Papers on the Polarization of Congress

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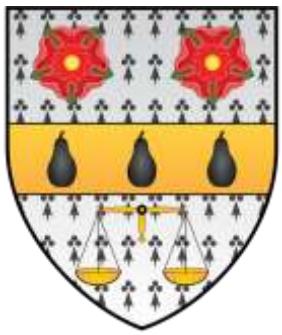

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This dissertation, a collection of independent papers, explores the polarization of the United States Congress through the lens of primary elections, campaign finance, and party structures during a pivotal moment in American political history. Paper 1 focuses on the top two primary format and its potential in producing moderate candidates and legislators, while Paper 2 expounds on the deleterious consequences it poses for the party system as a whole, particularly in this modern era of both high polarization and high fragmentation. Paper 3 examines the Downsian median voter theorem from the perspective of primary election voters, asking if general election wins/losses beget the nomination of more ideological/moderate nominees next cycle. Ultimately, the article illustrates that the parties instead retain consistent records through both election wins and losses, linked to credibility concerns from position changes as well as the inability of members to disentangle from national party identities. Its companion paper, Paper 4, takes that Downsian question to elites in Washington, D.C. Through original interviews with twenty-three individuals including former members of Congress, leadership, congressional staff, and think tank scholars, I describe the electoral and legislative pressures that prevent officeholders from responding to their median voter, especially among those in swing districts most exposed to the risks of partisan behavior. Paper 5, the final paper, brings together the themes of those preceding it by analyzing the ways in which outside interference, specifically political action committees and more inclusive primary elections, propagates legislative caucus fragmentation and weakens official leadership. This work plays one minor role in providing prescriptive steps to improve and empower channels of dialogue in the U.S. legislative branch—in spite of larger systemic sorting along geographical and partisan lines—and ensure the mediation of ideology between voters and their elected representatives results in policy solutions rather than gridlock.

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Introduction

Congress once worked. Moderates once existed. Party identification used to not entirely connote ideology. Southern Democrats and Northeast Republicans were prevalent. Committee chairs once held sway and the bodies they presided over were the principal location for reconciling disparate views. Now, horse-trading and logrolling—"reaching across the aisle"—once a staple of our nation's capital, is increasingly held in disdain for betraying purity. What happened and why has the situation become so dire? This dissertation explores potential causes and solutions to the polarization of the United States' legislative branch, especially the role party nominations, campaigns, and party structures play within that larger process. Using quantitative data from the last forty years and interviews with congressional elites who saw the polarization unfold before their eyes, this study provides an account of how and why we got here, where we may be headed, and what we can do to correct the course.

This dissertation can be roughly divided into three sections. The first section, composed of two papers, explore party primary elections and how who those voters are changes the behavior of legislators, as well as how campaigns and party structures themselves respond to changing levels of inclusiveness. The second section, also composed of two papers, focuses on the party, election returns, and the Downsian view of seeking the median voter in order to win. Interviews with former members of Congress contribute to the quantitative data by illustrating a litany of forces that pull members away from their constituency and towards the party. The final section, a single paper, combines themes throughout the dissertation to discuss party cohesion in state legislatures, outside influence, and leadership power to suggest a solution that can both harness ideology while bolstering the parties.

Previous literature provides several possible explanations to polarization as a baseline for my analysis. Some point to the role party donors and political moments play on galvanizing candidates and elected officials to their party (Ragusa 2016; Schumer 2014). Others argue that party activists and volunteers hold ideologies outside the views of the general electorate, thus pulling candidates away from the median general election voter (Fiorina and Abrams 2009; Jewitt and Goren 2016; McGhee et al. 2014; Panagopoulos 2016). Likewise, some authors cite the decreasing proportion of truly independent voters, linking their demise to rising education and political engagement levels (Abramowitz 2010; Broockman 2016; Smidt 2017). Furthermore, others have highlighted a multi-decade ideological sort both in respect to geography and party that have placed left-leaning voters in urban centers voting for Democrats and right-leaning voters in rural areas voting for Republicans as well as the decline of a de facto three-party system when Southern Democrats were a more dominant middle faction (Abrams and Fiorina 2012; Bishop 2009; Boatright 2013; Brady, Han, and Pope 2007; Bump 2014; Chen and Rodden 2013; Gelman 2009; Hill and Tausanovitch 2015; Jacobson 2015b; Knuckey 2015; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009; Sides 2012). Lastly, seemingly moderate state legislative districts exhibit greater distance between liberal and conservative voters than the distance between those in homogenous, rural, conservative districts and others in homogenous, urban, liberal ones, creating difficulty for elites to locate median voter preferences and leading to "leapfrog representation" between the two parties (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Bafumi and Herron 2010; McCarty et al. 2018; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009). In short, shifts in the electorate provide a compelling narrative to investigate polarization and lay the foundation for the beginning of the dissertation.

Paper 1 investigates the effect of primary system format on legislator ideology and responsiveness to district ideology vis-à-vis who is elected, building on the work of Rogowski and Langella (2015), Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz (2015, 2016), McGhee et al. (2014), Gerber and Morton (1998), Bullock and Clinton (2011), Brady, Han, and Pope (2007), Nagler (2015), Ansolabehere et al. (2010), Alvarez and Sinclair (2012), McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2008), Hirano et al. (2010), and Jewell and Morehouse (2001). I utilize differences-in-differences panel regressions, with fixed effects for time and state, to measure how primary format affects legislators' DW-NOMINATE scores, a proxy for voting ideology, and candidates' CFscore, a proxy for the candidate's ideology, with additional controls for the district ideology as measured by presidential electoral returns. My particular research interest is the top two primary format unique to the states of California, Louisiana, and Washington, which dissolves party lines in the primary election and takes the top two candidates, regardless of party, to the general election. That said, I also conduct a general analysis about primary inclusiveness and legislator ideology to provide a more macro narrative about trends between winning candidates and the sect of primary voters allowed to vote. The results find that top two primaries lead to slightly over half and slightly under half of a standard deviation reduction in polarization, respectively for Democrats and Republicans, or about 20-25% reduction for the average House member. Controls for district partisanship suggested that legislators elected in top two primaries are more responsive to the ideology of their constituents than their colleagues elected via other, more inclusive primary formats.

Paper 2 examines the deeper implications of the top two primary through interviews with campaign managers and staff, party operatives, and former congressional leadership. Delving into the details of a handful of top two races, the article provides context to some unintended consequences of the primary format. I focus on the format's

ability to tame more partisan districts dominated by one party, while noting how the unbridled nature can produce collective action problems and an invisible primary in more competitive districts. To that end, while the quantitative data suggest dissolving party lines in primary elections results in more moderate legislators—a result I obviously do not dispute—I stress caution in interpreting the top two as a necessarily good thing for Congress, particularly in an era of high polarization and weak parties.

Paper 3 explores Downsian logic and how parties respond to narrow wins or losses in the previous election cycle with the assumption that parties seek power by orienting policymaking to appeal to the median voter and maximize their number of voters. Taken one step further, loss of power would lead party primary voters to nominate a more moderate candidate in order to win their seat and gain control of the government once more. The work adds to the research of Lee, Moretti, and Butler (2004) and Cohen et al. (2008) on electoral returns and party ideology, instead utilizing candidate CFscores built around regression discontinuity design (RDD). RDD in the context of political science exploits the as-if-random assumption of narrow elections to compare a control and treatment group on either side of a given threshold. That is to say, candidates who narrowly won or narrowly lost are comparable in pre-treatment covariates such as candidate quality, campaign sources, or total contribution levels, linking any post-treatment differences to either winning or losing the election. Interestingly, House nominees whose parties narrowly won in a given district last cycle exhibit more moderate ideology scores relative to nominees in districts the party lost last cycle. Yet, after controlling for the effects of incumbency on the measured candidate ideology, this moderation effect dissipates, largely suggesting primary voters and party nominees are unresponsive to general election wins or losses. These results are consistent with the credibility concerns of shifting positions in Alesina (1988), the

national party brand contamination effects of Krasa and Polborn (2015), and the procedural cartel theory of Cox and McCubbins (2005). The findings are further supported by Dancey and Sheagley (2016) and Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2018) which suggest voters are largely unaware of their elected officials' positions and vote based off party spatial proximity, rather than how closely the legislator conforms to the district median voter. Moreover, parties seek policy positions that align with their ideological views and candidates must hold sufficiently different positions for each of them to justify their entry into the race (Besley and Case 2003; Besley and Coate 1997; Grofman 2004). In weighing between power and ideological stability, parties choose the latter to seek the former.

Paper 4 corroborates the quantitative data of the preceding article by interviewing former Republican and Democratic House leadership, committee chairs, rank and file members, legislative and campaign staff, party officials, and scholars at D.C-based think tanks on why the Downs median voter theorem is rarely observed in congressional politics. The discussions delineate their views on the many forces that may prevent candidates and legislators from seeking the median voter and why moderation does not guarantee a win. To gain bill sponsorship important for the district, party campaign committee support in the next election, or a legislative committee placement that would be beneficial for re-election, legislators, regardless of the competitiveness of their district, are expected to play with the team. The presence of non-substantive, procedural votes necessary to move the party agenda forward or embarrass the other side further complicate issues for legislators given voters' relative inability to distinguish between substantive, final passage votes and procedural votes. Increased competitiveness for control of the chamber has also turned legislating into a branding operation to create a unified message and national identity to better reap wave elections when they arrive,

providing few opportunities for a candidate to project a semblance of independence. When wave elections do arrive, the newfound majority party is capable of hitting the ground running by working through a backlog of their bills held in committee by the opposing party, which while efficient creates immense pressure for members in competitive seats to step up to the plate and enact the party's national goals. Finally, shifts in campaign finance laws have moved power away from the formal parties and to exterior groups, posing challenges for party leaders in forming durable coalitions capable of passing legislation.

The final paper pulls concepts from all of the preceding articles to yield insights on what could alleviate congressional polarization. In Paper 5, I exploit variation in campaign finance limits and primary election inclusiveness within State House chambers to examine caucus cohesion. Combining data on state legislator roll call voting from Shor and McCarty (2011), PAC contribution limits from Barber (2016), donation sources from Bonica (2016), primary election formats from McGhee et al. (2014), professionalism metrics from Squire (2007), and leader power from Anzia and Jackman (2013) into one comprehensive dataset, I find that allowing unlimited PAC contributions to legislative candidates increases caucus heterogeneity by three and a half to four standard deviations once those candidates take their seats. Moreover, doubling the PAC limit results in nearly a third of a standard deviation increase in caucus spread as PACs—through campaign donations—disrupt power previously held by the leader. Finally, primary election inclusivity is found to have an effect on Democrats. Allowing members from other parties to vote in the primary increased Democratic caucus heterogeneity by about half of a standard deviation, while having no effect on Republicans. I propose this divergent effect is linked to how the parties respond to more open primaries. Democrats experience a sharper increase in PAC spending from closed

to open primaries relative to Republicans, while Republicans shore up their candidates with a slightly higher percentage of campaign funds from the party campaign committee. Taken all together, the results suggest anti-party reforms that open parties to outside interference create difficulties for coalition building in legislatures and that steps should be taken to strengthen leadership and caucuses in relation to outside organizations.

Polarization, Congress, and the Top Two Primary Format

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1 Introduction

Polarization in the U.S. Congress and the nation at large has become a new normal in public discourse. The typical theory, whether more fiction than fact, argues gerrymandering has created districts that are safe for one party or the other, resulting in done and settled elections during the party primary cycle. When primary election voters are only the most ideological, candidates have very little incentive to choose centrist policies. This phenomenon combined with unregulated campaign finance creates the volatile recipe that has become the modern Congress. This paper unpacks one specific piece of that theory: primary elections and their various formats. Party primary elections can take many forms, some exclusive only for party members, others allowing some form of crossover voting from Independent voters or other party members, and still others partially or fully dissolving party lines on both the voter and candidate sides. In this paper, I explore primary openness in general as well as the most aggressive of these primary formats, the top two, which is unique in allowing any voter and any candidate to take part, regardless of party affiliation, with the "top two" candidates going onto the general election. Largely under-studied for lack of observations, the top two began in Louisiana in 1975 as a run-around to protect Democratic incumbents in the legislature and governor's mansion (Bibby and Schaffner 2008; Parent and Perry 2010). Nearly thirty years later, top two primaries still exist in Louisiana and are spreading. After several Supreme Court cases specifying its constitutionality in regards to parties' right of association,[1] the primary format has now existed in California since the 2012 election

[1] *Foster v. Love* found Louisiana's October election in which a candidate could win outright in violation of 2 U.S.C. § 1 and 7 specifying a uniform day for congressional and presidential elections across the nation (traditionally the first or second Tuesday in November). The first election was moved to match the national November date with a run-off set for December. *California Democratic Party v. Jones* struck down California's 1996 switch from a closed primary (in which one may only vote in the primary of the party that they are registered with) to a partisan blanket primary (where one may vote for

and Washington since the 2008 election. The literature is rich in analysis of closed, open, and partisan blanket primary systems, but considering recent developments, very little has been written on top two primaries.[2] Given its peculiarity of pitting all candidates and all voters—regardless of party—in the same arena from the beginning, one would expect competition between candidates to cause them to converge closer to the median voter. In today's age of polarization, that begs the question: Do top two primaries lead to more moderate candidates and officeholders relative to other systems? Will top two primaries solve congressional polarization?

The literature on primary systems and their effect on polarization is mixed. Some studies focus their attention on the introduction of the direct primary in the beginning decades of the 20th Century and the resulting decline in election voting rates (Ansolabehere et al. 2010; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008). The argument follows that low primary election response rates place greater power in the hands of voters with stronger partisan loyalties (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Brady, Han, and Pope 2007). Dividing the electorate via primary elections thus creates different median voters with different preferences (Grofman 2004; Owen and Grofman 2006), countering the classical view of the median voter theorem (Calvert 1985; Downs 1957). Therefore, candidates must first appeal to party loyalists with more extreme views before ever competing in the general election (Aldrich 1983; Coleman 1971; Fiorina and Abrams

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a Republican for governor, followed by a Democrat for senator, and so on) on the grounds of violating parties' First Amendment right of association (Bibby and Schaffner 2008; Maisel and Brewer 2010). Proposition 14 of 2010 set up the current nonpartisan blanket (top two) primary. *Washington State Grange v. Washington State Republican Party* reaffirmed the constitutionality of top two primaries.

[2] A majority of the literature does not specify the difference between partisan and nonpartisan (top two) blanket primaries, which is significant. Under partisan blanket primaries, candidates are still competing directly against other candidates from their party, thus likely to take hardline stances. Voters simply have the option to alternate between parties with each office on their ballot. Only with top two primaries are candidates of all parties competing against each other.

2009). Other studies analyze the interplay of presidential election years and voting rates, finding that participation rates have no effect on legislator ideology (Hirano et al. 2010; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008). Some researchers specifically compare candidates participating in the different formats and find that candidates are more moderate when primaries have greater inclusivity or dissolve the party boundaries (Alvarez and Sinclair 2012; W. Bullock and Clinton 2011; Gerber and Morton 1998). Going further, other researchers find that primaries—as a concept or in any format—do not affect polarization (Hirano et al. 2010; McGhee et al. 2014). Not all studies control for district ideology and therefore candidate/legislator responsiveness to voters, but Gerber and Morton (1998), McGhee et al. (2014), and Bullock and Clinton (2011) do. When the literature distinguishes between primary election formats, their effects on polarization vary, but all include the methodological decision to not distinguish between partisan blanket primaries and the top two format I investigate (Rogowski and Langella 2015).

Researchers are not short of alternative arguments for polarization. Some cite gerrymandering, donors, or party activists (Fiorina and Abrams 2009; McGhee et al. 2014; Schumer 2014). Gerrymandering, they argue, redraws districts to heavily preference one party over another, thus creating incentives for candidates to tack to the far right or far left to secure their party's nomination. Donors or party activists provide resources to nascent candidates, creating a foundation for their campaign and yet potentially warping their positions to appeal to early supporters. Demographics are also included in alternative arguments, citing a growing rural-urban divide, partisan clustering, and a realignment of the South to the Republican Party (Abrams and Fiorina 2012; Bishop 2009; Chen and Rodden 2013; Knuckey 2015; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009; Sides 2012). McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2009) cite this process as more responsible than gerrymandering. Partisan clustering, unsurprisingly, will cause

districts to increasingly favor one party over the other, placing greater power into the hands of the primary electorate. In other words, more now than ever academics should be studying primary elections.

As more cycles have passed since the introduction of the top two primary in California, the academic community is beginning to analyze that state's reforms. Political scientists there found voters in the state had difficulty distinguishing between ideologically extreme and moderate candidates (Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz 2015, 2016). Co-partisan competition in the general election (two members of the same party running against each other) also resulted in abstention by voters in the opposite party, producing a median voter not unlike a restricted primary (Nagler 2015). Yet, voters are adapting to the top two primary format and seeking out information, particularly when candidates from the same party face-off in the general election (Betsy Sinclair and Wray 2015). Americans at large favor more open primary systems over closed, although the results for top two primaries are more mixed, likely linked to lower voter experience and understanding (Jordan 2014). Its freshness is ripe for analysis, and the ball is in social scientists' court to argue for the significance of top two primaries on polarization with much of the literature contending that primary elections do not matter.

In this paper—the first within the literature to directly analyze legislators elected via the top two primary—I find that they *do* matter and *do* affect candidate ideology and governance. Whether via elites responding to their changing electorate or the extended party network coalescing around more moderate legislators, more inclusive primaries result in a decrease in polarization, and top two primaries (the most inclusive) result in a decrease in legislator polarization. Utilizing DW-NOMINATE ideology scores from Poole and Rosenthal (1985), which are based on roll call voting, and Campaign Finance scores (CFscore) from Bonica (2013a), which are based on campaign donations, I find

legislators winning office via top two primaries experience about 55% of the standard deviation reduction in polarization of DW-NOMINATE scores for Democrats and about 40% for Republicans. For an average House member, this represents about 26% reduction for Democrats and 16% for Republicans. More importantly, the results hold when controlling for district partisanship, illustrating that legislators from (liberal) conservative districts elected in top two primaries are less (liberal) conservative than their colleagues elected in other primary formats. Using CFscores, the results are more mixed but show the top two primary results in 37% of the standard deviation reduction in polarization for Republican candidates or about 13% for the average winning candidate.

In effect, top two primaries create real consequences for governance, systemic gridlock, and partisanship. As more candidates participate in this primary format with each Congress, the clarity and implications of this research has the potential to grow.

2 Literature Review

The scholarly literature about closed, open, and partisan blanket primaries is rich. Little attention has been given to top two primaries, largely because prior to 2008 Louisiana was the only state to utilize the format. To lay the foundation for sections on theory, metrics, and data analysis, in this section I explore the previous research of primary elections.

Ansolabehere et al. (2010) provides an account of direct primary elections, a Progressive Era reform, and evaluates competitiveness levels in the modern day. They discover that primary election competition and voter participation has declined greatly since the 1940s.[3] In an era of waning partisan loyalties, the Progressive adage to "vote for the man, not for the party" came to benefit incumbents the most, and thus led to declining competition (Ansolabehere et al. 2010, 203; Ware 2002). Progressive reforms against the spoils system also transferred patronage powers from party bosses and into the hands of incumbents to dole for public projects. Ansolabehere et al. (2010) discount entirely that the increase in two-party competition via the general election caused the demise in primary competition, noting regional and temporal inconsistencies. The researchers conclude that direct primaries gave voters greater choice in states dominated by single parties. Ware (2002) adds to this narrative, observing that the introduction of primary elections served two purposes in the Democratic Party-dominated South: They ended local and state control of nominations by the patrician class and they enabled the party to exclude African-Americans from the "real election" given Democratic candidates were all but certain to win the general election.

[3] An election was coded as not competitive if the winner received more than 60% of the vote share. At or less than that threshold was considered competitive. The researchers found that moving the threshold did not dramatically change their results.

Additional research by Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) finds that from 1874 to 1996 congressional candidates have generally assumed the ideological positions of the national party over their local district, minus rare moments between 1940 and 1970,[4] countering the claims of the median voter theorem. Low election responsiveness rates, they suggest, place greater power in the hands of primary electorates who hold stronger partisan loyalties relative to general election voters (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Brady, Han, and Pope 2007).

I should note that other researchers do not find a pattern between polarization indices for candidates elected in presidential versus midterm years, which often have different levels of primary election voter participation (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008, 69). That is to say, connecting declining primary voter participation to polarization is unwarranted. Moreover, Hirano and Snyder (2014) highlight that partisan voters tend to be the most knowledgeable and hence provide a vital vetting service in safe districts dominated by a single party. For this reason, I do not investigate turnout rates between primary formats, instead narrowing in on polarization indices themselves.

