. "Agenda Power in the U.S. House of Representatives," in *Party, Process, and Political Change in Congress*, David W. Brady and Mathew D. McCubbins (eds.) Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cox, Gary W., and William Terry. Forthcoming. "Legislative Productivity in the 93rd-105th Congresses." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.
- Denzau, Arthur T., and Robert J. Mackay. 1983. "Gate-Keeping and Monopoly Power of Committees: An Analysis of Sincere and Sophisticated Behavior." *American Journal of Political Science* 27: 740-61.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1977. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2006. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Longman.
- Frantzych, Stephen. 1979. "Who Makes Our Laws? The Legislative Effectiveness of Members of the U.S. Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 4(3): 409-428.

- Gertzog, Irwin N. 1984. *Congressional Women: Their Recruitment, Treatment, and Behavior*. New York: Praeger.
- Groseclose, Tim. 2001. "A Model of Candidate Location When One Candidate Has a Valence Advantage." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(4):862-86.
- Hasecke, Edward B., and Jason D. Mycoff. 2007. "Party Loyalty and Legislative Success: Are Loyal Majority Party Members More Successful in the U.S. House of Representatives?" *Political Research Quarterly*. 60 (4): 607-17.
- Hall, Richard L. 1987. "Participation and Purpose in Committee Decision Making," *American Political Science Review* 81(1): 105-128.
- Hall, Richard L. 1992. "Measuring Legislative Influence." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 17(2): 205-231.
- Hamm, Keith E., Robert Harmel, and Robert Thompson. 1983. "Ethnic and Partisan Minorities in Two Southern State Legislatures." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 8(2): 177-189.
- Hibbing, John R. 1986. "Ambition in the House: Behavioral Consequences of Higher Office Goals Among U.S. House Representatives." *American Journal of Political Science* 30(3): 651-665.
- Jones, Charles O. 1968. "Joseph G. Cannon and Howard W. Smith: An Essay on the Limits of Leadership in the House of Representatives." *Journal of Politics* 30: 617-646.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23: 235-266.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1999. "The Party Effect from A to Z and Beyond." *Journal of Politics* 61: 832-840.
- Krutz, Glen S. 2005. "Issues and Institutions: 'Winnowing' in the U.S. Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(2): 313-326.
- Lasswell, Harold D. 1936. *Politics: Who Gets What, When and How*. NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Leader, Shela G. 1977. "The Policy Impact of Elected Women Officials." In Louis Sandy Maisel and Joseph Cooper, eds. *The Impact of the Electoral Process*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Londregan, John, and Thomas Romer. 1993. "Polarization, Incumbency, and the Personal Vote." In William Barnett, Melvin Hinich, and Normal Schofield (Eds.), *Political Economy: Institutions, Competition, and Representation*. (pp. 355-77). New York: Cambridge.
- Matthews, Donald R. 1960. *U.S. Senators and Their World*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Mayhew, David R. 1991. *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations 1946-1990*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Meyer, Katherine. 1980. "Legislative Influence: Toward Theory Development through Causal Analysis." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 5(4): 563-585.
- Mezey, Susan Gluck. 1978. "Women and Representation: The Case of Hawaii." *Journal of Politics* 40: 369-85.
- Miquel, Gerard Padro I, and James M. Snyder, Jr. 2006. "Legislative Effectiveness and Legislative Careers." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 31(3): 347-381.
- Nelson, Garrison. 1992. *Committees in the U.S. Congress, 1947-1992*.

- Rohde, David W. 1979. "Risk-Bearing and Progressive Ambition: The Case of Members of the United States House of Representatives." *American Journal of Political Science* 23(1): 1-26.
- Rohde, David W. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Saint-Germain, Michelle A. 1989. "Does Their Difference Make a Difference? The Impact of Women on Public Policy in the Arizona Legislature." *Social Science Quarterly* 70(4): 956-968.
- Schiller, Wendy J. 1995. "Senators and Political Entrepreneurs: Using Bill Sponsorship to Shape Legislative Agendas." *The American Journal of Political Science* 39(1): 186-203.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A., and Barry R. Weingast. 1987. "The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power." *American Political Science Review* 81: 85-104.
- Snyder, James M., and Tim Groseclose. 2000. "Estimating Party Influence in Congressional Roll Call Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(2): 193-211.
- Stewart, Charles III, and Jonathan Woon 2005. *Congressional Committee Assignments, 103rd to 110th Congresses, 1993—2007*.
- Thomas, Sue. 1991. "Indicators of Activities of United States Senators." *Congress and the Presidency* 18(2).
- Thomas, Sue. and S. Welch. 1991. "The Impact of Gender on Activities and Priorities of State Legislators." *Western Political Quarterly* 44(2): 445-456
- Truman, David B. 1951. *The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion*. New York: Alfred A Knopf.
- Wawro, Gregory. 2000. *Legislative Entrepreneurship in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Weingast, Barry R., and William Marshall. 1988. "The Industrial Organization of Congress." *Journal of Political Economy* 91: 765-800.
- Weissert, Carol S. 1991a. "Issue Salience and State Legislative Effectiveness." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 16(4): 509-520.
- Weissert, Carol S. 1991b. "Determinants and Outcomes of State Legislative Effectiveness." *Social Science Quarterly* 72(4): 797-806.
- Wiseman, Alan E. 2006. A Theory of Partisan Support and Entry Deterrence in Electoral Competition. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 18(2): 123-158.
- Wiseman, Alan E., and John R. Wright. 2008. "The Legislative Median and Partisan Policy." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. 20 (1): 5-30.
- Wittman, Donald. 1983. "Candidate Motivation: A Synthesis of Alternative Theories." *American Political Science Review* 77: 142-157.