Interestingly, Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) observe discrepancies between candidate ideology[5] and the seat status. After controlling for district partisanship,[6] they find primary election challengers take more extreme positions than open seat candidates who in turn take more extreme positions than incumbents, thus illustrating a moderating effect of incumbency. This can be seen when open seats switch parties as well, transitioning from one ideological extreme to another. Bafumi and

[4] They note that parties were at their highest levels of ideological convergence in the 1960s and 1970s.
[5] They measure candidate ideology via the National Political Awareness Test (NPAT).
[6] They measure district partisanship via presidential election returns.

Herron call this "leapfrog representation" which creates median positions in the House or Senate that never match the true median voter (2010, 538).[7]

Pertaining specifically to primary election format, Gerber and Morton (1998) perform a cross-section time-series analysis of closed primary states versus the others, finding that, relative to their respective general election median voter (measured via presidential election returns), U.S. representatives selected in closed primaries are more ideologically extreme[8] than their counterparts in semi-closed primary states, and that they too are more ideological than those elected in open/partisan blanket/nonpartisan blanket primaries. When the latter category was divided, partisan blanket/nonpartisan blanket primaries were found to be the most moderate relative to open primaries, and runoff systems common in the South had a moderating effect as well. Their finding for runoff systems provides additional credence to the effect of the top two primary, which is in effect a multi-party runoff system. However, their research, like all others, does not distinguish between partisan and nonpartisan blanket (top two) primaries.

Gerber and Morton (1998) highlight that primary election styles may be endogenous to the electorate of a given state.[9] For example, moderate voters may be more inclined to have more inclusive primary elections, which result in moderate officeholders. The endogenous relationship between elections and parties or officeholders has been well documented, with electoral actors pursuing reforms that crystallize the party structure or the electoral viability of individuals or parties (Benoit 2007; Benoit and Hayden 2004; Boix 1999; Colomer 2005). To contain this endogeneity, my models also include interaction effects between primary format and district ideology

[7] This analysis includes only the 109th and 110th Congresses (January 2005-January 2009).
[8] Ideology score based on Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) ratings.
[9] Also see Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman (2003).

(measured via district-level Democratic two-party presidential vote percentages) on the dependent variable. In this way, I investigate if legislators and candidates are more or less *reactive* to their constituents within different primary election formats.

Bullock and Clinton (2011) explore California's 1996 reforms that shifted the state from a closed primary to a partisan blanket system. By employing a differences-in-differences regression model, the researchers illustrate that partisan blanket primaries had a moderating effect on U.S. Representatives elected through the system, but only in swing districts.[10] Considering 1998 and 2000 were the only years California was able to elect U.S. House members via partisan blanket primaries, the literature is lacking in depth.[11] Hirano et al. underscores Bullock and Clinton's point, noting that primary systems may create incentives for extreme positions, but "whether or not candidates respond to these incentives also depends upon how their position will affect general election outcomes" (2010, 184). That is, swing districts with a more balanced electorate can have a moderating effect on candidates (W. Bullock and Clinton 2011; Podkul and Kamarck 2014). I find this analysis significant for the qualitative interviews I conducted with party operatives about the top two. Campaigns and parties employ differing strategies depending on the partisanship of their district, and more competitive districts pose unique collective action problems. This is expanded on in the qualitative interviews paper.

Hall (2015) provides further evidence for the interplay between general electorates and primary voters: Candidates who adopt extreme positions in primary elections have increased odds of losing the general election and the party faces an

[10] Moderate, swing districts were labeled as those that fell within 5% of the national vote share in the 1992, 1996, and 2000 presidential elections, while partisan districts were those that did not (W. Bullock and Clinton 2011, 919).
[11] In 2000, the Supreme Court struck down the partisan blanket system for infringing on a party's right of association, and thus its right to endorse candidates as it pleases.

electoral penalty in subsequent elections. This supports the framework of Coleman (1971) and Owen and Grofman (2006), which argue that primary votes must consider the other party's positions/candidates, consider their individual tastes relative to their options, and consider general election viability when choosing their candidate (to maximize their probabilistic utility). Within this model, one may understand how candidates from parties that represent a minority of the electorate are able to win majorities, tapping into a concentration of district voters with positions between the party and population median voter (Owen and Grofman 2006). In this way, general election voters may create pressure for more centrist positions, while primary election voters exert an opposing force.

Alvarez and Sinclair (2012) investigate claims similar to those of Bullock and Clinton, instead focusing their research solely on California state legislators using the social network theory and roll call data from eight legislative sessions, 1991 to 2006. From the roll call votes, the authors were able to create a "matrix of agreement" to compare agreement between members with and without the partisan blanket primary, excluding unanimous consent votes (Alvarez and Sinclair 2012, 546). They found a slight increase in agreement for legislators of the same party elected via partisan blanket primary and even stronger results between legislators from different parties. Moreover, the results were amplified when both members were elected via a partisan blanket primary, with weaker agreement when only one member was, and even weaker when neither member was elected through the primary system. Their results suggest primary formats have the ability to select for and cement a legislator's ideology early on in their career.

Nevertheless, the literature is not unanimous on blanket primaries or primaries in general. McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2008) point to differing timelines between

polarization and the introduction of the direct primary election, but do not distinguish between different systems. They also find little difference between polarization score means among House Republicans, Senate Republicans, or Senate Democrats elected in closed primaries versus more open systems. Only closed primary House Democrats showed a more extreme position compared to their counterparts elected by way of other systems (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008). The general findings of Hirano et al. (2010) are that there is no effect on polarization from primary election turnout, primary challenger threats, or primary elections themselves.[12] McGhee et al. (2014) find that, among state legislators, the openness of primary systems has little effect on polarization, yet again do not separate the top two primary and partisan blanket primary.

Alternative explanations for polarization could be gerrymandering or distortion effects caused by donors and party activists (Fiorina and Abrams 2009; McGhee et al. 2014; Schumer 2014). Other researchers counter this analysis, instead pointing to the rural-urban divide coinciding with the concentration of Democrats in urban environments as well as regional realignment that has shifted the South and Northeast to strong Republican and Democratic bases, respectively (Chen and Rodden 2013; Knuckey 2015; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009). Partisan clustering, they argue, is leading to natural extremism as individuals sort with other like-minded individuals (Abrams and Fiorina 2012; Bishop 2009; Sides 2012).

Questions also remain about perfect information in campaigns as well as voter ambiguity regarding public officials' positions or actions once elected (Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz 2015, 2016; Rogowski 2014). Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz (2016) find that voters have difficulty distinguishing between ideologically moderate and extreme candidates. Given

[12] The researchers do not however distinguish between party primary systems, and the cases they review coincide with the period of declining party primary competition as noted in Ansolabehere et al. (2010).

the information miser nature of voters, they may instead resort to projecting their views onto candidates and voting based on perceived similarities rather than actual similarities, further complicating analysis (Dalager 1996; Granberg and Brent 1980; Kinder 1978). Shifts to more open primary laws could also not result in a more moderate electorate, driving candidates to maintain their original views and platforms. Nagler (2015) observes California's first top two primary resulted in abstention by voters facing a choice of two candidates from the opposing party, thus an electorate comparable to a closed primary. Collective action problems arising out of an inability to limit the number of candidates from a single party can result in co-partisan top two general elections, particularly in swing districts, which I explore in-depth in the qualitative article. This phenomenon, I find, can lead to districts being briefly represented by legislators with vastly different ideologies than the electorate.

Co-partisan competition in the general election succeeding a top two primary did however result in increased online searches of the candidates, thus voters appear to be seeking additional information when party labels are not relevant (Betsy Sinclair and Wray 2015). Furthermore, one researcher argued via an opinion piece that top two primaries would not result in more centrist politicians, citing reduced turnout in California's first top two primary in 2012 and the increased difficulties the system creates for Independent candidates (Killian 2014). I find this argument lacking however, due to the already low level of Independent legislators serving in Congress and national trends that saw decreased primary turnout for all states that year (Gans 2012). Finally, more accessible primary elections could invite crossover voters to "raid" the other party by voting for weaker candidates, in an attempt to help their party. That said, this has not been supported among partisan blanket primaries and voters face greater uncertainty in

top two primaries where even candidates unopposed within their party may not be guaranteed a spot in the general election (Jewell and Morehouse 2001).

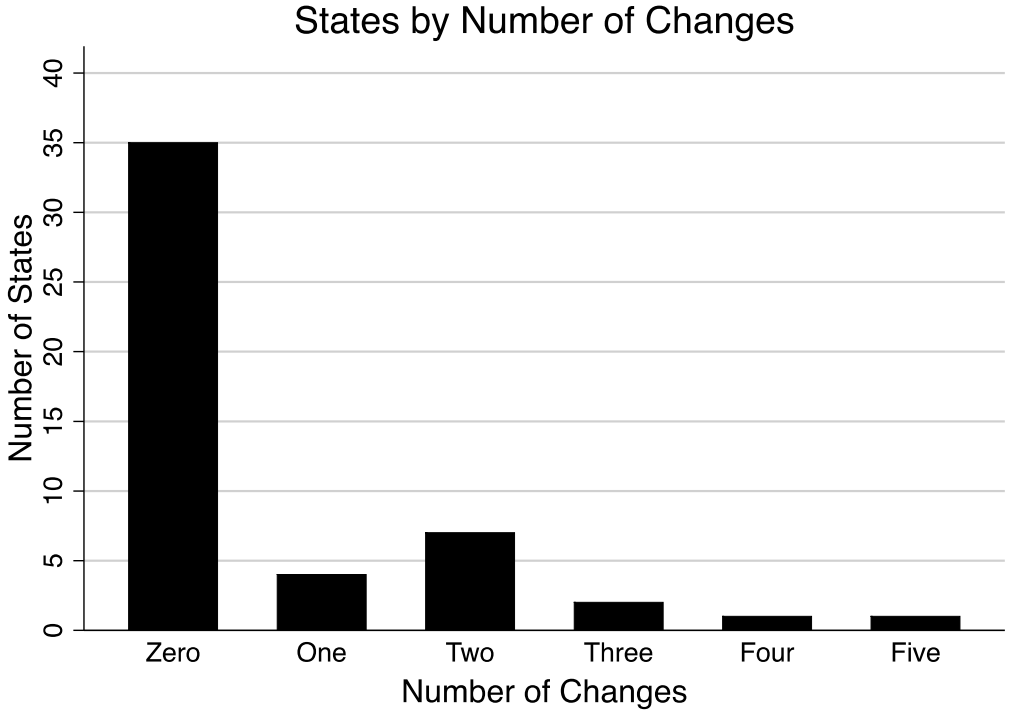
Finally, Rogowski and Langella (2015) find after analyzing data on state and federal candidate platforms over a thirty-year period find that there is no pattern between primary system and ideology.[13] This analysis does not differentiate nonpartisan blanket (top two) primaries from partisan blanket primaries, which create entirely different candidate incentives and thus necessitate an individual look at top two primaries, nor does it control for district ideology. Conversely, a separate paper also by Rogowski, *does* find that candidates respectively select more moderate platforms when running in more inclusive primaries and more polar platforms when running in more exclusive primaries, using the National Political Awareness Test (NPAT) as the candidate ideology metric. Like Rogowski and Langella (2015), Rogowski (2013) does not create a distinction between partisan and nonpartisan blanket primaries, yet the results suggest more inclusive primaries overall affects candidate positioning. I replicate the Rogowski and Langella (2015) results in the data section to illustrate the significant distinction of the top two primary and why we as researchers must treat it differently. As McGhee et al. state, "These two systems would likely have similar rates of crossover voting, though the freewheeling nature of the top-two system might discourage strategic crossover votes by making the likely consequences difficult to predict" (2014, 340). The jury, that is, is still out on top two primaries through holes in the literature, and some argue all primary formats have a non-effect.

[13] They utilize Bonica's CFscore metric based on whom the candidates receive their campaign donations from, one of my two dependent variables.

3 Primary Formats, Theory, and Hypotheses

The theory underlying this research is candidate/legislator-focused, observing differences in candidate/legislator ideology depending on whom that candidate faces in a primary election and the ideological composition of the primary electorate. By employing a difference-in-differences analysis of panel data from 1980-2012, I create a causal link between primary system format and candidate ideology. The data includes 33 primary election changes across 15 states. The distribution of changes per state is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The distribution of states by number of electoral reforms.



Eight states had parties with different primary election systems in place at a given time. One state had five different changes over the time period observed, one had four, two had three, seven had two, and four had one, all of which are variations that can be exploited through a differences-in-differences regression. Table 1 lists the different primary styles for each state for the period 1980-2012.

Table 1: Primary System by State, 1980-2012

Primary Type	States
Closed	Arizona (1980-1998), California (1980-1996), Colorado (1980-1990), Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho Republicans (2012), Kansas Democrats (1980-1990), Kansas Republicans (1980-1990; 2004-2012), Kentucky, Louisiana (2008-2010), Maryland Democrats, Maryland Republicans (1980-1998; 2002-2012), Nebraska (1980-1986), Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina Democrats (1980-1994), North Carolina Republicans (1980-1988), Oklahoma, Oregon Democrats (1980-1996; 2002-2012), Oregon Republicans (1980-1988; 1994-2012), Pennsylvania, South Dakota Democrats (1980-2008), South Dakota Republicans, Utah (1980-1992), West Virginia Democrats (1980-2006), West Virginia Republicans (1980-1986)
Semi-Closed	Alaska Democrats (2002), Alaska Republicans (1992-1994; 2000-2012), Arizona (2000-2012), California (2002-2010), Colorado (1992-2012), Idaho Democrats (2012), Kansas Democrats (1992-2012), Kansas Republicans (1992-2002), Maine, Maryland Republicans (2000), Massachusetts, Nebraska (1988-2012), New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina Democrats (1996-2012), North Carolina Republicans (1990-2012), Oregon Democrats (1998-2000), Oregon Republicans (1990-1992), Rhode Island, South Dakota Democrats (2010-2012), West Virginia Democrats (2008-2012), West Virginia Republicans (1988-2012)
Semi-Open	Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah (1996-2012), Virginia, Wyoming
Open	Hawaii, Idaho (1980-2010), Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Utah (1994), Vermont, Washington (2004-2006), Wisconsin
Partisan Blanket	Alaska Democrats (1980-2000; 2004-2012), Alaska Republicans (1980-1990; 1996-1998), California (1998-2000), Washington (1980-2002)
Nonpartisan Blanket (Top Two)	California (2012), Louisiana (1980-2006; 2012), Washington (2008-2012)

Note: Six states had primary systems that differed by party. These dates and formats were compiled according to McGhee et al. (2014) and Rogowski and Langella (2015).

Figure 2 provides a visual map of primary formats in the final year of the data. Additional maps for the other years are included in the appendix. Table 2 lists the qualities of the different primary systems.

Figure 2: Primary systems across the states in 2012. Mixed styles denote states in which the parties operate under different formats.

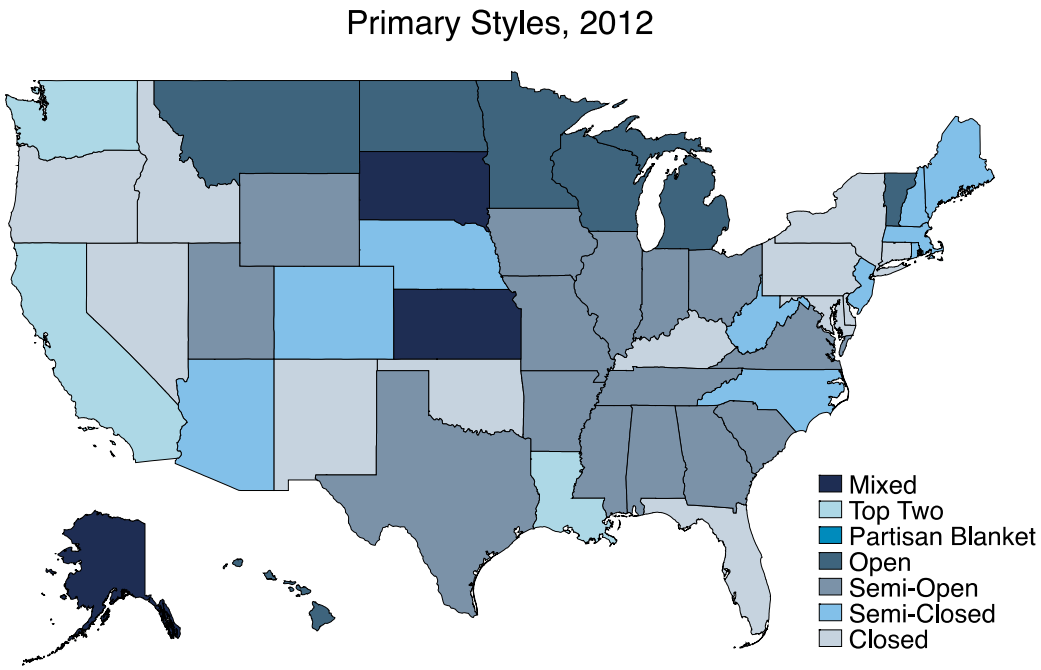


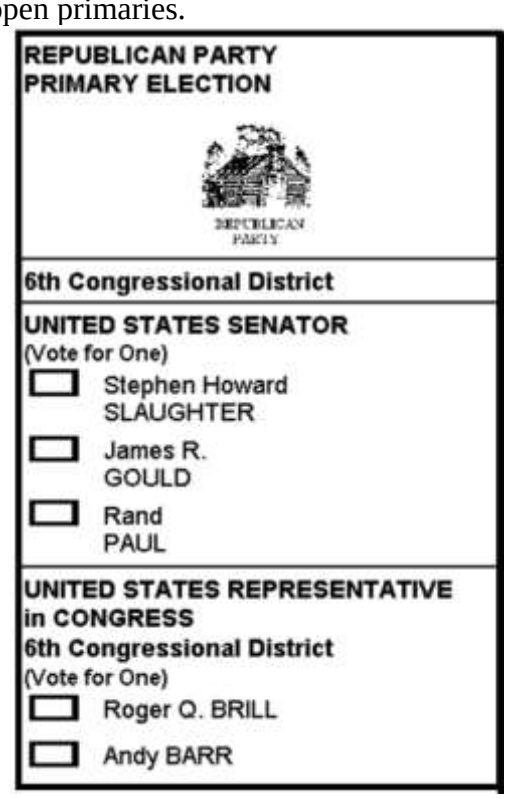
Table 2: Primary System Distinguishing Features

	Co-Partisan Competition Only?	Crossovers Voters Allowed?	Independent Voters Only?	Public Decision?	Registration Requirement?	Voters Choose Parties?
Closed	Yes	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Semi-Closed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sometimes	Yes
Semi-Open	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Sometimes	Yes
Open	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Partisan Blanket	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Nonpartisan Blanket (Top Two)	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

Note: "Co-Partisan Competition" references if party candidates are only competing against other party candidates for a spot on the general election ballot. "Crossovers Allowed" references if members of other parties are allowed to vote. "Independents Only" references if only Independent voters (not registered with a party) are allowed to crossover. "Public Decision" references if the party primary they voted in appears on their voting registration. "Registration Requirement" references if crossover voters must register with the party whose primary they vote in, even if temporary. "Choose Parties" references if voters are confined to a single party on their ballot. (Based off McGhee et al. 2014, 341).

Figures 3-5 below provide sample ballots for a few primary systems. In the first ballot, taken from Kentucky, a closed primary state, and used for all primary formats except the two blanket formats, Republican and Democratic candidates are on separate ballots and competing against their co-partisans. To that end, one nominee from each party will be on the general election ballot. The only distinguishing feature between the different formats using this ballot is who can vote in the party primary. For closed primaries, only party members can participate. For semi-closed, Independents are able to choose one of the party ballots, but members of other parties are not allowed. In both semi-open and open primaries, voters can select any party ballot, but their choice is publicly available in their voter registration only in semi-open states (and thus available for future use by party operatives to microtarget partisan-leaning voters to support their candidate). For partisan blanket primaries, like the ADL (**A**laskan Independence Party, **D**emocratic Party, **L**ibertarian Party) ballot in Figure 4, any voter can participate and the top one vote-getter for each party will go onto the general election. That is to say, candidates for any of these parties are fighting for the same voters and voters can change parties between offices (not possible in closed, semi-closed, semi-open, or open primaries), yet in effect each candidate must only beat the other candidates from their party to compete in the general election. Finally, for top two ballots like Figure 5, all candidates are listed for the same office, voters see every candidate on their ballot, and only the top two vote-getters move onto the general election, regardless of their party affiliation. Two Democrats or two Republicans may win, a unique phenomenon that has occurred in recent elections, and candidates from the initial start are competing against every other candidate for votes.

Figure 3: Closed primary ballot from Kentucky's 2016 election, also used for semi-closed, semi-open, and open primaries.