Table 1: Determinants of Legislative Effectiveness

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Lagged Effectiveness Score	0.700*** (0.030)			0.507*** (0.039)
Majority Party		0.886*** (0.070)	1.013*** (0.084)	0.607*** (0.053)
Distance from Median		0.044 (0.141)	0.078 (0.168)	-0.006 (0.106)
Committee Chair		2.675*** (0.347)	2.640*** (0.309)	1.782*** (0.203)
Top Committee		-0.321*** (0.303)	-0.356*** (0.056)	-0.194*** (0.029)
Female		0.111** (0.055)	0.174*** (0.064)	0.123*** (0.040)
African-American		-0.372*** (0.085)	-0.325*** (0.091)	-0.194*** (0.059)
Latino		0.040 (0.097)	0.054 (0.100)	-0.004 (0.066)
Speaker		-1.104*** (0.322)	-0.993*** (0.309)	-0.916*** (0.303)
Majority Party Leadership		-0.067 (0.227)	-0.067 (0.240)	0.145 (0.160)
Minority Party Leadership		-0.449*** (0.138)	-0.404*** (0.139)	-0.134 (0.091)
Vote Share		-0.000 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.001)
Seniority		0.147*** (0.019)	0.130*** (0.023)	0.054*** (0.015)
Seniority ²		-0.003** (0.001)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)
State Legislative Experience		-0.026 (0.097)	-0.038 (0.112)	-0.027 (0.066)
State Legislative Experience x Legislative Prof.		0.313 (0.331)	0.406 (0.372)	0.251 (0.208)
Size of Congressional Delegation		-0.001 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.002)
Constant	0.407*** (0.025)	-0.138 (0.138)	-0.098 (0.177)	-0.050 (0.118)
N	4511	5505	4402	4402
Adjusted-R ²	.44	.40	.40	.56

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* p < 0.1 (two-tailed), ** p < 0.05 (two-tailed), *** p < 0.01 (two-tailed).

Table 2: Relationship between Effectiveness in Freshman and Sophomore Terms

	Below the Median Sophomore LES within their party	Above the Median Sophomore LES within their party	Total
At/Below the Median Freshman LES within their party	217	97	314
Above the Median Freshman LES within their party	127	219	346
Total	339	321	660

$$\chi^2(1) = 69.26 \text{ (p-value} < .001)$$

Table 3: Freshman in top 10% of their cohort in LES in 98th Congress

Name	LES	State Legislature	Current Political Position
Rich Boucher (VA)	2.595	Yes	House
Katie Hall (IN)	2.156	Yes	Lost reelection bid (99 th Congress)
Bill Richardson (NM)	1.997	No	Governor
Barbara Kennelly (CT)	1.352	No	Lost bid for Governor (1998)
Barbara Boxer (CA)	1.333	No	Senate
James McNulty (AZ)	1.202	Yes	Lost reelection bid (99 th Congress)
John Bryant (TX)	1.087	Yes	Lost bid for Senate (1996)
James Clarke (NC)	0.946	Yes	Lost reelection bid (99 th Congress)
Alan Mollohan (WV)	0.898	No	House

Table 4: Relationship between Effectiveness in Freshman Term and Seeking Higher Office

	Does Not Seek Higher Office	Seeks Higher Office	Total
At/Below the Median Freshman LES within their party	389	58	447
Above the Median Freshman LES within their party	350	81	431
Total	739	139	878

$$\chi^2(1) = 5.57 \text{ (p-value =0.018)}$$

Table 5: Relationship between Effectiveness in Freshman Term and Decision to Retire

	Does Not Retire From Office	Ever Retires from Office	Total
At/Below the Median Freshman LES within their party	355	92	447
Above the Median Freshman LES within their party	366	65	431
Total	721	157	878

$$\chi^2(1) = 4.52 \text{ (p-value =0.033)}$$

Appendix: Comments on selecting weights for categories of legislation in LES

In selecting the values for α , β , and γ to generate each Member's LES, we sought to choose values that reflected the belief that substantively significant legislation would be generally more influential than substantive legislation, which in turn would be generally more influential than commemorative/symbolic legislation. Our selection of 1, 5, and 10 to correspond with α , β , and γ , respectively, reflects this assumption. In order to ascertain the substantive impacts of varying these weights, the following methodology was employed.

First, we replicated our regression analysis in Table 1, model 4 where we allowed the weights of α , β , and γ to take on any integer values between 1 and 10, inclusive. Upon completing these 1000 regressions, we compared the R^2 that corresponded with each regression to identify the weights that yielded the best fit for the data, given these independent variables. Our results revealed that the specification that yielded the lowest R^2 (of 0.06) was the one where $\alpha = 10$, and $\beta = \gamma = 1$ (i.e., substantively significant bills were weighed as highly as substantive bills, and both were weight ten times less than symbolic/commemorative legislation.) In contrast, we found that the specification that yielded the greatest R^2 (of 0.56) was the one where $\alpha = 1$, $\beta = 5$, and $\gamma = 10$, which is the model that we ultimately used in the analysis in this paper.

To further investigate the robustness of these findings, we replicated this analysis, allowing α , β , and γ to take on any integer values between 1 and 100. Our analysis reveals that across this region of the parameter space, there is no interior solution that maximizes the R^2 of the regression. Instead, we find that R^2 is maximized whenever $\alpha = 1$, γ takes the maximal value of the interval, and β is about half the size of γ . Conversely, we find that R^2 is minimized whenever $\gamma = \beta = 1$, and α was the maximal value of the interval. In no cases did the R^2 achieve a value greater than .56. The substantive results of these alternative regressions so closely mimic

those of Table 1 (as long as $\alpha < \beta < \gamma$), that we are comfortable using the 1-5-10 weightings throughout the paper.