REPUBLICAN PARTY
PRIMARY ELECTION

REPUBLICAN PARTY

6th Congressional District

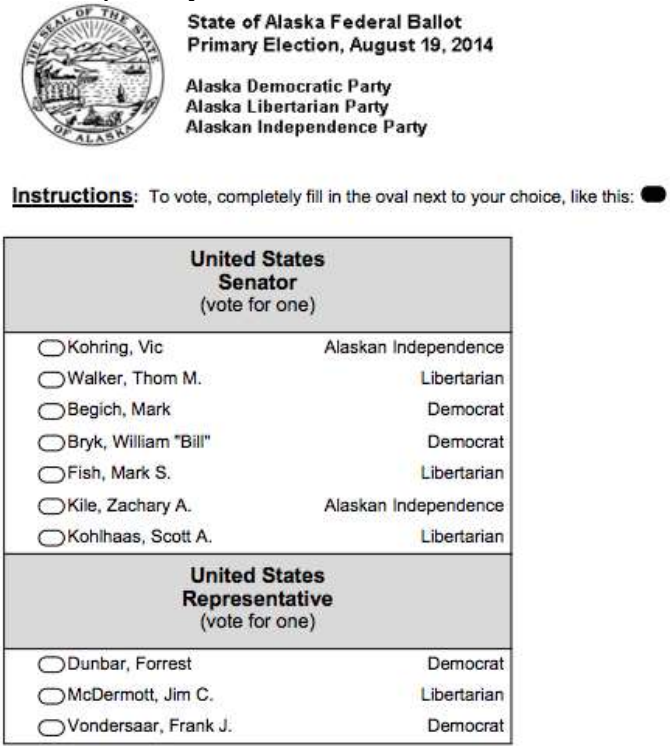
UNITED STATES SENATOR
(Vote for One)

- ☐ Stephen Howard SLAUGHTER
- ☐ James R. GOULD
- ☐ Rand PAUL

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE in CONGRESS
6th Congressional District
(Vote for One)

- ☐ Roger Q. BRILL
- ☐ Andy BARR

Figure 4: Partisan blanket primary ballot from Alaska's 2014 election.



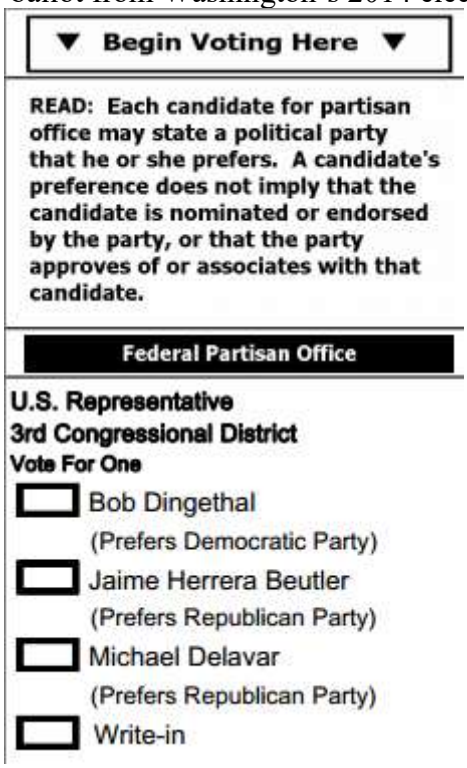
State of Alaska Federal Ballot
Primary Election, August 19, 2014

Alaska Democratic Party
Alaska Libertarian Party
Alaskan Independence Party

Instructions: To vote, completely fill in the oval next to your choice, like this: ●

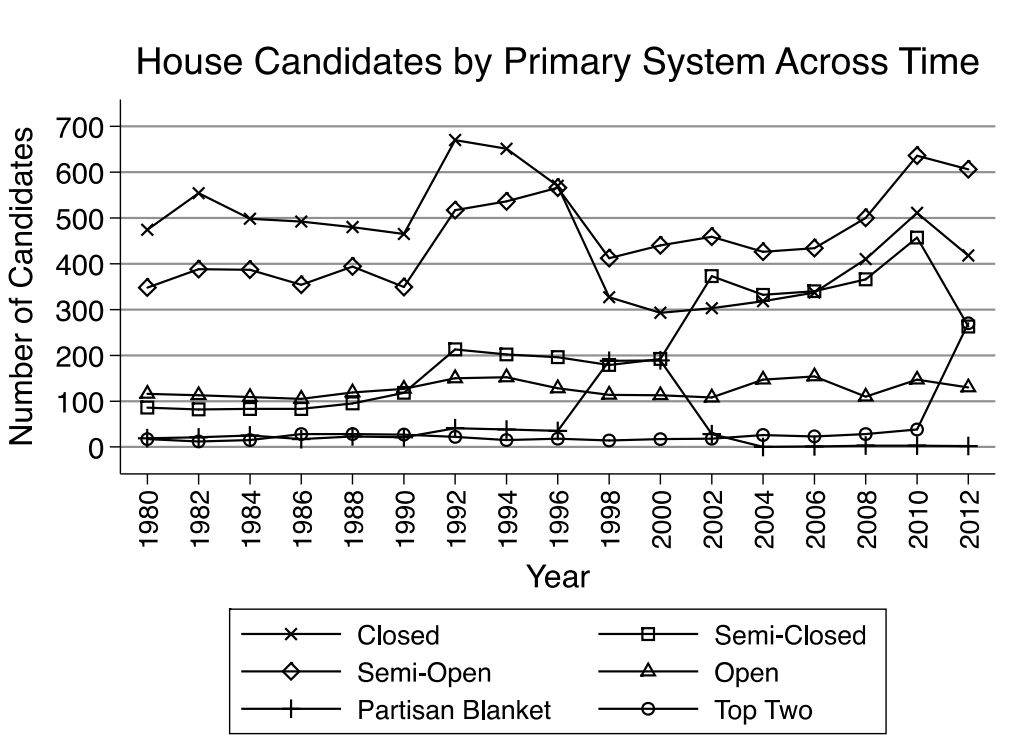
United States Senator (vote for one)	
○ Kohring, Vic	Alaskan Independence
○ Walker, Thom M.	Libertarian
○ Begich, Mark	Democrat
○ Bryk, William "Bill"	Democrat
○ Fish, Mark S.	Libertarian
○ Kile, Zachary A.	Alaskan Independence
○ Kohlhaas, Scott A.	Libertarian
United States Representative (vote for one)	
○ Dunbar, Forrest	Democrat
○ McDermott, Jim C.	Libertarian
○ Vondersaar, Frank J.	Democrat

Figure 5: Top two primary ballot from Washington's 2014 election.



I could analyze strictly top two primary candidates within the data; however, that limits the external validity of the research, provides no control groups, and reduces the number of observations. With the goal of creating a broader observation on the openness of primary systems and the effect of including a wider ideological spectrum of candidates and voters, all primary styles are included. At any point in time, there have been hundreds of candidates participating in each variation of primary elections, and thus providing ample data on the effects of a shifting opposition or electorate. Furthermore, every primary format change challenges the endogenous relationship between primary format and the electorate of each state, providing evidence that the causal arrow begins with primary format and does in fact affect legislators' ideologies while state populations remain constant. Figure 6 lists the number of House candidates involved in each primary style. Note that closed, semi-closed, and semi-open styles tend to be the most utilized over time, but have declined in recent years as usage of the top two has increased.

Figure 6: The number of House candidates by primary system format and per election year.



The dependent variables are the candidate Campaign Finance score (CFscore) taken from the Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME), a measure of ideology based on a candidate's donors, as well as Poole and Rosenthal's DW-NOMINATE (Bonica 2013a; Poole and Rosenthal 1985). The independent variable of interest is the primary system format, and additional controls are added for district partisanship. To expand on the previous literature, I include a distinction between partisan blanket primaries and nonpartisan blanket (top two) primaries. As previously stated, I find this differentiation critical. In partisan blanket primaries, although voters may switch between parties as they vote for offices on their ballot, Republican candidates are still facing other Republicans and Democratic candidates still facing other Democrats, and one member from each party will be on the general election ballot. By pitting Republican and Democratic candidates against each other in the first round of an

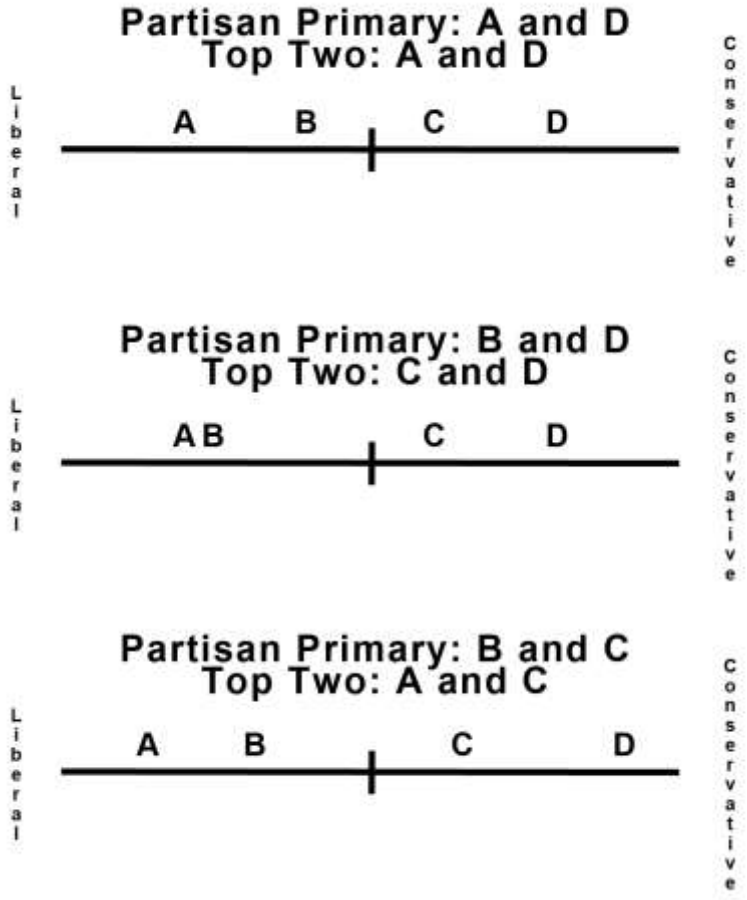
election, we would expect new incentives for candidates as McGhee et al. (2014) state, even if the median party voter may be consistent across both formats.

All six primary formats should generate median voter differences, per the primary theory of Rogowski and Langella (2015). The classical view of the median voter theorem assumes candidates from differing parties will converge at the median voter to appeal to the largest portion of the electorate (Calvert 1985; Downs 1957). Yet, as Aldrich notes, candidates must first appeal to party activists who often hold more extreme views than the general election electorate (1983; Fiorina and Abrams 2009). He bases this on an assumption that party activists are price takers who "take the positions and goals of the party as given" without wishing to change them (Aldrich 1983, 976). Because candidates need activists for volunteers or campaign donations, they may adopt a position near the party center and thus constrain their general election options. They may also choose positions in between the median party voter and median population voter dependent on the concentration and distribution of the party electorate (Grofman 2004; Owen and Grofman 2006). Thus, elected officials or would-be elected officials may be responding to the demands of political elites and activists (Fiorina and Abrams 2009). Given the two-stage nature of American politics, candidates must first clear this hurdle of gaining their party's nomination to gain a place on the general election ballot (Coleman 1971). This in and of itself requires candidates to create assumptions about their electorate's views, the opposing party's views, the opposing party's electorate's views, which themselves are an evaluation of the first party's positions. In short, primary elections are complex.

Figure 7 illustrates several hypothetical elections using four candidates on a spectrum from 0 to 1, liberal to conservative. To the left of 0.5 are registered as liberal while to the right are conservative. An infinite amount of voters are uniformly

distributed throughout the spectrum so vote yields are entirely decided by candidate placement. In example 1, the candidates are evenly spaced across the spectrum 0 to 1. Candidates A and D garner all voters on the polar ends, and half of those in between A-B and D-C, taking 30% of the total vote each with either primary format. For a partisan primary, B and C each take 20%, or all votes to the ideological middle within their parties and half of those between B-A and C-D. With a top two primary, B and C would each split the distance between them, resulting in the same number of votes. A and D move onto the general election regardless of primary format.

Figure 7: Candidate ideological placement and primary election winners.



In example 2, one party's candidates take more polar positions, with the other two candidates remaining the same. Under a partisan primary, B would win by gaining all voters to the ideological center dividing the parties and half of those in between B-A,

while D would again win by gaining all voters to the polar end and half of those between D-C. A top two primary would instead result in C and D winning, with C encroaching on some left-of-center votes that previously would have gone to B under a partisan primary (half of those between C-B).

Finally, example 3 would result in B and C winning under a partisan primary by claiming all votes to the ideological center dividing the parties and half of those between B-A and C-D. In a top two primary with the same candidates, center right candidate C would again encroach on some left-of-center votes previously going to B, resulting in A and C winning. Algebraically, this can be written as $2A + B > C$. Similarly, B and D could win instead depending on the placement of B, written as $C + 2D - 2 < B$, in which B is sufficiently to the right to encroach on C votes.

In other words, the placement of B and C relative to A and D affects if the top two would yield different results than a partisan primary, potentially increasing polarization relative to the center like in example 3, decreasing it like in example 2, or having no effect like in example 1. Given B and C gain votes from each other, we cannot go from A and D winning in a partisan primary to B and C winning in a top two, or vice versa, but a one candidate change is possible as examples 2 and 3 show. Increasing or decreasing the number of candidates would likewise affect the results, as would normal or bimodal voter distributions. Regardless, by staging primary elections prior to a general election, the candidates must appeal to primary election voters that may not reflect the general election voters. Thus, an opening up of primary elections will bring about a change in candidate and voter divisions, and thus a change in candidate strategies as they seek to maximize their number of votes to make it to the general election. Mechanically, this process could derive from elites or the extended party network of operatives and political action committees analyzing the viability of certain strategies or

candidates within differing electoral environments, either ex ante or ex post. But, rather than debating the means of transmission, this article analyzes the results themselves with the understanding that the mechanisms of who is nominated and how that comes to be is the result of innumerable public and private processes with none able to lay claim as the primary means.

For both candidate and legislator ideology metrics I use, positive values constitute conservative ideologies while negative ideology values constitute liberal ideologies. I define moderation as a decrease (increase) in conservative (liberal) candidates' or legislators' ideology metrics, and polarization constitutes the opposite of moderation. Given this, the testable hypotheses are:

H_1: Top two primary election formats will generate congressional candidates and officeholders with more moderate ideologies, relative to the other five formats.

H_2: More inclusive primary election formats will generate congressional candidates and officeholders with more moderate ideologies.

I define more inclusive primary election formats as the spectrum of voting eligibility per Table 2, beginning at the most restrictive system—closed—and finishing at the most inclusive—top two. The null hypothesis argues there is no effect of primary election format on the ideology of congressional candidates or officeholders.

4 Ideology Metrics

I work within the Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME), which contains 5,768 Democratic and Republican[14] unique candidates in 7,388 elections for the House from 1980-2012, and DW-NOMINATE, which provides ideal point estimates of ideology for elected legislators in every Congress, or 2,075 unique legislators in 7,472 elections from 1980-2012 (Bonica 2013a; Poole and Rosenthal 1985). DW-NOMINATE is an intertemporal,[15] bicameral,[16] spatial map of members' voting ideology on a unidimensional scale, a common metric[17] for analyzing legislators' views (Poole and Rosenthal 1985). Comparable to Poole and Rosenthal's DW-NOMINATE, DIME aggregates information from 3.93 million campaign donors and 262,000 political action committees to provide an indicator of candidate ideology (Bonica 2014). Donor ideology is calculated as a contribution-weighted average of the DW-NOMINATE scores for incumbents they have given to, excluding the candidate the CFscore refers to (Hall 2015). Figures 8 and 9 and Tables 3 and 4 list the summary statistics and distributions for each metric.

[14] Independent candidates are excluded.
[15] By covering all roll call votes, DW-NOMINATE therefore includes legislators from multiple Congresses, hence provides an intertemporal bridge for comparison from the 1st Congress to the current Congress.
[16] The scores are calculated for both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Votes on conference committee conference reports in both chambers provide some comparison between members of the two bodies (Bafumi and Herron 2010; Poole and Rosenthal 1985).
[17] See Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz (2015), Bafumi and Herron (2010), Bonica (2013b, 2014), Brady, Han, and Pope (2007), Gerber and Morton (1998), Hall (2015), Hirano et al. (2010), Rogowski and Langella (2015), and Rogowski (2014).

Table 3: DW-NOMINATE Nokken-Poole
Summary Statistics for General Election Winners

	Democrat	Republican
Mean	-0.33	0.50
Median	-0.35	0.49
Standard Deviation	0.16	0.22

Figure 8: Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE distribution.

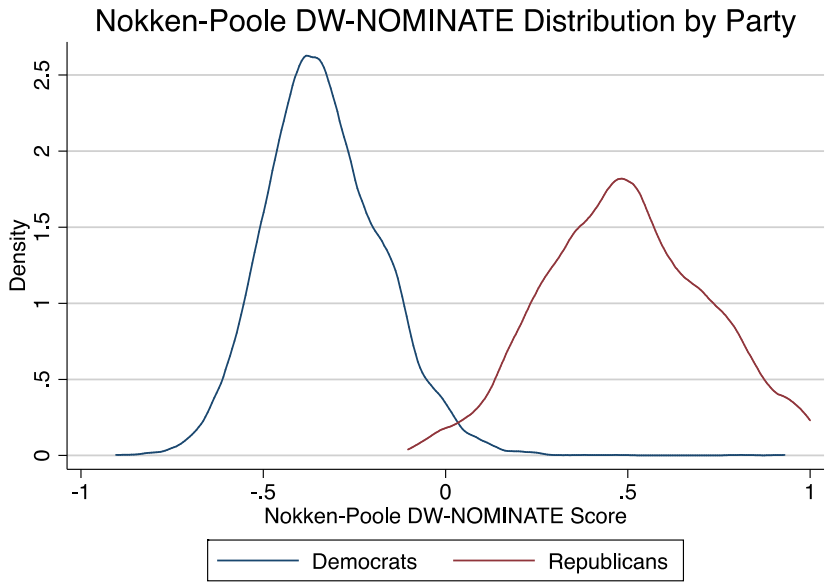
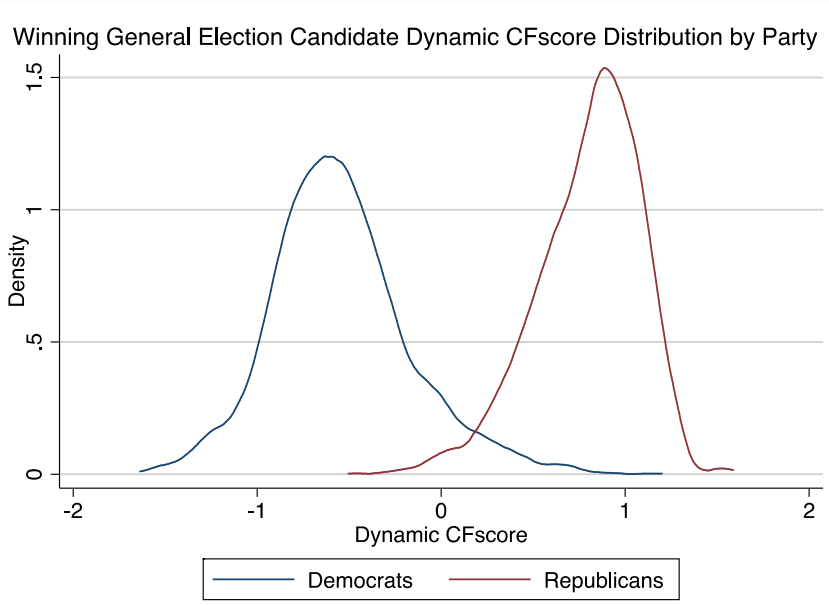


Table 4: Dynamic CFscore Summary Statistics for General Election Winners

	Democrats	Republicans
Mean	-0.55	0.80
Median	-0.58	0.84
Standard Deviation	0.38	0.28

Figure 9: Dynamic CFscore distribution.



Other popular metrics are Project Vote Smart's National Political Awareness Test (NPAT, now called the Political Courage Test)[18] and Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) interest group ratings.[19] DW-NOMINATE scores and CFscores are the preferred metrics for candidate ideology, better absorbing variation in geography and time without relying on self-reporting like NPAT or independent assessments by an outside group like the ADA.

As Rogowski and Langella (2015) note, donors may contribute for reasons other than ideology. They cite studies that show a quarter of donors give for material reasons and another quarter for social reasons. Bonica (2014) discounts this concern with several robustness checks that illustrate non-ideological giving is a small fraction. I further this analysis by investigating political action committee (PAC) campaign contributions, which have the potential to distort ideological metrics built around campaign giving and donor intent (Barber 2016). Illustrating internal validity, CFscores are able to

[18] See Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) and McGhee et al. (2014).
[19] See Bonica (2013b, 2014), Gerber and Morton (1998), and Poole and Rosenthal (1985).

respectively predict votes in the House and Senate 88% and 87% of the time, compared to DW-NOMINATE's 90% and 88% (Bonica 2014).

CFscores have the potential to be a better read of candidates than DW-NOMINATE. As Bonica states, "Contributors are free to consider the many ways in which candidates express their ideology beyond how they vote, such as public-speaking records, stated policy goals, endorsements, the issues they champion, authored and cosponsored legislation, or cultural and religious values" (2014, 372). Likewise, the erosion of campaign finance laws only strengthens the measure, as it "brings together the masses, elites, special interest groups, and politicians" through money linkages that "pervade nearly every level of American politics" (Bonica 2014, 309). Although not perfect, from where and whom candidates receive campaign funds from provides a signal about their political ideology and how they will vote once in office (Ashworth 2006; Bonica 2014; Rogowski and Langella 2015). Corroborating that analysis with DW-NOMINATE fills in the gap, telling us specifically how that candidate legislates and votes once in office.

Because Independent candidates to not take part in closed, semi-closed, semi-open, or open primary systems involving major party candidates and represent only 0.1% of elected Representatives since 1980 (11 out of 7,484), I removed them from both CFscore and DW-NOMINATE datasets. The independent variable is unaffected by this change since I am interested in candidate/legislator ideology of elected officials across different primary election formats, particularly the top two. It should be noted that Independent candidates do share the ballot with Democratic and Republican candidates in either partisan or nonpartisan blanket primary systems; however, they have not been elected. Moreover, in the instance of partisan blanket primaries, major party candidates

are still truly only competing against intra-party competitors to secure a spot on the general election ballot, thus making Independent candidates less relevant to the results.

5 Data Analysis

For analysis, I employ a difference-in-differences model of the CFscore and DW-NOMINATE panel data. Differences-in-differences estimation uses aggregate data as a version of fixed effects regression, taking into account that there are six different primary systems existing across the 50 states over time and using this variation to drive causal comparisons (Angrist and Pischke 2009, 2015). In its simplest form, a differences-in-differences model takes into account that treatment and control groups are potentially different but recognizes they move parallel across time. In this instance, the "divergence of a post-treatment path from the trend established by a comparison group may signal a treatment effect" (Angrist and Pischke 2015, 178). That is, the two groups behave similarly pre-treatment but at different magnitudes, and behave differently after one group is treated, hence differences-in-differences. House candidates in the dataset compete within 2,175 unique House districts, the true 435 districts redistricted after each census within the 1980-2012 period (therefore redistricting occurred in 1982, 1992, 2002, and 2012). My models replicate Rogowski and Langella (2015) and McGhee et al. (2014) by using state as the location-based fixed effect, given treatment (primary format) occurs at the state level. By including state and time fixed effects, the model accounts for differences between locations and across time, providing parameters on the effect of each primary system (the treatment).

Primary systems are coded according to McGhee et al. (2014), with edits made for the introduction of the top two primary in California, Louisiana, and Washington. This coding was cross-checked with Rogowski and Langella (2015). Where I discovered inconsistencies, I consulted Kanthak and Morton (2001), Gerber and Morton (1998), the National Conference of State Legislatures (Underhill 2014), the Center for Voting and Democracy (Richie 2012), and Secretaries of State websites.

The dependent variables are the dynamic CFscore and the first-dimension Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE estimates, which are cycle-specific for each candidate and Congress-specific for each legislator, providing the maximum variation year to year for each individual candidate and legislator (Bonica 2013a; Nokken and Poole 2004). For both metrics, Democratic candidates have negative values (liberal on the first dimension, unidimensional scale) and Republicans positive (conservative on the same scale). Separating by party accounts for any differences between the parties in regards to primary formats. The independent variables of interest are the dummy variables for the six primary systems, with closed primaries (the most restrictive) acting as the reference category. To provide a clear picture about primary format reforms on legislatures and governments, and because all primary candidates may not be running with the intention of winning the general election, CFscores of only winning general election candidates are analyzed as dependent variables. And given that DW-NOMINATE scores only exist for winning candidates who hold office, they are inherently linked to legislatures. I find this particularly important given it is only those individuals that are controlling and navigating the dialogue of public policy. To that end, this provides a narrative of primary election formats' impact on government policy, while also expanding on previous research that has focused solely on officeholders (Bafumi and Herron 2010; Brady, Han, and Pope 2007; Gerber and Morton 1998; Hall 2015; Hirano et al. 2010; Rogowski 2014; Rogowski and Langella 2015). Furthermore, this solves an over-representation problem by districts that field more candidates than average, which would weight the results to those districts over others. For instance, some House districts had as many as 16 candidates between all parties in a single election, while others had as few as one (unopposed). By focusing specifically on general election winners, all districts have equal representation in the data.

As previously stated, to account for differences across state and years, both location and time fixed effects are included. The baseline model is:

$$y_{ts} = \alpha + \delta_t + \phi_s + \beta_1 \text{SEMICLOSED} + \beta_2 \text{SEMIOPEN} + \beta_3 \text{OPEN} + \beta_4 \text{PARTISANBLANKET} + \beta_5 \text{TOPTWO} + \varepsilon_{ts}$$

where y reflects the candidate CFscore/legislator DW-NOMINATE score, subscripts t and s reference years and states; δ_t describes time fixed effects with 1980 as the reference category; ϕ_s describes state fixed effects; β_1 through β_5 represent dummy variables for each primary type with closed primaries as the reference category; and finally error terms and a constant. Standard errors are clustered on states since primary systems are treated at the state level. House members are elected via within-state congressional districts, however primary election rules are dictated by the state.

Expanded models are run with an additional independent variable for district partisanship. One model simply controls for district partisanship. A more advanced model interacts district partisanship and primary format on the dependent variables. These models are:

$$y_{ts} = \alpha + \delta_t + \phi_s + \beta_{1\text{-}5} + \lambda_d + \varepsilon_{ts}$$

$$y_{ts} = \alpha + \delta_t + \phi_s + (\beta_{1\text{-}5} \times \lambda_d) + \varepsilon_{ts}$$

where all previous notations remain the same, and λ_d reflects district ideology.

As noted, I predict that more restrictive primary systems create candidates further from the district median voter.[20] I measure district partisanship utilizing the most recent district-level Democratic two-party presidential percentage,[21] a traditional measure of

[20] See Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman (2003) which illustrates that open primary systems have more ideologically moderate electorates than semi-open or closed primary systems.

[21] Provided by Snyder (2010) and manually updated to include 2012.

district ideology.[22] The interaction function with district partisanship investigates the endogeneity concern in which more inclusive primary election systems are the result of a more moderate electorate within a state, which may violate the parallel trends assumption of difference-in-differences analysis. The question remains whether, after controlling for district partisanship, more restrictive primary systems elect candidates with more polar ideology scores compared to less restrictive primary systems (the top two system being the least restrictive). Along these lines, one would expect liberal (conservative) districts to elect liberal (conservative) candidates, but it is unknown if certain primary systems cause a district to elect a *less* liberal (conservative) candidate than it would otherwise. To that end, the model investigates if elected officials are more responsive to constituents and median voters in one primary format system over another.

[22] See Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001), Bullock and Clinton (2011), Gerber and Morton (1998), and McGhee et al. (2014).

6 Results

6.1 CFscore

To illustrate the effect of primary election inclusiveness on candidate polarization, I first run a simple closed/open binary[23] model. Table 6 shows the results for both Democrats and Republicans, with summary statistics listed again in Table 5 for reference. The findings illustrate that more inclusive House primaries (open versus closed) produce slightly less polar general election winners, particularly for Republicans (negative values indicate moderation). For Republicans, the statistically significant effect is about 20% of the standard deviation. For Democrats, the results are statistically insignificant, but the coefficient is in the direction we would expect (positive values for Democrats suggest more moderate candidates). That said, these models only describe general trends about openness of primary systems, necessitating more advanced models that tell us more about the specific nuances of each primary system format elucidated throughout this article.

Table 5: Dynamic CFscore Summary Statistics for General Election Winners

	Democrats	Republicans
Mean	-0.55	0.80
Median	-0.58	0.84
Standard Deviation	0.38	0.28

[23] Closed and semi-closed primary systems were coded as zero. All other systems were coded as one.

Table 6: Open vs. Closed Primaries and Winning Candidate Ideology by State

Dependent Variable: Candidate Dynamic CFscore Panel Unit: State		
Variables	Democrats	Republicans
Open Primaries	0.00935 (0.39)	-0.0547*** (-3.62)
Constant	0.105*** (4.46)	0.489*** (21.04)
State/Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.53	0.49
N	3,881	3,399

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.
Note: The reference category is the closed/semi-closed primaries. Negative values equal more liberal candidates, positive values equal more conservative.

Table 7 lists the models that separate out the six types of primary system. The reference category for primary style is the closed primary. State and time fixed effects are included. I use the replication data from Rogowski and Langella (2015) for these models specifically to illustrate the difference between separating and not separating the two types of blanket primaries (partisan and the non-partisan top two). I use my data with its additional parameters for all other models, and comparison between the two datasets illustrate statistically indistinguishable results, unsurprising given both come from same source (DIME).

The results for primary styles are not negligible. The top two primary performs at par with the semi-open primary for Republicans, illustrating an even slightly higher moderation effect (37% of the standard deviation versus 34%). Put another way, for the average Republican member (CFscore of 0.80 relative to -0.55 for Democrats), the top two primary results in about a 13% reduction in polarization. Given that the Republican Party by most metrics is the party responsible for polarization in Congress, this result is not unsubstantial. The partisan blanket results in slightly less moderation for

Republicans than the semi-open, but is statistically significant for the party nonetheless. Meanwhile, the semi-open primary results in about 0.17 moderation for Democrats (about 45% of the standard deviation) and 0.10 moderation for Republicans (again, 34% of the standard deviation). In general and for all results, I stress caution in interpreting the semi-open primary coefficient. Only one state (Utah) switched to/from the semi-open between 1980 and 2012 providing very little variation to exploit for the differences-in-differences regressions. Furthermore, all other statistically significant results hold when I exclude semi-open primary candidates. Finally, the top two coefficient for winning Democratic candidates is statistically insignificant, but in the right direction and 6% of the standard deviation (positive values suggesting moderation). These results taken together suggest Republican candidates in top two primaries are campaigning at a slightly more moderate level than their co-partisans running in other primary formats.

Table 7: Comparing General Election Winners with/without Separating Blanket Primaries Using Rogowski and Langella (2015) Replication Data

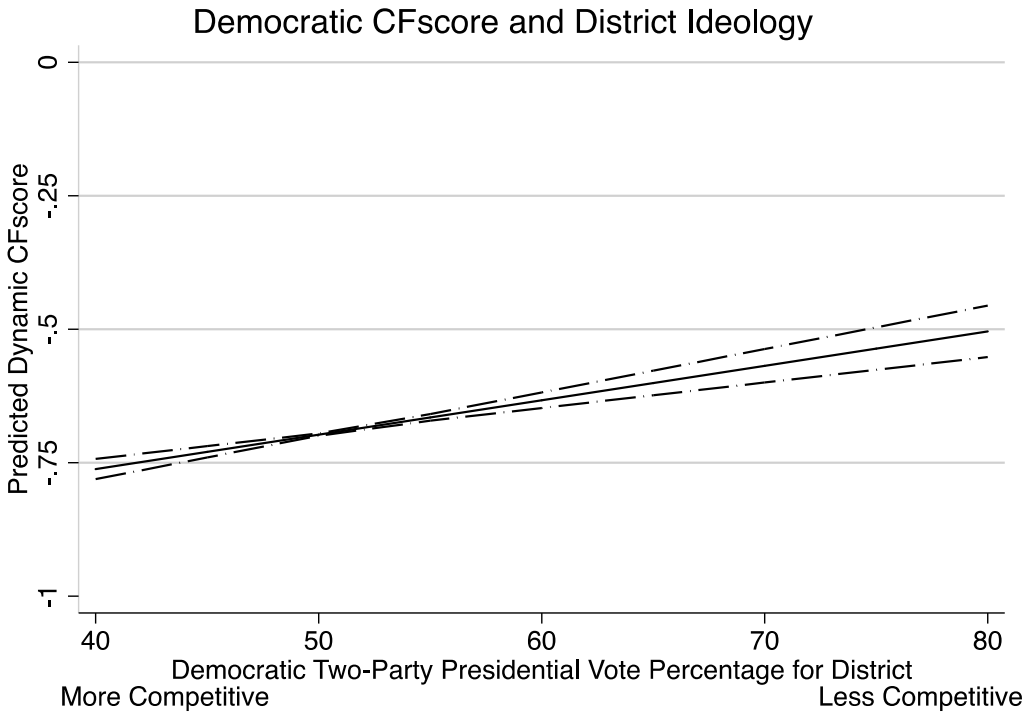
Dependent Variable: Candidate Dynamic CFscore Panel Unit: State				
Variables	Democrats	Democrats	Republicans	Republicans
Semi-Closed	0.0116 (0.37)	0.0118 (0.37)	-0.0757* (-2.03)	-0.0758* (-2.02)
Semi-Open	0.170*** (8.30)	0.166*** (7.97)	-0.0973*** (-6.27)	-0.0953*** (-6.12)
Open	0.00235 (0.05)	-0.0262 (-0.40)	0.00548 (0.21)	0.0231 (0.92)
Blanket	0.0124 (0.53)	—	-0.0918*** (-5.22)	—
Partisan Blanket	—	0.00846 (0.27)	—	-0.0861*** (-4.36)
Non-Partisan Blanket (Top Two)	—	0.0232 (0.78)	—	-0.103*** (-4.90)
Constant	0.113*** (4.94)	0.113*** (4.94)	0.898*** (37.93)	0.898*** (37.91)
State/Year Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.53	0.53	0.49	0.49
N	3,887	3,887	3,392	3,392

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.
Note: The reference category is the closed primary. Negative values equal more liberal candidates, positive values equal more conservative.

Needless to say, the more interesting question, for both CFscores and DW-NOMINATE scores, involves asking if the reason for more moderate winning candidates in top two primary states is simply the result of a more moderate electorate. To answer that question, I should control for—or run interaction effects on—district partisanship (measured via Democratic two-party presidential percentages). Yet, for CFscore specifically, the metric's internal mechanics run at odds with district ideology. Specifically, the CFscore metric faces a problem where candidates from safer, less competitive districts actually exhibit more moderate scores.

Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the problem directly. Here I plot the dynamic CFscore on the y-axis and Democratic two-party presidential district percentage on the x-axis. For Democrats on the right hand side of the graph (less competitive, safer Democratic districts), CFscores are measurably closer to zero. For Republicans on the left hand side of the graph (also less competitive, safer Republican districts), CFscores are again much closer to zero. This phenomenon can largely be explained by the source of campaign contributions, as Figure 12 illustrates.

Figures 10 and 11: Modeling dynamic CFscores with presidential returns.



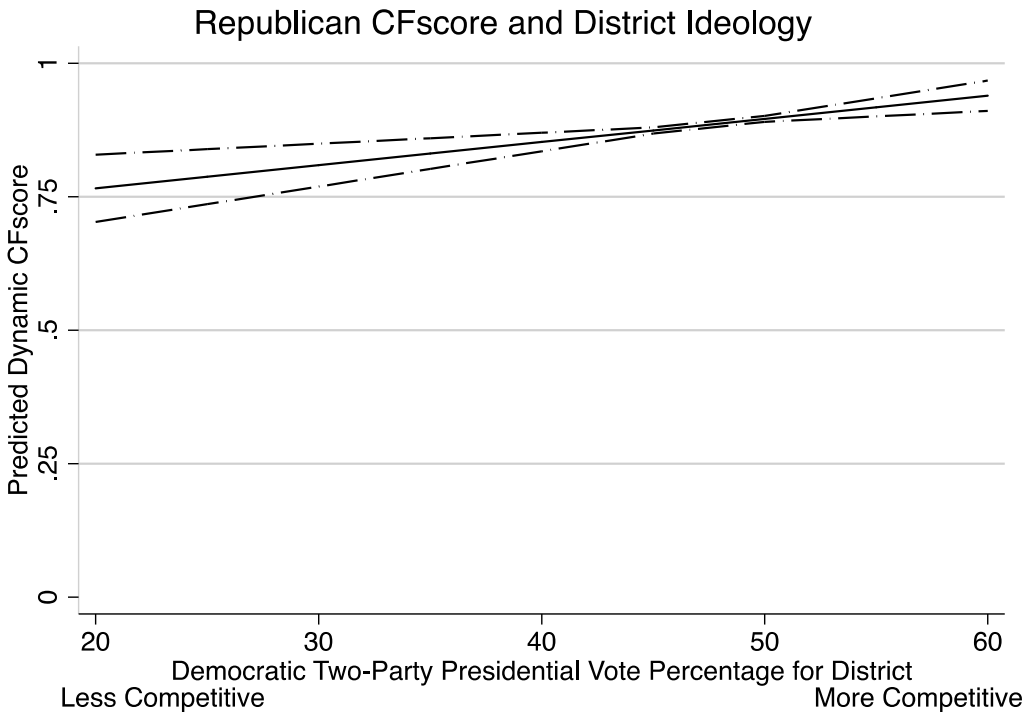
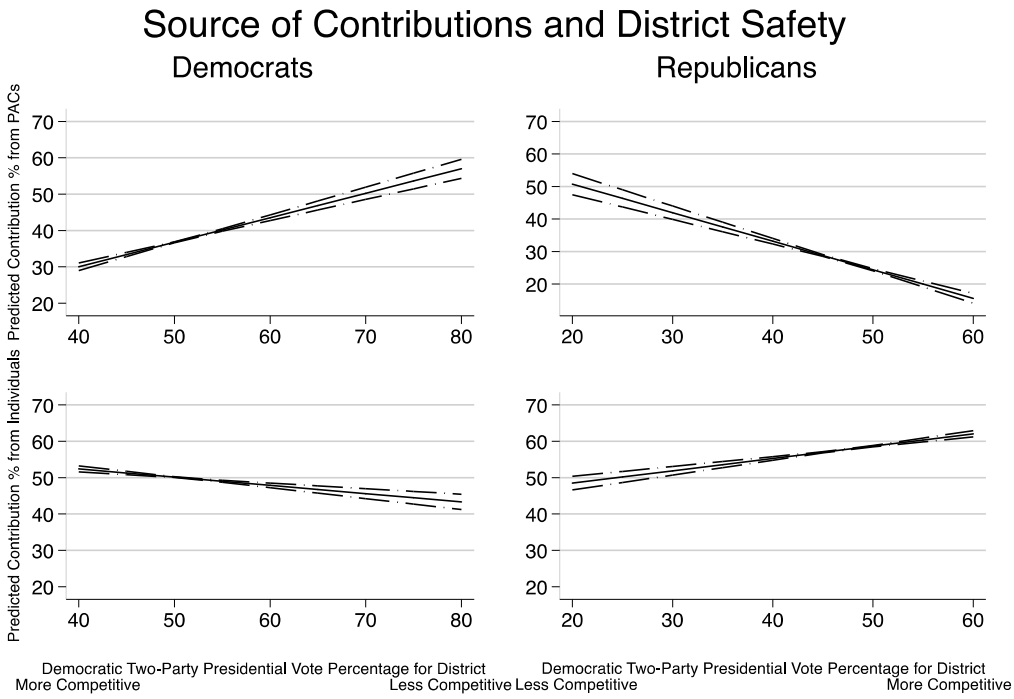


Figure 12: A clear pattern between district partisanship and source of campaign funds.



For both parties, we observe a clear pattern between the competitiveness of the seat and the percentage of their contributions coming from PACs versus individuals. The safer the seat, the more contributions candidates receive from PACs and less from individuals. This is disconcerting for a metric built around campaign contributions, considering PACs predominantly give for access to incumbent legislators, whether they are Democratic or Republican. In other words, PACs give to both parties, therefore every contribution they provide to a candidate has the effect of creating a CFscore moderation that may not truly exist. This is not to say PAC giving does not invite ideological moderation. In fact, Barber (2016) finds increases in states' PAC giving limits result in more moderate legislatures, while increases in states' individual giving limits result in more polar legislatures.[24] Yet, the metric's inconsistency based on the safety of the seat

[24] Individuals, the argument goes, donate for ideological reasons, while PACs donate for access to incumbent legislators.

creates difficulties in drawing larger conclusions about responsiveness to district partisanship.

For this reason, I find it inappropriate to model the CFscore with district partisanship, and therefore am unable to unpack the endogeneity concern that more moderate candidates winning in more inclusive primary formats may simply be the result of a more moderate electorate. That said, I do not find similar internal validity concerns with DW-NOMINATE scores, which are based on roll call voting. Given this, the next two sections corroborate these CFscore results, with additional controls for—and interaction effects with—district partisanship.

6.2 DW-NOMINATE with and without District Partisanship Controls

As with the CFscore, a simple open/closed binary is first run on the dependent variable, the Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE value. Like the dynamic CFscore for election cycle, the metric is re-calculated for every Congress, providing maximum variation between the years. Table 9 lists the results with the summary statistics for each party listed again in Table 8 for reference. Like the previous binary models, closed and semi-closed primaries are coded as zero, and the other remaining, more open systems are coded as one. The results illustrate a strong effect from the opening up of primary systems. Both parties' coefficients are statistically significant with about 0.05 DW-NOMINATE points in moderation for both parties, which represent about 30% of the standard deviation for Democrats and about 25% for Republicans. After controlling for the district's partisanship, as measured via Democratic two-party presidential vote share in the most recent presidential election, more open primaries result in about 0.03 DW-NOMINATE points of moderation for both parties. The coefficients for presidential vote share are in the correct direction, suggesting a 10% increase in the district for a Democratic presidential candidate results in 0.07 more liberal Democratic legislator and 0.04 more liberal Republican legislator. In other words, district partisanship has a slightly larger effect on Democratic legislators than for Republicans, which is partially a result of the Democratic two-party presidential vote share distribution by party. For reference, the Democratic two-party president vote percentage mean, median, and standard deviation are 57%, 56%, and 14% for Democrats, and 42%, 42%, and 8% for Republicans. Figure 13 lists the distribution. Note the wider distribution of Democratic-held districts, caused by the long existence of Southern Democrats who held seats with conservative, split-ticket-voting electorates that supported Republicans at the presidential level while supporting Democrats locally. I will now present more advanced models that

separate out the varying primary election formats and their many nuances, which paints a fuller picture.

Figure 13: Democratic two-party presidential vote share distribution.

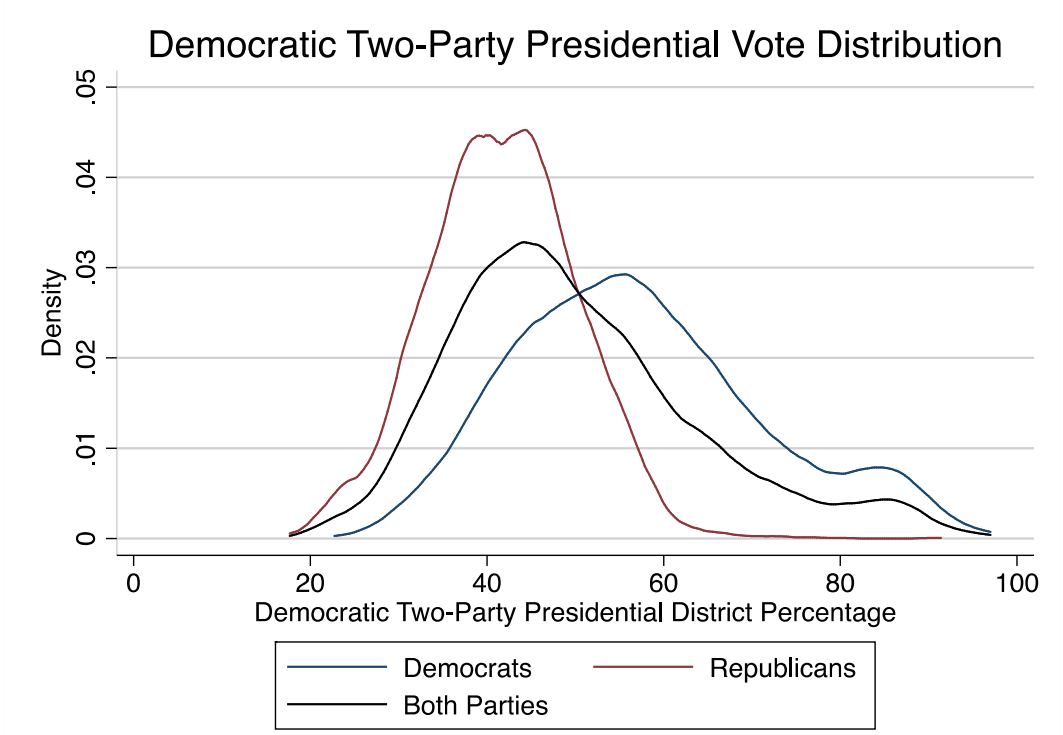


Table 8: DW-NOMINATE Nokken-Poole
Summary Statistics for General Election Winners

	Democrat	Republican
Mean	-0.33	0.50
Median	-0.35	0.49
Standard Deviation	0.16	0.22

Table 9: Open vs. Closed Primaries and Legislator Ideology by State

Dependent Variable: Legislator DW-NOMINATE Nokken-Poole Score Panel Unit: State				
Variables	Democrats	Democrats	Republicans	Republicans
Open Primaries	0.0492*** (6.34)	0.0388*** (4.65)	-0.0529*** (-4.93)	-0.0393*** (-4.72)
Democratic Two-Party Presidential Vote	—	-0.00672*** (-11.83)	—	-0.00417*** (-4.17)
Constant	-0.315*** (-19.19)	0.0127 (0.29)	0.0522*** (4.64)	0.242*** (5.70)
State/Time Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.28	0.50	0.62	0.63
N	3,975	3,971	3,497	3,489

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.
Note: The reference category is the closed/semi-closed primaries. Negative values equal more liberal candidates, positive values equal more conservative.

Table 10 lists the results from separating out the primary formats. The coefficients for top two are statistically significant for both Democrats and Republicans relative to closed primaries, resulting in 0.09 moderation for Democrats and 0.08 moderation for Republicans. This is about 55% of the standard deviation for Democrats and 40% for Republicans. For an average House Democrat or Republican the top two primary results in a 26% and 16% reduction in polarization, respectively. The results are robust to controls for district ideology, again measured via the Democratic two-party vote share in the most recent presidential election, albeit drops slightly for Republicans to 0.06. Likewise, the other primary formats are largely statistically indistinguishable from the reference category (closed primary) once district partisanship is controlled for. Meanwhile, the coefficients for presidential vote share are statistically significant, in the

right direction, and nearly identical to the coefficients from the simple open/closed primary model in Table 9. They suggest a 10% increase in the Democratic presidential nominee's vote share results in 0.07 more liberal Democratic Representatives and 0.04 more liberal Republican counterparts.

In other words, these results confirm that though conservative districts or liberal districts exist, the top two is resulting in legislators who are *less* conservative (for Republicans) or *less* liberal (for Democrats) after controlling for their district partisanship and relative to all other primary formats. Moreover, this supports the findings of Gerber and Morton (1998), which found the opening up of primary systems results in more moderate legislators, even when controlling for their district ideology. The next section explores a more interesting question: Does primary format affect legislator responsiveness to their constituents?

Table 10: Primary Format and Legislator DW-NOMINATE Score by State

Dependent Variable: Legislator DW-NOMINATE Nokken-Poole Score Panel Unit: State				
Variables	Democrats	Democrats	Republicans	Republicans
Semi-Closed	0.0186 (0.72)	0.0274 (0.78)	-0.0112 (-0.53)	-0.00831 (-0.41)
Semi-Open	0.0566*** (3.91)	0.0000374 (0.00)	-0.0345* (-2.13)	-0.0405* (-2.37)
Open	0.0658*** (3.51)	0.0563* (2.26)	-0.0264 (-0.66)	-0.0175 (-0.48)
Partisan Blanket	0.0382* (2.23)	0.0310 (1.38)	-0.0493** (-3.05)	-0.0322* (-2.37)
Non-Partisan Blanket (Top Two)	0.0866*** (4.51)	0.0857*** (4.72)	-0.0809*** (-3.91)	-0.0626** (-3.24)
Democratic Two-Party Presidential Vote	—	-0.00674*** (-11.89)	—	-0.00416*** (-4.17)
Constant	-0.313*** (-19.04)	0.0163 (0.38)	0.0516*** (4.38)	0.241*** (5.77)
State/Time Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.28	0.50	0.62	0.63
N	3,975	3,971	3,497	3,489

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.
Note: The reference category is the closed primary. Negative values equal more liberal candidates, positive values equal more conservative.

6.3 Modeling Legislator Roll Call Responsiveness to District Partisanship

Simply controlling for district partisanship gives us a snapshot of a member of Congress's ideology in a given district with a certain political leaning, and how these distinctions vary by primary format and political party. That said, these results do not necessarily tell us if what we are instead simply observing more moderate electorates adopting the more inclusive top two primary, therefore resulting in moderate legislators. To unpack these time-variant, district-specific confounding factors, I create an expanded model interacting each primary format across the full spectrum of the district partisanship score (as measured via presidential returns) on the dependent variable, the Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE scores. I present these results graphically for easier interpretation. The first model is a simply open/closed binary model interacting with district ideology (i.e. Table 9 with interaction effects). Closed and semi-closed primaries are again coded as zero and all other more inclusive primaries coded as one. The second model compares the top two primary with the closed primary, the reference category as well as the primary format most diametrically opposed to the highly inclusive top two primary. The third and final model compares the top two primary to every other format. I do not list all primary formats together for simplicity of interpretation. That said, the results in Table 10 with district partisanship controls show most primary formats are statistically indistinguishable from the closed primary, minus the semi-open primary and partisan blanket primary for Republicans and the open primary for Democrats. Results for these other primary formats are not consistently statistically significant for both parties (while the top two primary is), thus justifying their exclusion.

Before discussing each set of figures in turn, it is worth noting general trends and overall interpretation. The x-axis for all six plots is the district-level Democratic two-

party percentage for presidential candidates, plotted for 40-point windows—40% to 80% for Democrats and 20% to 60% for Republicans. For Democrats, the far right of their plots are the least competitive and safest seats, where they are highly expected to win. The far left for Republicans fits that same description, less competitive when the Republican Party takes home nearly 80% of the two-party share relative to only 20% for the Democratic Party. The y-axis in all six plots is the predicted Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE scores, where positive values reflect more economically conservative legislators and negative values reflect more economically liberal legislators. By interacting different primary formats with district ideology, we can observe how primary format affects legislators' responsiveness to their constituents. As all figures clearly show, the higher percentage the Democratic presidential candidate receives in the district, the more liberal both Republican and Democratic legislators are, illustrated by the downward slopes.

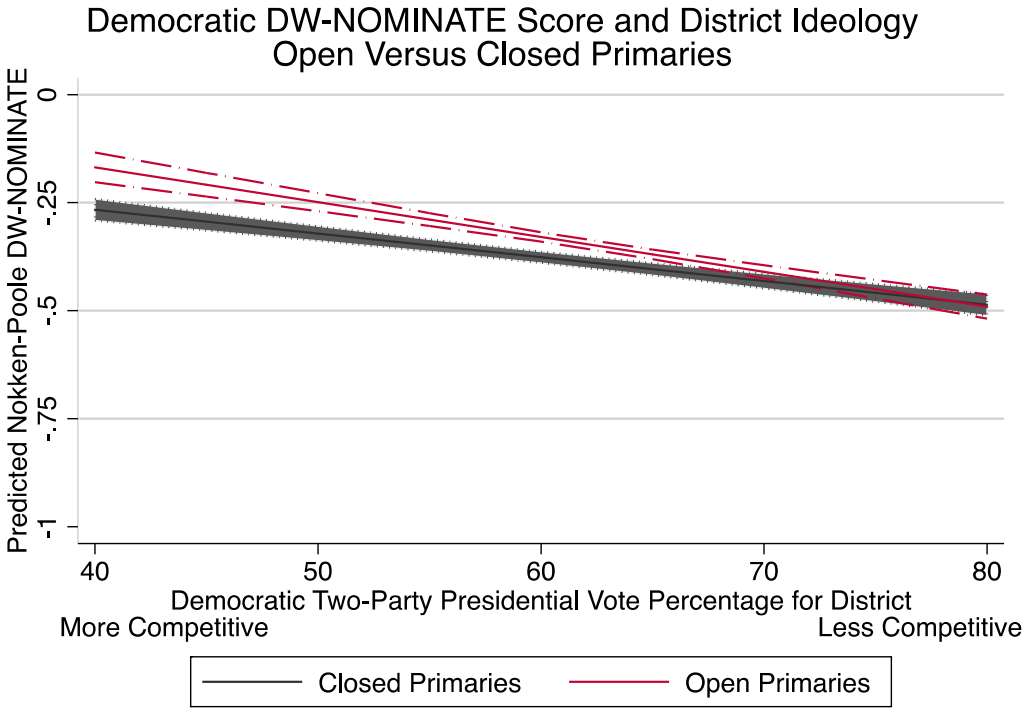
For all plots, the red line and surrounding dashed confidence intervals reflect the more inclusive primary system options. For all Democratic plots, those lines are largely above the less inclusive primary option (the dark line and dotted confidence interval area), closer to zero and suggestive that while these candidates are still responsive to constituents, they exhibit more moderation and therefore less ideological voting tendencies across the spectrum of district ideology preferences.[25] For Republicans, the

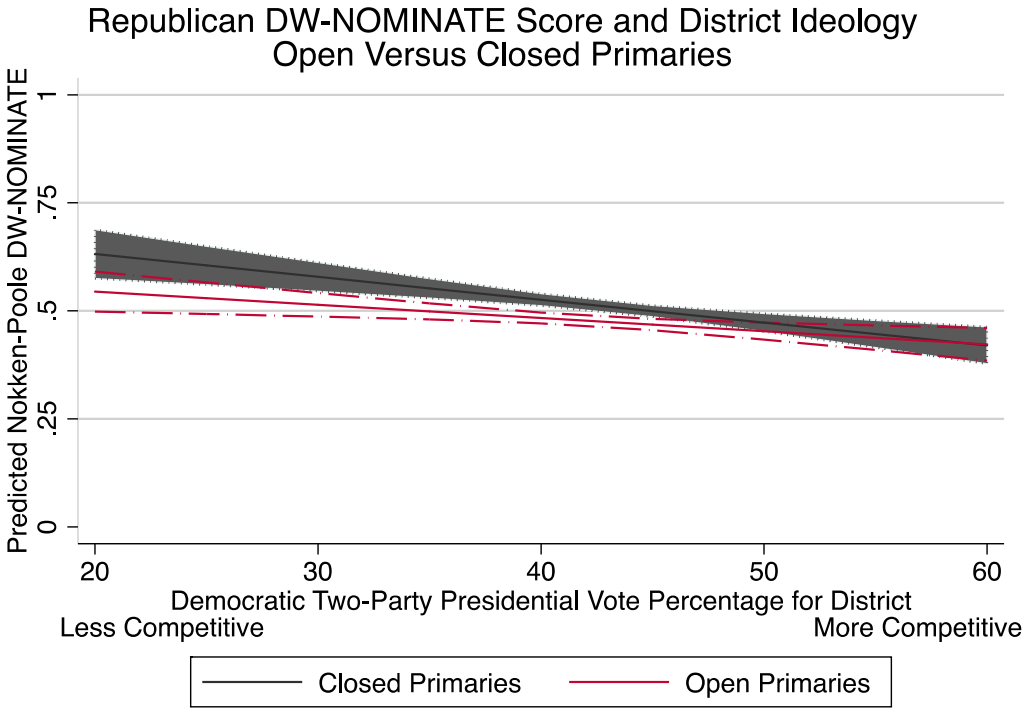
[25] A recent paper argues observing slopes may be incorrect. A steeper slope, which I suggest is indicative of closer representation, particularly as districts become more competitive, may actually be from a "looser link between voter and elite positions" as more confusion is embedded in the system as a whole (Kousser, Phillips, and Shor 2018, 5). Using a limited district ideology score from an original 46-question survey conducted before California's June 2012 top two primary, they find no link between the primary's introduction and improved representation between 2010 and 2012, with the caveat that responsiveness may improve as political actors and voters become more acquainted with the top two system. They do not however include controls for districts in states using other formats. While my approach is arguably simpler, their approach was beyond the financial means of this paper (which they note as a limitation). Our quantitative methods

same can be seen with the red line below the dark line representing less inclusive primary formats, closer to zero across the full ideological spectrum of the district.

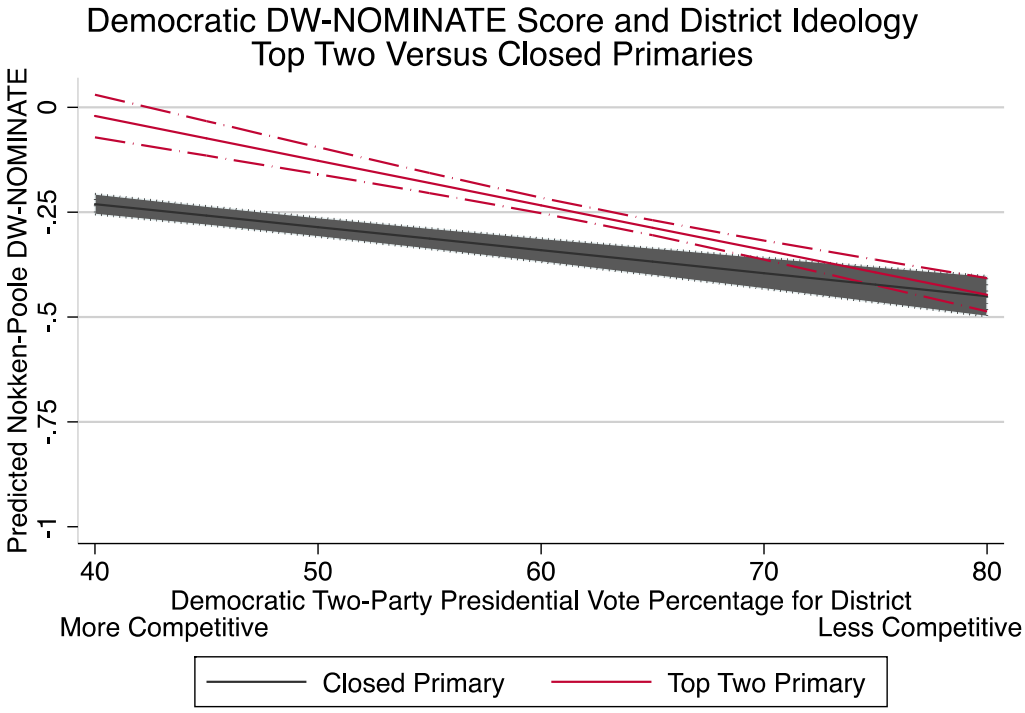
and results may differ, yet I nonetheless agree with their final conclusion in regards to how the top two affects the parties as well as voters' ability to discern candidate positions.

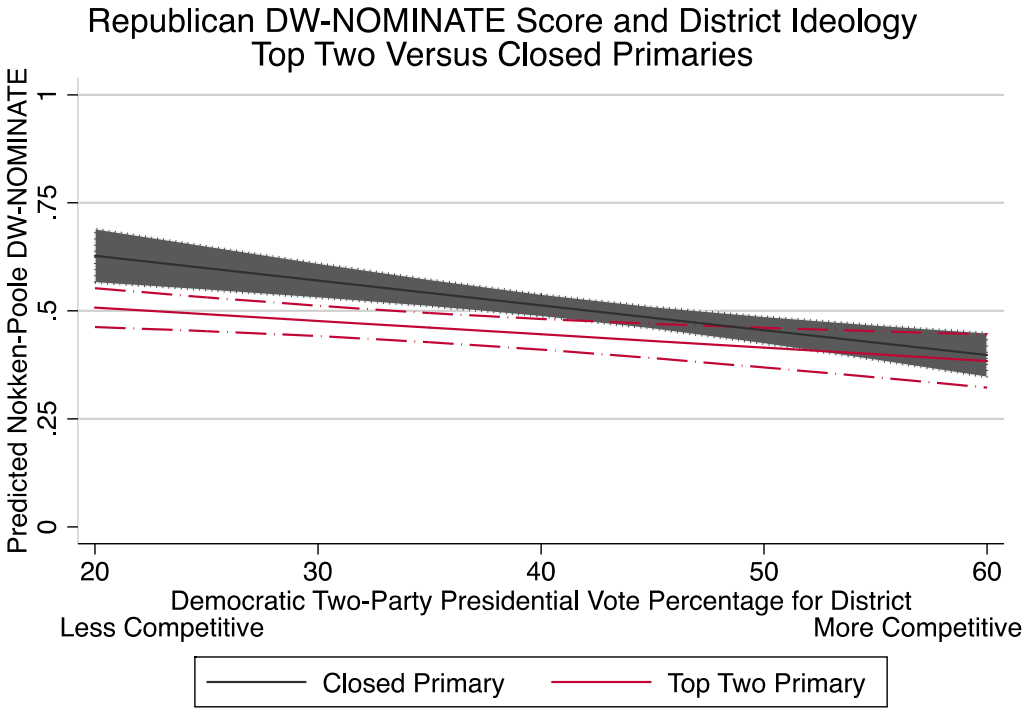
Figures 14 and 15: Modeling Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE scores with Democratic presidential returns for open/closed primary binary.



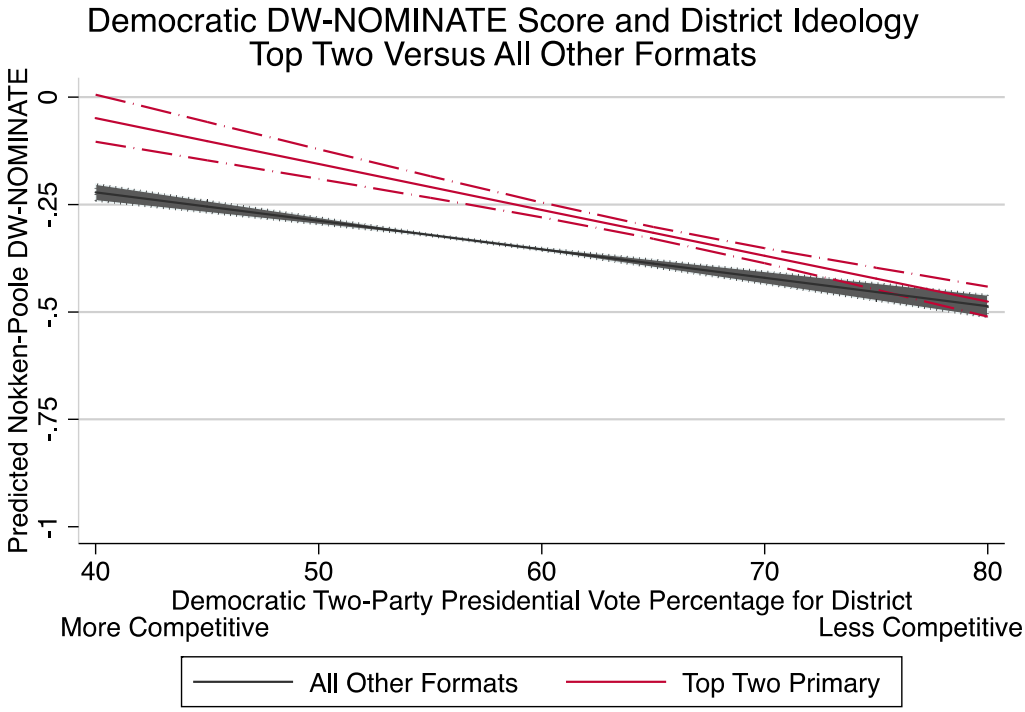


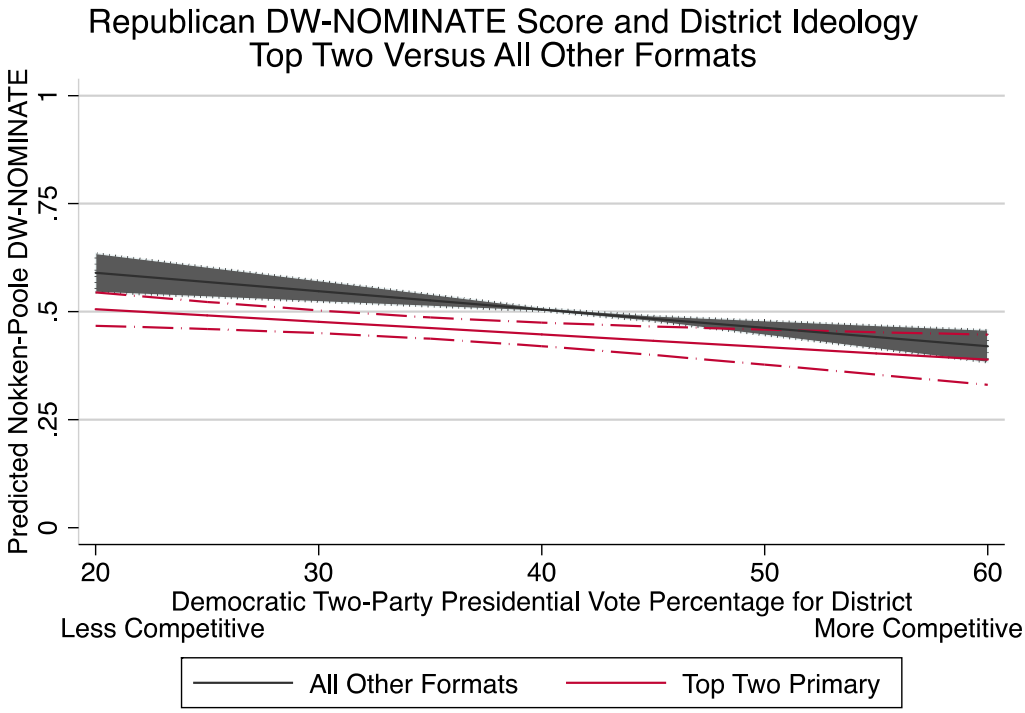
Figures 16 and 17: Modeling Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE scores with Democratic presidential returns for only top two primary versus closed primary.





Figures 18 and 19: Modeling Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE scores with Democratic presidential returns for only top two primary versus all other primary formats.



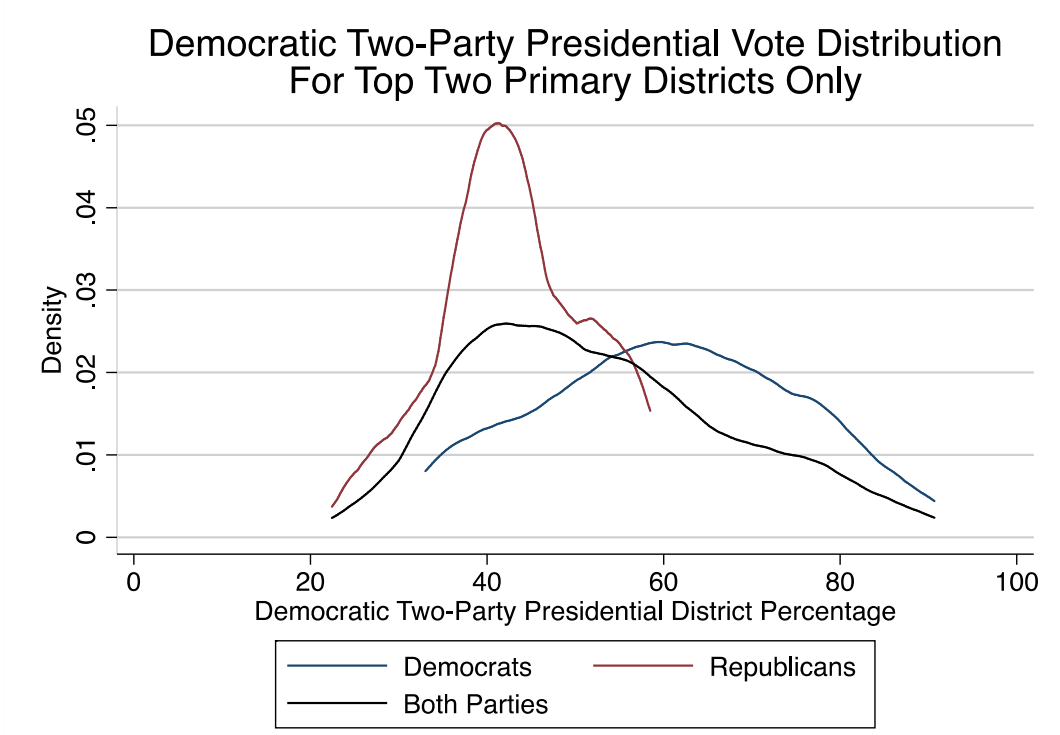


Figures 14 and 15 specifically compare more open primary systems (semi-open, open, partisan blanket, and top two primary formats) to less open primary systems (closed and semi-closed primaries). The result is resounding and robust, illustrating that more open primary systems produce more moderate legislators in about 85% of both Democratic and Republican districts and covering broad swaths of the ideological spectrum for districts. For Figures 16 and 17 comparing the top two primary (the most inclusive primary format) to the closed primary (the most exclusive primary format, and the reference category), the results are equally strong, suggesting the top two primary produces more moderate legislators relative to the closed primary in nearly 90% of Democratic districts and nearly 80% of Republican districts. Finally, for Figures 18 and 19 comparing the top two primary to all other formats, the former produced more moderate legislators in about 85% of both Democratic and Republican districts.

The lines in all plots tend to converge on the right side, suggesting primary format has fewer implications in extremely safe Democratic districts (greater than 70% for the Democratic presidential nominee) or extremely competitive Republican districts (more than 50% for the Democratic presidential nominee). I take caution interpreting larger ramifications from this differential impact on parties, as the observation count begins tapering off for both parties around these vote shares. To illustrate this point, Figure 20 shows the distribution for district ideology for top two primary districts only. The models in that regard have fewer observations to predict from, resulting in larger standard errors. I can say, nonetheless, in an overwhelming majority of electoral conditions that legislators are campaigning in and representing for within Congress, the opening up of primary systems as well as the top two primary format are having the effect of moderating legislators in their roll call voting records. While still responding to their constituents, legislators elected via top two primary formats are taming the more

aggressive ideological passions of their party and exhibiting more centrist voting records than their colleagues elected via other party primary election formats.

Figure 20: Democratic two-party presidential vote share distribution for only top two primary districts.



6.4 Robustness Checks

It should be noted that the same election cycle (2010) that brought the top two primary referendum to California also included the creation of an independent redistricting commission, removing the ability of political actors to control decennial congressional redistricting for their personal or partisan gain and which is often blamed for congressional polarization. The simultaneous introduction of this reform may potentially affect the top two coefficients in my models because these California members may have run in more-competitive, less-gerrymandered districts and the state's 2012 delegation represents about 30% of all top two observations. To account for this potential spurious relationship, I create separate models excluding both the entire state of California followed by only the California observations in 2012 (after the independent redistricting commission reform), and finally utilize bootstrap sampling to ensure the results as a whole are not dependent on any one state.

Interestingly, the results for top two coefficients hold for all models, both with and without controls for district partisanship as measured via Democratic two-party presidential percentages. Using the Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE scores, excluding California altogether results in 0.07 moderation for Democrats (45% of the standard deviation) and 0.04 moderation for Republicans (19% of the standard deviation), again with considerably large moderating effect relative to other formats. (Note: Just for reference, the main models in Table 10 illustrate a respective top two moderation effect of 0.09 for Democrats and 0.08 for Republicans.) Excluding only 2012 observations for California (the ones actually affected by 2011 post-census redistricting using independent redistricting boards for the first time) results in even stronger coefficients for both parties. Democratic legislators elected via the top two relative to the closed primary are 0.11 more moderate in this model (70% of the standard deviation), which is

nearly double the effect of any other primary format. The result holds when controlling for district partisanship. Meanwhile, Republican legislators elected via top two relative to the closed primary are 0.06 more moderate (about 30% of the standard deviation), again nearly double the magnitude of the coefficients for other formats, and the result holds for controls for district partisanship. Finally, bootstrap sampling and estimation replicated five hundred times (i.e. removing one state at random and re-running the regressions) results in the same statistically significant top two coefficients as Table 10 throughout, both with and without presidential vote share as an independent variable. Some other primary formats were no longer statistically significant after bootstrapping, but top two remained and with moderation levels significantly higher than the other statistically significant primary formats.

Using the same models but with the dynamic CFscore finds equally strong results. Excluding the state of California entirely, I find Republicans in the top two are as moderate as Republicans in semi-open primaries, both relative to the reference category (closed primaries) and both statistically significant. Again excluding California entirely for Democrats, those running in the top two are considerably more moderate (about 50% of the standard deviation) and perform at par with candidates in the semi-open and partisan blanket primaries, relative to closed primaries. Excluding just the 2012 California observations, Republicans in top two primaries moderate by about 30% of the standard deviation (statistically significant), again equal to the semi-open and partisan blanket primaries. The results for Democrats are a bit more muddled, with all but one coefficient statistically insignificant. Finally, bootstrap sampling to the five hundredth estimation results in the same statistically significant coefficients as Table 7. Again for Republicans, the top two produces slightly more but nearly identical moderation as the

semi-open primary and more than the partisan blanket, while for Democrats the results are less clear with only one coefficient statistically significant.

Overall, given these results, the effect we see between the top two primary and legislator DW-NOMINATE scores is not due to a spurious relationship with the simultaneous introduction of the independent redistricting board in California or reliant on any one state. Meanwhile, the results with CFscores are slightly more mixed, but robust for Republican candidates. The implications for the top two primary are large, which will be further explored and expanded on in the next paper using qualitative interviews.

7 Conclusion

Direct primaries are a relatively new invention to American democracy, having been introduced during the Progressive Era alongside notable reforms such as the direct election of Senators, women's suffrage, and citizens' referendum and recall. In today's age of polarization, they provide ample opportunities for analysis and research. Top two primaries, an even more novel arrangement that dissolves party divisions, have not been studied extensively among the pool of all primary election systems. First introduced in Louisiana in 1975 by Governor Edwin Edwards—no doubt, to the benefit of both him and incumbent Democratic state legislators in their heavily Democratic state—the top two primary now exists in California and Washington as well. By pitting all candidates, regardless of party affiliation, against each other in the primary election to gain a spot for the general, I hypothesized the format would push candidates closer to the center and closer to the median voter. Under this setup, co-partisans may compete against each other in the general election, distorting incentives and creating as McGhee et al. calls a "freewheeling nature" that makes the "likely consequences difficult to predict" (2014, 340). All the while, Americans overall prefer more open primary systems over closed formats, but are still somewhat cautious about top two primaries (Jordan 2014). Nevertheless, top two primaries have not been studied extensively until now. Their effect on legislator and candidate ideology was consequently unknown.

Given the literature gap in addressing the top two primary, my findings—the first to directly address this primary type—suggest that primary formats do matter, particularly for the top two primary. Overall, the primary *does* affect congressional polarization by electing candidates closer to the political center. Using Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE scores, the top two format results in about 55% of the standard deviation reduction in polarization for Democrats and 40% for Republicans. In other

words, for an average House Democrat or Republican the top two primary results in a 26% and 16% reduction in polarization, respectively. When controlling for district partisanship, the top two has a moderating effect on legislators from both parties that is about 50% more effective than the closest statistically significant primary format (both relative to closed primaries, the reference category). Moreover, after interacting the district-level two-party percentage for Democratic presidential nominees with primary format for the Nokken-Poole DW-NOMINATE scores (therefore observing how primary format affects legislators' response to their district), the top two is shown to reduce polarization in 85% of Republican and Democratic districts, relative to other primary formats. The results for CFscores are a bit more mixed, yet still result in 13% reduction in polarization for an average Republican or about 37% of the standard deviation.

To interpret the data more broadly, while we are not seeing a strong effect on candidate ideology—perhaps because traditional party structures endure despite integrated, top two primaries—when it comes to actual governance, measured via roll call votes, we are definitively seeing a reduction in polarization. The top two is shown to have a substantial impact on moderating legislators and is robust to the full ideological spectrum of the electorate. All in all, more inclusive primaries that place less emphasis on the party registration of voters or candidates lead to more moderate elected officials.

I link these results to shifts in the median voter that better reflect the electorate at large, one which research has shown is more moderate than elites or closed primary election voters (Aldrich 1983; Fiorina and Abrams 2009; Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003). More inclusive primaries also allow parties to attract a broader electorate, which may improve their candidates' name recognition in the general election. By allowing more Independent or non-party-member voters to take part in an election, attraction may be a two-way street: Candidates are appealing to these voters to

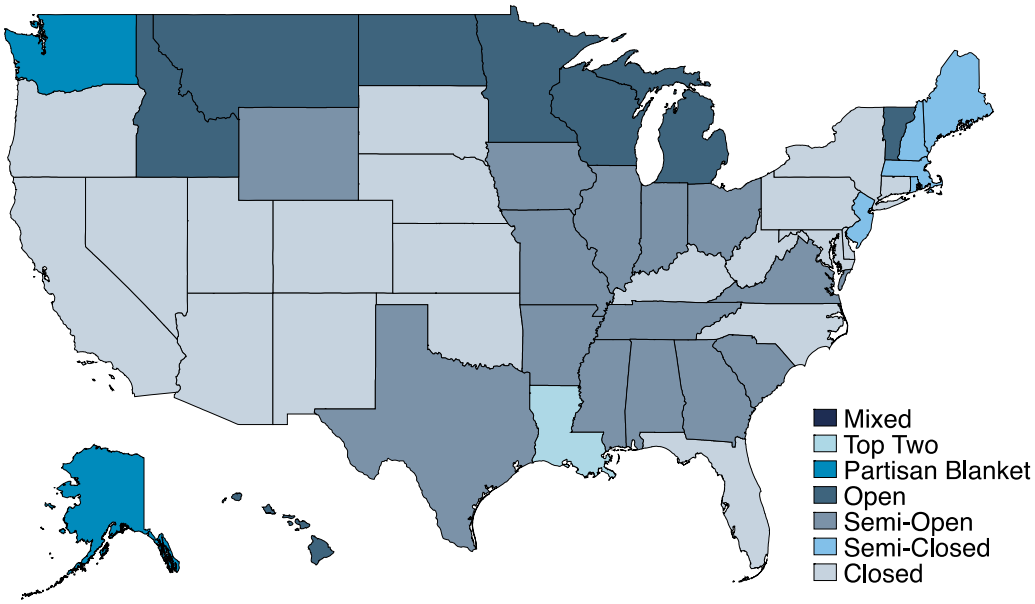
build allegiance while these voters are also building a cohort with candidates. While my evidence does not directly address voters or their (lack of) ability to distinguish between centrist and extremist candidates—as posited in Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz (2015), Dancey and Sheagley (2016) or Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2018)—the results suggest legislators are responding to primary format and its accompanying electorate. Whether intentionally or not, elites, party operatives, and the extended party network are coalescing around more moderate legislators, while legislators are equally responding to their changing environment despite the countervailing forces of party donors and activists (McGhee et al. 2014; Schumer 2014).

Just as the Progressive Era's direct primaries gave moderate voters an equal voice with partisans and placed greater control in the hands of candidates over party bosses, introducing more inclusive primary elections, my findings suggest, will produce more moderate legislators. The next article explores the larger question of the top two primary: Will its introduction nationwide reduce polarization in the U.S. House?

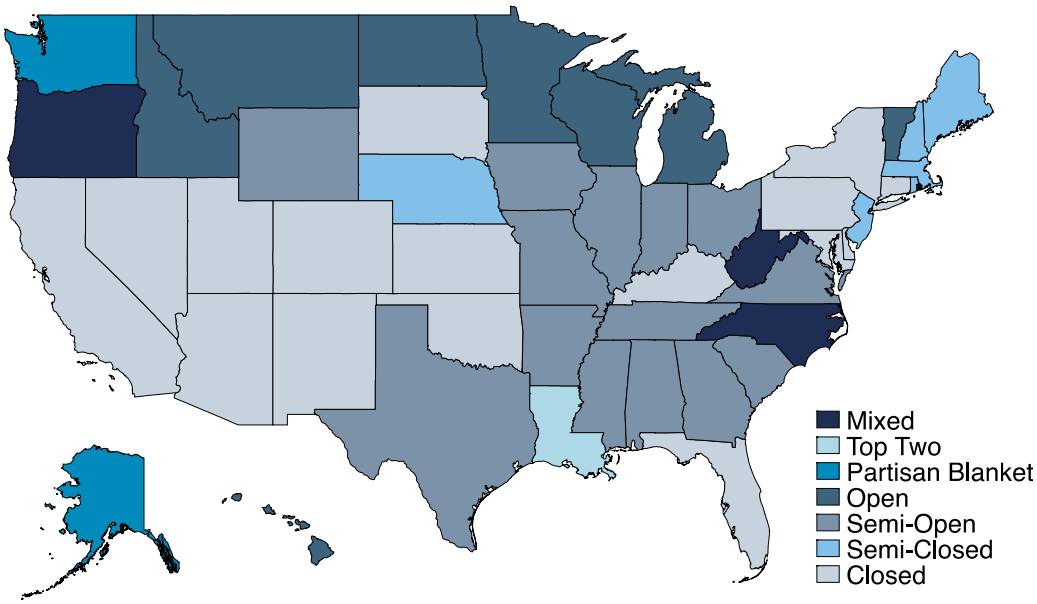
8 Appendix

Figures 21-23: Primary systems across the states in 1980, 1990, and 2000. Mixed styles denote states in which the parties operate under different formats.

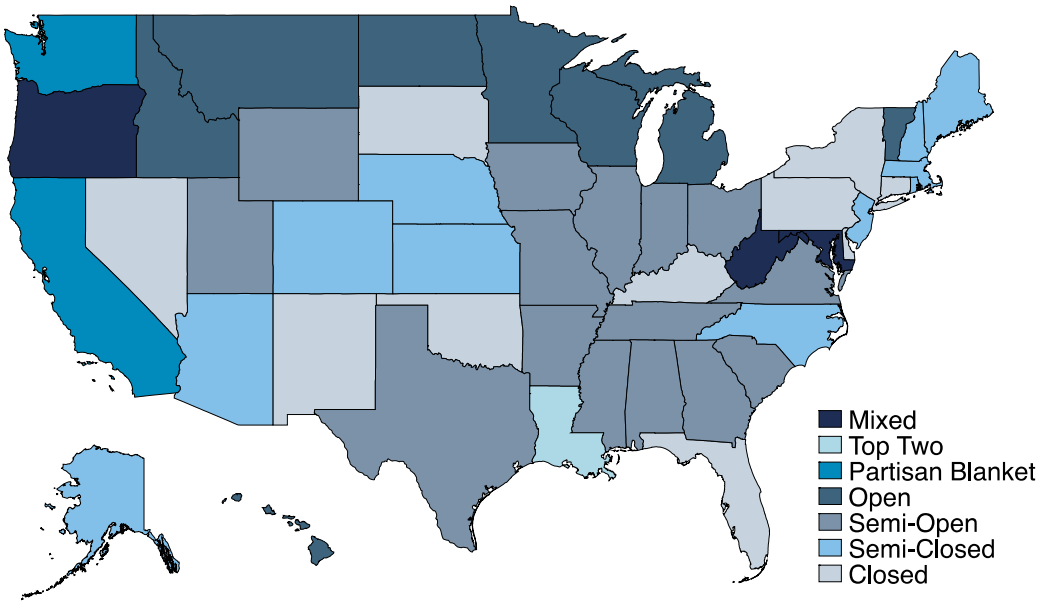
Primary Styles, 1980



Primary Styles, 1990



Primary Styles, 2000



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“It Was Just a Fiasco”: Interviews with Campaign Operatives, Party Elites, and Candidates on the Top Two

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Table of Contents

1 Background

To gauge the larger and more personal ramifications of the top two primary, I organized interviews with twenty-three elites in Washington, D.C. and by phone around the country over a six-week period between September and November 2016. I began with former campaign managers who ran candidates in top two primaries, party officials, and retired veteran members of Congress. I was particularly interested in co-partisan top two races as well as top two races in swing districts, both instances where candidates must behave markedly different from normal primary and general elections. From a campaign perspective, I focused entirely on staff rather than the candidate—usually the campaign manager—and all were no longer working for the candidate/legislator in an official or campaign capacity. Some interview contacts were originally found in reference to another article, but produced valuable insight in relation to this paper and thus were included. Through all my contacts, I used snowball sampling to build out the interview base (Esterberg 2002). I recorded every interview and directly transcribed them myself. They were all on the record, except for two individuals still currently working in the campaign operative space. I allowed them to speak on background to provide more honest and forthright answers. It is best to view the interviews as illustrative in nature, supporting the quantitative data rather than standalone evidence. Some quotes remain the interviewees' opinions, yet that itself provides value.

The interviewees included five former staff members of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), the campaign wings of both parties in the House. All five had direct experience in the western regional offices more likely to handle top two primary races in Washington and California, and three had been senior staff reporting directly to the caucus-elected chair. Of the campaign staff, two were campaign managers (one going on

to serve as Chief of Staff) and two were campaign finance directors, all in top two primaries. I also interviewed two campaign managers from closed primary states to distinguish the unique challenges top two primaries introduce. Of the nine former members of Congress: two were former chairs of DCCC and the House Democratic Caucus; three were former chairs of the NRCC; one was the former chair of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee; another was a former senior staffer at the Republican National Committee (RNC); one was the former Chair of Candidate Recruitment for the NRCC; and one was a former U.S. Senator. Finally, I interviewed four scholars from major think tanks who study the polarization of Congress. The think tanks represented include the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), and FairVote.

Nearly every individual I interviewed has a career that has spanned campaigns and governance, party leadership and individual member offices, insider dealmaker and outside observer. Their observations provide a narrative unattainable in quantitative models, and tell us the potential of the top two primary as well as the pitfalls. This qualitative section is divided in three parts. First, I focus on party structures and how their resistance to the top two can unwind its intended effects. The second section discusses its power in taming the most partisan of districts, specifically comparing two co-partisan races in California and Washington. The third and final section explores the larger motions of the top two primary, exploring why it alone cannot be the silver bullet to congressional polarization and in fact if adopted nationwide could exacerbate polarization by weakening the major parties. While effective in taming the passions of highly divided states, the top two is only a single tool within a much larger set needed to re-calibrate a polarized Congress.

2 Collusion and the Invisible Primary

The most repeated race among all my interviewees was California's 31st Congressional District in the Inland Empire. Redistricted out of his previous 42nd District in 2011, Rep. Gary Miller (R-CA-31), ran in the newly drawn 31st, which constituted about a third each from the previous 26th District (Republican held), 41st District (Republican held), and 43rd District (Democratic held), but included none of Miller's old 42nd that he represented for the previous decade. He most likely chose the seat because staying in the new 39th, which constituted most of his old district, would have placed him up against the more powerful incumbent Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA-39, who had served three more terms than Miller when redistricting occurred). Miller instead decided better odds existed in the 31st, announcing his run for the seat within an hour of Rep. Jerry Lewis (R-CA-41) announcing his retirement, and nudging Rep. David Dreier (R-CA-26) out of the race with a near simultaneous NRCC endorsement directly upon Miller's announcement.

On paper, it appeared Miller's fast actions had duped Dreier or Lewis and set him on a path for another ten years of incumbency, but the 2012 election may have changed his calculus on this plan. He found out his new district was much more competitive than an 8-term incumbent might prefer. The new 31st had a D+2 rating from Cook Political Report's Partisan Voting Index going into the election, meaning most Democrats in the district won by 2 points. President Obama ultimately garnered 57% in the district in 2012, or 59% of the two-party share. The seat in other words was highly competitive, but leaned Democratic.

The seat's competitiveness set the stage for some truly unique dynamics. All told six candidates ran in the June 2012 primary election, two Republicans and four Democrats. On the Republican side was State Senator and Republican Minority Leader

Bob Dutton (CFscore of 0.65) and Rep. Gary Miller (0.59). For Democrats, the candidates were Redlands Mayor Pete Aguilar (-0.91), former congressional staffer and Department of Justice attorney Justin Kim (-0.36), nonprofit executive director Renea Wickman (-2.53), and community college trustee Dr. Rita Ramirez-Dean (no CFscore available). When the June primary dust was settled, Miller received 26.7% of the vote to take first place. Dutton, the fellow Republican, received 24.8% to Democrat Aguilar's 22.6% to take second place and go onto the general election. Behind Aguilar were fellow Democrats Kim with 13.5%, Wickman with 6.7%, and Ramirez-Dean with 5.7%. All told, the Democratic candidates pulled in 48.5% of the vote to Republicans' 51.5%, but split their vote so heavily among the four candidates to null themselves from the general election ballot. If even one of them had removed themselves from the ballot and endorsed Aguilar, he would have made the general election ballot.

Post-election, when Gary Miller represented the 31st District in the 113th Congress held between January 2013 to January 2015, he had a DW-NOMINATE score of 0.46, far more moderate than the average Republican member score of 0.70 in that Congress and also more moderate than his DW-NOMINATE scores in his old districts. Still, his ideology score was not zero (denoting a centrist voting record) or remotely leaning Democratic, as one might reasonably expect for a district President Obama narrowly won. Potentially seeing the writing on the wall, he chose not to seek re-election after sixteen years in Congress.

Filling the void, seven candidates announced for the 2014 election. Learning no lesson from the 2012 loss and with the party having few coercive tools to limit the number of candidates, Democrats again put up four names. Pete Aguilar, the Redlands Mayor ran again, this time with the financial backing of the DCCC and with the chair, Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY-03), personally speaking at a fundraiser. In spite of DCCC's

endorsement, three more Democratic candidates joined the race: attorney Eloise Reyes, former Rep. Joe Baca (D-CA-43, whose old district made up part of the new 31st District as mentioned), and local school board member Danny Tillman. The only factor saving Democrats from near-certain defeat: Republicans put up three candidates this go-round. They were former White House Senior Policy Advisor for President George W. Bush and Navy reservist Dr. Paul Chabot, Miller staffer Dr. Lesli Gooch, and political consultant Ryan Downing. Some suspected Downing was an intentional Republican "spoiler" on behalf of Democrats, largely because he entered the race last-minute, was the minimum House candidate age of 25, and was a resident of Whittier, 30 miles outside the district border (Gutglueck 2014). Whether a plant or not, his effect was clear. Pulling in 3.3% of the vote, he narrowly prevented Gooch, the third-place finisher with 17%, from beating out Aguilar's 17.3%, who secured second place to Chabot's 26.6% and made it onto the general election. The remaining Democratic candidates received 15.9% (Reyes), 11.2% (Baca), and 8.7% (Tillman). On the loss, Gooch's campaign manager Jeff Stinson placed the blame squarely at the feet of his party, saying, "The state party and the NRCC should be ashamed, because if they had spent one dollar on this race they would have won it. They had a great candidate, and now they've made it an extremely difficult race" (Hagen 2014).

Altogether, Democratic candidates secured 53.2% of the vote to Republicans' 46.8%, and only through happenstance split their vote minimally enough relative to Republicans to get one candidate, Pete Aguilar, to the general election. Now-Representative Pete Aguilar (D-CA-31), he went onto the general election to win by 3 points in 2014. The 2016 election included incumbent Democrat Aguilar, Republican Chabot, two other Republicans, and one other Democrat, resulting in a re-match between

Aguilar and Chabot, with the former prevailing again by a slightly larger margin of 12 points and a Democratic voter registration advantage of 6 points.

This is not the only example of complex political maneuvering that has become the new norm in the top two primary. In yet another example from the 2014 cycle, California's 17th District saw downright strange phenomenon. In that instance, it was alleged that candidates Vinesh Singh Rathore and Joel Vanlandingham were recruited to run as a Republicans to seed confusion and siphon votes away from fellow Republican candidate Vanila Singh, and ultimately led to Democratic candidate Ro Khanna facing off against incumbent Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA-17) in the general election. Law firm Dhillon and Smith, coincidentally whose partners include Harmeet Dhillon, vice chairwoman of the California Republican Party, filed a lawsuit to remove both Vanlandingham and Rathore from the ballot. Rathore was removed from the ballot by the Sacramento County Superior Court for discrepancies on his candidate petition signatories, and ultimately did not make the primary election ballot. Joel Vanlandingham remained, pulling 6.8% of votes away from fellow Republican Vanila Singh who received 17% and settled with third place to Khanna (28%) and Honda (48.2%). As one Atlantic article described the race, "Democrats were trying to get Republicans to run against Democrats, only to get stopped by a leading Republican" (Caen 2015). Although Vanlandingham's votes did not constitute a large enough margin to have singlehandedly prevented Singh from making the general election, it serves in recent memory as another potentially Democrat-employed move to split Republican Party votes and ensure a Democrat's place in the general election.

Undoubtedly, without Ryan Downing's entrance into the 31st District that same year, the slightly Democratic district would have split their vote among four candidates to Republicans' two, and again been represented by a Republican. In other words, both

parties have become vastly weakened in this process, unable to limit the supply of their candidates and unable to prevent vote splitting among their candidates, both of which have the potential to block them from competing in the general election for highly competitive seats. John Pitney Jr., professor of government at Claremont McKenna College, whose campus directly abuts the 31st Congressional District, characterized the race as a clear collective action problem: "You just don't have the same type of tight organizational control that you see in other states" (Cappis 2013). Without any ability to limit, their best response has been to add—specifically adding candidates for the other side.

In the long term, it would be expected that both parties attempt to rein in control on open-seat races, either by promoting spoiler candidates for the other party or limiting their own numbers. Drew Spencer Penrose, Legal Director for FairVote, a non-partisan non-profit organization that studies electoral reforms, thought California's 31st was a premier example of the learning curve the primary format presented for parties. As part of my interviews, he told me, "In District 31, you had that worst-case scenario, where the vote was split among the four Democrats, a little too closely, even though it was a majority Democratic district. [After that] you think, 'Wow, the Democrats are really going to get their act together for the 2014 election' and then, they don't…they very nearly allowed it to happen again." The insiders I spoke with largely agreed with Penrose. One DCCC staffer who has directly managed and overseen House races across the western region for several cycles said in regards to the 31st: "We didn't quite know how to work the math and how to work the modeling. We got caught flatfooted on that one because the party essentially didn't back anybody. It kind of wanted to just wait and see, but the downside of that was the [Democratic] vote got split so much that we ended up with two Republicans going into the general."

A Republican operative argued similar for his party in California. Highlighting the 2016 U.S. Senate general election with two Democrats, he was skeptical his party's voters will remember the lesson of 2016 and field a more electable Republican when the opportunity comes around again. His metaphor for the situation was this: "It's kind of like yelling at your dog four days after it pooped on the rug. If you want the dog to know you don't poop on the rug, you've got to yell at your dog and smack it right then. The opportunity for the dog to behave again is so far away, I don't think the dog remembers." Another former NRCC operative agreed, saying the real effect of the top two was "disenfranchising one party or the other in the general election as opposed to necessarily changing the ideology of the candidates who are running." I suspected both parties would have a vigorous response to this collective action problem, but I mainly observed attempted collusion among Democrats in the wake of embarrassing losses. Republicans I spoke with claimed the party made no endorsements if it was an open seat, but this may have more to do with the fact that more top two districts are in Democratic-leaning states and Republicans so far have been the ones to reap competitive seats they truly should not have won based off presidential returns.

The Democrats applied their lessons most recently to California's 24th Congressional District in the 2016 cycle after incumbent Rep. Lois Capps chose to retire and left an open seat. In a district somewhat comparable to Pete Aguilar's 31st, having a Cook Partisan Voting Index of D+5 and Obama garnering 54% of the 2012 vote, they again had more Democratic candidates run than Republicans. The June 2016 primary included four Democrats, three Republicans, and two Independents. According to DCCC staffers, the race really came down to two strong Democratic candidates and two strong Republican candidates. To head off losing access to the general, the party quickly

consolidated around Santa Barbara County Supervisor Salud Carbajal, in effect having an invisible primary. As the DCCC staffer described the top four candidates, there was

> no telling who ends 28% and who ends up 25% because that's just within the margin of error of any polling that we had out there. So we made a decision early to back the stronger Democratic candidate, and just went all in to get him through to the general so that we didn't end up with that problem. It worked. We applied the lesson from Aguilar in '12 to make sure we got a really good, strong candidate through to the general there in the 24th.

Another staffer in a separate interview said similar, but specified who was ultimately deciding the party's anointed candidate. "You saw spending happening from outside groups to make sure Democrats didn't get shut out," suggesting more than anything that the party establishment does not always have complete control in top two primaries.

How the party operates in these circumstances is not set in stone, varying between Republicans and Democrats and by district based on the strength of the "farm league," the backbenchers of the parties who have been serving as city councilors, county prosecutors, state representatives, etc. The greater the farm league, the increased likelihood that blatant collusion and an "invisible primary" will be necessary to win a winnable seat. Another Democratic operative backed this up, arguing it in clear terms:

> If there is for instance an open seat where there are [multiple] Democrats running and it's going to be a competitive November election, I absolutely think there are certain scenarios where they will get involved, whether they do it behind closed doors or how you think about it, in terms of influencing things so the person they want to win gets in…Whether it's invisible or out there in public depends on the scenario, but *something that definitely does happen*.

In short, parties must take proactive, and often non-public, steps to limit candidates from their party or increase the number of candidates for the other party if they wish to succeed with top two primaries in highly competitive seats. For more partisan districts, the majority party's hands-off approach is more likely to succeed, given they know the seat will remain for their party and stepping back from the race

frees up resources for other districts. The interviews suggest that even among elites the mechanisms of legislator moderation via the top two primary—whether that is from elected officials responding to their environment or from PACs and political operatives taking part in an invisible primary to choose the most electable candidate—cannot be directly ascertained. In the next section, I explore this concept more in-depth by investigating two co-partisan races from California and Washington.

3 Co-Partisan General in Partisan Districts

In this section, I explore two top two co-partisan (Democrat vs. Democrat and Republican vs. Republican) races in California and Washington. The first race occurred in California's 35th District in 2012 and the latter in Washington's 4th District in 2014. Throughout the section I will highlight how the states differ, particularly when it comes to voter and party familiarization with blanket primaries, [26] as well as their similarities.

In California's 35th District, State Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod was up against incumbent Democratic Rep. Joe Baca (the same candidate who ran in the 31st District in 2014 as a Democrat and again in 2016 as a Republican). They were both Democrats as was their primary election competitor Anthony Vieyra. Alfonso Sanchez, Negrete McLeod's long-time campaign manager and legislative Chief of Staff at both the state and federal level, argued that Republicans simply had not built an organization in the 35th. He said, "I would put my hat on as someone who is strategic, and if you're going to run, why lose?" He cited several examples of Republican politicians losing in this district, failing to find a Republican base to build their campaign off of. "The Democrat just had to send a mailer out to Democrats saying, 'He's a Republican.' You don't have to say anything bad about him, just say he's a Republican, and they're going to vote for the Democrat, because they vote so much on the Democrat ideology." The result meant any ambitious politician would run as a Democrat, regardless of their actual ideology.

This is not to say the district is inherently liberal. The Inland Empire where the district sits has been wracked by cement and steel plant closures, partially linked to tighter regulations on particulate matter emissions. Some oil refineries remain, but the other closures have limited jobs in the district. Often considered a pipeline to Las Vegas

[26] Washington had the partisan blanket primary from the beginning of my quantitative dataset through the 2002 election, before introducing the top two primary in 2008.

for Los Angeles residents, the district might be considered Southern California's flyover country. "This district is hemmed in below the foothill communities, in this Inland Empire," Sanchez went on to say, "just sprawling, more known for freeways and big massive warehouses, and lots and lots of trucks passing through…[Citizens] drive all the time. They have to deal with the high cost of Southern California and the traffic." It lacks public universities, federal courthouses, or state buildings, resources that may provide a direct personal linkage to their tax dollars.

Moreover, the district is predominantly Latino and Catholic, adding an air of social conservatism that may scramble traditional economic liberal-conservative ideology metrics. The lines are often drawn more by interstate highways than physical geography, with I-10 providing an east-west border separating more affluent white areas to the north from middle and working class Latino neighborhoods to the south. Sanchez, who went on to run for school board and State Senate within the borders of the 35th Congressional District, recalls being asked fairly pointed questions by voters while knocking on doors. "The first question people asked you at the time 'What about those tranny bathrooms?' 'How do you feel about gay marriage?' 'What god do you pray to?' And I only went to high propensity [Democratic] voters. I'm not at the grocery store talking to random people. I'm talking to people who actually vote."

In his race for Negrete McLeod, the campaign saw an infusion of cash from Michael Bloomberg and Planned Parenthood, both groups hitting their opponent Democratic Rep. Joe Baca for his votes on interstate gun regulations, violence against women, and environment pollution. Ideologically, Sanchez suggested both candidates were near identical. I corroborated this with DW-NOMINATE. In fact, Negrete McLeod scored -0.41 immediately after her election to Baca's -0.35 in the previous session. In other words, the legislators voted the same way. Yet, the optics could not be further from

that. Negrete McLeod was “the grandma, the mother, not the misogynistic pig,” as Sanchez described her opponent. Baca, on the other hand, was considered part of the “good ole boys club,” trying to build a dynasty (both sons have served or ran for the state legislature), and was known to “shake people down,” refusing to engage with them without campaign contributions to him, his sons, or the Hispanic Caucus. His actions, that is, built an enemy base to exploit in a campaign environment.

Without a party primary election to clearly delineate the candidates for the general election by party, the race centered on party endorsements. As the chair of the Los Angeles Democratic Party said, “The top two primary returns us to the days when old-fashioned retail politics is critical, and the value of the endorsement is heightened” (Cahn 2013). That entailed working the county and city party organizations, whipping delegates to support their candidate. The process began with local Democratic clubs—the Chino Club, the West End Club, the Fontana Club, the Rialto Club—building support early enough to gain the party’s pre-convention endorsement. Neither candidate, perhaps unsurprisingly, gained the endorsement before the primary election or convention. It precipitated to an hours’ long floor fight. As Sanchez tells it:

> It was just a fiasco. We ended up having to take this to the Special Rules Committee, like at midnight, of the party. We had to go up before their representatives, because they had challenged so many of our votes. And we had challenged their votes, and so we had to make our case before the endorsement and before the Credentialing Committee, a joint committee, and it lasted for hours.

This process happened both before and after the primary election. A vote in San Diego in February before the June primary did not result in an endorsement. Only after the primary did Baca receive the endorsement of the California Democratic Party, and yet still he did not prevail in the general election, losing to Negrete McLeod by 12 points or about 15,000 votes.

Reflecting on the top two in his state, Sanchez thought his candidate could not have prevailed without the primary format:

> It has given opportunities for areas like this where the other party isn't activated and there really aren't strong opposite party candidates or even strong opposite party efforts or any kind of mobilization—it just doesn't exist. It gives an opportunity for the same party to challenge the incumbent, and that message of change and out with the old and in with the new resonated. And we wouldn't have had that opportunity in November if there was no top two primary.

He highlighted that there was no way she would have won in a traditional Democrat vs. Democrat June primary. In fact, she lost that primary election race by 9 points, but placing second bought the campaign time. "The primary would never favor the challenger from the same party. There is lower voter turnout in the primaries, and those voters that come out are going to go with who they voted for last time, typically," Sanchez said. Yet, the period between the primary and general election provided ample time to communicate the differences between Negrete McLeod and Baca leading up to the larger voter pool that participates in the November election.

The campaign made a strong effort to broaden their base during that time, picking "mixed universes" as Sanchez put it, sending mailers to veterans, the elderly (Negrete McLeod was 71 herself on election day), "decline-the-states" (having no assigned party affiliation), and even Republicans. Ultimately, while the ideology distinctions between Baca and Negrete McLeod were clouded, the top two primary enabled the latter to win against an incumbent legislator and provided the time to highlight their opponent's rent-seeking behavior.

In the 2014 election for Washington's 4th Congressional District, there existed a similar story of a co-partisan general election, this time with each candidate taking different positions within wings of the party in clear and blatant ways. Washington State has ten congressional districts after the 2010 census and 2011 redistricting, with four

districts heavy clustered around the Seattle area. The remaining six districts cover a broad swath of the state. The 4th District along with the 5th cover the flat prairies and agricultural land of the eastern half of the state. Both districts run from Oregon to the Canadian border. The 4th is a largely Republican district, voting Republican for the last sixty plus years with the exception of LBJ in 1964. The 2012 election, setting the ideological scale in the run-up to the 2014 congressional election I study, favored Republicans by 22 points. When ten-term incumbent Doc Hastings chose not to run for re-election in 2014, the open seat led to a heavily fought race to replace him.

The top two primary election candidates largely reflected the ideological tilt of the district, with eight Republican candidates running versus only two Democrats and two Independents. As expected, two Republicans took the top two spots in the primary election and went onto the general. I spoke with Tim Kovis, campaign manager for the eventual winner Dan Newhouse, to get insight on this additional co-partisan race that they ran against Clint Didier.

The Newhouse campaign had an expectation early on that the general election would likely be a Didier vs. Newhouse race. Didier had ran previously statewide for the U.S. Senate in 2010 and for state Public Lands Commissioner in 2012, and before politics had been a Super Bowl winning NFL tight end, all garnering him some notoriety. For his part, Newhouse had previously been a State Representative in the area and at the time of the campaign was the state Director of Agriculture, an important position in the agriculturally rich lands of eastern Washington. His father had also been a state legislator, serving in the Senate and House for thirty-four years and providing additional name ID in their area of Washington. Kovis described the district as being roughly divided in thirds: one portion being Yakima County, another portion being the Tri-Cities area of Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco, and finally the northern, more rural

section. Dan Newhouse was a native of Yakima County, giving him an edge in that area. Clint Didier grew up in Pasco, giving him an advantage in the Tri-Cities area. Another Republican candidate, Janéa Holmquist Newbry, had served as a State Representative and Senator in Moses Lake, on the northern end of the district, and yielded a benefit there. Based on the population bases of Yakima and the Tri-Cities, the Newhouse campaign expected after the initial round of polling that the real race would be against Clint Didier.

The lines quickly became drawn between the establishment Republicans and the Tea Party. Newhouse represented the more moderate wing, even having been nominated Director of Agriculture by a Democratic governor, Christine Gregoire. A third-generation farmer, he was part of the business-friendly, centrist side of the party. He was in the line of Doc Hastings, the moderate incumbent leaving the seat open to retire. In fact, Tim Kovis, his campaign manager, had previously worked for Hastings, first on the Natural Resources Committee (where Hastings was chair) and then in the state as Deputy District Director. To make the point absolutely clear, after the primary election when the race came down to just Didier and Newhouse then-Representative Hastings endorsed Newhouse for the general election. Didier came from the Tea Party wing of the party, taking part in the 2010 protests and retaining the support throughout his 2010, 2012, and 2014 races.

Indicative of their bases, Didier received the endorsement of FreedomWorks, a predominantly Tea Party-based group, while Newhouse received the backing of the National Rifle Association and the Washington Farm Bureau. Kovis told me, “Clint was the Tea Party favorite, threw red meat at the base and constantly did it. We knew that Dan could never get further to the right than Clint, and Dan’s base was going to be conservative Republicans to the left. Moderate Republicans and conservative Democrats,

that's where we needed to get votes." When it came to campaign finance and ideological scores, the differences were stark. Newhouse had a 2014 cycle-specific CFscore of 0.83 to Didier's 1.50 (because Didier has not serve in an elected office, we do not have roll call voting scores to compare). Newhouse had a slight fundraising edge before the primary election, collecting more than $350,000 to Didier's $220,000. (Didier did have an infrastructure advantage via yard signs from his previous races, having enough signs to cover the state yet now only covering a fraction of that geographical area.) Finances aside, the primary election split the establishment Republican vote enough that Didier came out on top, edging above Newhouse by 4 points for the top spot. But with the public endorsement of Hastings post-primary, the Newhouse campaign experienced an influx of D.C. cash from the agricultural and defense sectors, largely a result of Hastings's nudge. Prior to the endorsement, "that money stayed on the sidelines," Kovis said. "You don't want to have to beg for forgiveness." By the end of the election, Newhouse had collected $1 million to Didier's $600,000. To make matters more difficult for Didier, former U.S. Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA) began Washington's Future PAC and raised $100,000 in support of Newhouse and against Didier.

Their ultimately winning the general election, just like Negrete McLeod in California's 35th, came down to the top two election, the additional time the primary election provided, and the opportunity for some more voices to be heard. As Kovis put it during the interview, "Had we had a closed primary or blanket primary in 2014, Dan would never have won. So we were grateful that it was a top two." Sinclair et al. agree on Kovis's point, writing that—in rare circumstances—the dynamics have "brought together unusual political coalitions to win elections with candidates unlikely to have won otherwise where the key political fact may have been issues tangential to the main axis of cross-party conflict" (2017, 28). The general election became the Newhouse

campaign's opportunity to broaden their base, not necessarily seeking Democratic votes but not stopping those efforts. "It wasn't like we sent Dan to Democrat PCO (precinct committee officer) meetings or union hall functions, however I know that there were folks in those communities who said very nice things about Dan." Another former Director of Agriculture who had also served in the state legislature as a Democrat did some quiet campaigning as well, privately telling Democrats to vote for Newhouse. The most public Democratic base that came out for the Newhouse campaign was organized labor from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, a former Cold War plutonium manufacturing site on the Columbia River and Environmental Protection Agency Superfund cleanup site designated in 1988 to contain and remove the radioactive waste. The cleanup processes require about $2 billion a year in federal funding. Once the Democratic field was cleared the Hanford constituency settled on Newhouse as the policy wonk rather than Didier, the "more political, stab-the-Democrats-in-the-eye-every-time-you-get-a-chance-to" candidate, as Kovis described him.

All that said, the campaign did not expect a resounding Democratic turnout, particularly because the 2014 election was a midterm, which skews conservative, and there were no Democrats running on the top of the ticket. The 2014 election cycle was a non-presidential year, but it was also a midterm for Democratic Governor Jay Inslee's first term and Democratic Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell had both been re-elected in 2010 and 2012, respectively. Kovis said a normal year with Democrats running at the top of the ticket could expect around 30% of the vote in the district, but without that proxy he was less certain for 2014. This was a common expectation across all of the elites I spoke with. When there was not a presidential, gubernatorial, or U.S. Senate election at the top of the ballot, the race came down entirely to turnout and motivating your voters to the ballot box just for your race.

Direct targeting was difficult nonetheless, by and large because Washington does not have party registration. This is partially a quirk of Washington State politics in general. Kovis described it this way:

> Folks in Washington State are more independent minded. For seventy some odd years, we had the blanket primary and people liked it…In between the blanket primary and top two, where we had [more exclusive] primaries, people didn't like being forced into a box. They don't want to be forced to say, "I am a Republican" or "I am a Democrat." They want to vote for the candidates of their preference regardless of political party. Westerners are a little more recent to political systems, newer states. So that tradition of hard-core party, of party bosses, don't come out in the West like they do in the Midwest, or New England.

The Newhouse campaign viewed weak parties as a strength to them. Regarding endorsements, Kovis said:

> It was pretty much the Wild Wild West. The party for the most part stays out of it. There was no endorsed Republican candidate in any way…[also] it wasn't particularly a good thing to be the party establishment candidate, so even if we had got the backing of the party endorsement, that would be another club for an opponent to beat us with. *It would do more harm than good.*

Newhouse stayed in touch with then NRCC Chair and Oregon Representative Greg Walden (R-OR-02) and met with Speaker John Boehner's staff, but they knew the party, at the federal and state level, could not risk picking a losing horse in the race and knew a party endorsement could backfire in the anti-establishment arena of Obama-era Republican elections. Only one county party committee even approached conducting a nomination, but in the end did not endorse anyone. And the Newhouse campaign inherently saw no financial incentive either. "The reality of this state—in Washington State—political parties are very, very weak. There's very little they can do for you. It's just more a matter of don't do any harm, more so than actually providing resources."

For both the California 35th race, the Washington 4th race, and for all top two states at large, I found major agreement from both the national Democratic and Republican campaign committees on this point. If the end result is likely a co-partisan

general election, it is in their best interest to stay out. The reason is quite simple: money. Robert Jones, former NRCC West Regional Political Director during the Newhouse vs. Didier showdown, suggested it succinctly. “From a budgetary and majority standpoint, that was the best outcome for us, to get two Republicans, cause then we don’t have to spend any money to contest the seat in the fall. We’re going to get a Republican no matter what.” They may consider even attacking a Democrat on the verge of winning a top two spot for the general election, but that calculus comes down to the how close the nearest Democrat is and if they can damage their odds. “Most of the spending we do as a committee happens in August/September/October, but in rare occasions we’ll spend in primaries where we can have a positive impact like that,” Jones said. “If we spend some amount of dollars, it will save us that many more dollars in the fall by not having to compete there.” Former Rep. Vic Fazio said similar, arguing that from the perspective of the DCCC, “When you have two Democrats running, you’re not going to spend a lot of time, money, or political capital on that, unless of course this is a question of a leadership-oriented, strong Democrat running against somebody who is really an outlier, who has as a D on their shirt, but really isn’t.” In other words, as long as neither candidate is a bomb-thrower who will be a thorn in the side to leadership and their policy goals, it is highly unlikely the NRCC or DCCC get involved in top two, co-partisan races in safe seats.

One reading of both of these races in California and Washington is that the top two can only succeed in states with weak party structures. This may certainly be true. Although my quantitative models control for fixed effects associated with state, I did notice unique, qualitative trends in my discussions with party and campaign officials, particularly that specific conditions—be it extreme polarization in California or an independent Western streak in Washington—must be met for a top two election format

to be in put in place. Even Louisiana, the regional outlier, instituted their top two during the Democratic one-party reign of the state that existed from the Civil War well up to the 21st Century as an effort to minimize run-off elections for Democratic nominees. For these reasons, the final section will explore an overarching argument: While the top two primary is statistically shown to reduce polarization in elected legislators, if adopted nationwide I believe it will weaken the parties, leadership control, and discipline among the ranks, potentially proliferating polarization and fragmentation.

4 Weak Parties, Polar Congress

The existence of the top two primary in states with notoriously weak party systems creates an inherent tension between my quantitative data and the qualitative interview content discussed here. If the top two was largely a result of young, weak party systems—or at best unique circumstances since Louisiana does not fit the profile of a young, western state—would it *really* reduce polarization if adopted nationally? My conclusion in the final section of this qualitative paper is largely no. The top two serves a purpose in addressing symptoms of polarization, but if every state used the format we would face a clear lack of discipline in House procedures, weaker parties, and an inability of party leadership to pursue policy goals on the party's behalf.

The long-term effect of the top two will be less reliance on the party, particularly in more partisan districts, or an invisible primary and outright collusion in competitive seats, where the potential exists for a party to block itself out of competing in the general. That said, is this necessarily good for the party or the system? Is it effective if people are entirely voting for the individual without observing or relying on party cues? Can policy goals be adopted in a party without rigid discipline or without members who owe a debt of gratitude to the party? To that end, in a world without clear partisan labels, candidates must rally around something to distinguish themselves from their opponent. Without party cues or policy positions, the candidates will reach for salient, valence issues in order to win, more characteristic of a populist government rather that a programmatic, policy-based legislature.

Within the literature, we know voters are information misers. Dancey and Sheagley (2016) and Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2018) provide the most complete account of this problem. Both papers, separately studying the Senate and House respectively, find voters are most predictive of their legislator's position if they vote in

more polar ways and that voters largely select their legislator off of party spatial proximity rather than roll votes. In other words, engagement in current events, studying up on candidates, and the actual time of voting are all costs to voting and affect political engagement levels. This is the Downs paradox, and poses unique challenges for the top two. As one political operative described it, intraparty competition with the top two primary was good for the "uneducated voter who always votes their party and their member" by challenging them to think through why they support their member beyond just partisan cues. That is an easy statement to make, but the literature is still mixed. Voters chose to look up more information on their candidates when their was an intraparty race in California (Betsy Sinclair and Wray 2015), but were no more likely to identify the moderate candidate in the instance of 2012 elections (Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz 2016). Without party primaries that sort and vet candidates by ideology, we are left with weaker discipline overall. Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman (2003) agree. They specifically argue:

> There is substantial evidence that open primaries further weaken the political parties' influence over the nomination process, running contrary to the goal of building a strong and responsible two-party system. Parties can promote democracy only under certain conditions, one of which is that voters know the parties, what they stand for, and what they have accomplished. If the purpose of a primary election is to produce a candidate representative of a party, opening the primary to nonpartisans and partisans of the other party totally defeats this purpose (2003, 472).

To that end, is achieving less polarization through weaker party discipline inherently good? Without a strong hand on candidates, campaigns become a playground for private campaign finance. In the vacuum of leadership, they can perform the processes of the party without the ideology to anchor it. Nolan McCarty argued this view in similar terms, noting that: "Strong political parties have autonomy from and bargaining advantages over special interest groups. Weak parties are those whose elected officials are free agents who can build electoral coalitions around narrow and extreme

interests" (McCarty 2015, 143). Sinclair et al. made comparable points in their full account of co-partisan top two races. "If the nonpartisan primary results in regularly occurring co-partisan elections in the most partisan districts in a predictable fashion, groups not previously aligned with the standard party coalitions have an opportunity to intervene in the selection of new legislators" (J. A. Sinclair et al. 2017, 11). This effect, while potentially reforming coalitions, may also produce disastrous results for the traditional party structure. Top two, McCarty says, diminishes the party, creating neutrality that "facilitates the entry of more extreme candidates" and the potential for a party to field too many candidates and lose access to a seemingly competitive seat (2015, 143). The remainder of this article explores this view and extrapolates what the elites say on party discipline and how they view it within the top two primary dynamic.

Former Representative and chair of the NRCC Tom Reynolds noted the already weak state of modern parties. Regarding campaign finance laws like McCain-Feingold and the media landscape, he said, "We certainly have undermined the power of parties in this country, both parties. They're not what they were decades ago. Each generation is weaker." The top two primary exacerbates that trend, given candidates owe less to the party. "Parties sometimes charted a course. They also looked at helping their candidates and recruiting candidates as well as other party workers. Now, the candidates set up operations almost to themselves. [And] the outside groups are in play." Jacobson described these "countervailing forces" as the predominant reason why efforts like redistricting reform or top two primaries cannot overcome polarization (Jacobson 2015a, 87). Tom Coleman, another former Representative for Missouri, spent nearly twenty years in the House with a front row view of the increasingly anemic parties. He argued, "It's like an oxymoron that people are more entrenched in their party label identification at a time when parties are more meaningless than ever." And yet, he does not see

leadership as have any clear power as it did when he served in the House. Nowadays, he continued, “The leadership can’t do a darn thing for you. There are ways of slapping down somebody who got out of line, on either political side. Those things have vanished. They weren’t very much then; they’re nothing now.” Party discipline can beget polarization. Yet still, the other side of that coin can also lead to polarization.

While leadership may be losing, someone must be winning, and it appears to be the campaign consultants. Every campaign operative I spoke with that worked in the western region believed the top two has benefited them. When the party establishment does not anoint a candidate, it becomes more of a race over who can hire the best guns. One former campaign manager observed, “I can tell you the one effect I see is that the only people who have benefited from this new system are campaign consultants and people who make money off people running for elections [pollsters, mail experts, professional petition gatherers]. This squeezed more money out of this process. I could see this as the only net effect.” A consultant, who worked in California on a race challenging an incumbent Representative and fellow Democrat, noted that they were “basically shunned by [the] party for stepping forward.” That candidate had run grassroots party efforts in the area and donated money to local candidates prior to announcing their congressional candidacy, yet that does not mitigate the feeling of turning on one’s own team. The campaign received donations from non-party strongholds like the Cattlemen’s Associations, but as the consultant said, “People in D.C. would meet with us, but then they would say, ‘We can’t support you. We can’t give you any money.’” That left them to reaching out to non-party sources and PACs.

FairVote, a D.C.-based nonprofit studying electoral reform, views this as the inherent problem of top two. Their legal director suggested to me that in the worst case we have an invisible primary with few intraparty races—as often observed in

Washington—or limited input from the party establishment, resulting in chaos and many co-partisan general elections—as observed in California. In effect, one type of district subverts the intention of the top two, while the other version sows the field for PAC control by relinquishing party control. Penrose argued this increased PAC involvement "allows polarization to be a little bit more ossified," preventing conservative Democrats from being elected in Republican-leaning districts or liberal Republicans from being elected in Democratic-leaning districts. "When you can't elect a Democrat in a Republican district or a Republican in a Democratic district," he went on, "then you don't have people in Congress who can build bridges between the two major parties." Moreover, finding likeminded donors with deep pocketbooks increases the odds that a candidate or legislator is less likely to change their position, regardless of changing circumstances. While both points might be a fair observation of PACs, neither are unique to top two races so they must be taken with a grain of salt. The more grave concern is who steers the wheel when parties create a vacuum of leadership within top two races. This interplay with campaign finance suggests—without the opportunity to exist on its own merit and with strong inertia from PACs—top two, if adopted nationally, may not produce the results its drafters hoped for.

Within the paradigm of choosing party or person, one California-based campaign finance consultant described the top two's effects in these terms: "[Voters] always say 'I vote the person, not the party,' which is complete hoo-hah—but, I think now that they really are getting the opportunity to vote the person and not the party." Yet, in opening up the party's candidates to centrist voters from other parties, are they sacrificing their values for seats? That is the critical question at which the top two primary should be judged. The quantitative results suggest it helps elect moderates in all types of districts, and the qualitative data suggests it prevents the most passionate ideologues from being

elected in safely Republican or Democratic seats. This trait of top two races will only become more effective as the nation sorts deeper into firmly entrenched Republican seats and firmly entrenched Democratic seats. Yet, we must be cognizant of the importance of parties in the United States, and provide them some assistance when at their most dilapidated state. Top two primaries are not that helping hand.

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Doubling Down: Elections and Candidate Ideology in the U.S. House

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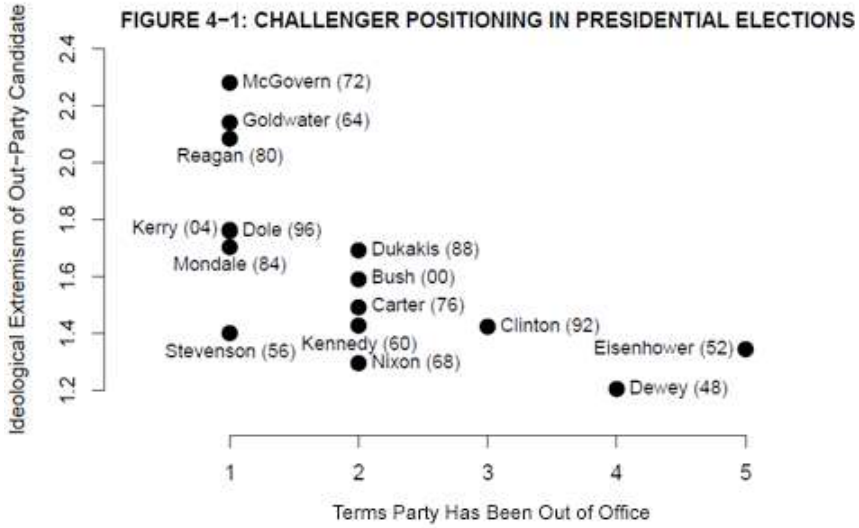
1 Introduction

Gridlock and the polarization of Congress have been central themes in media coverage of U.S. federal policy or lack thereof in recent years. The Downsian view on party structures and elections argues that parties seek power by orienting policymaking to the median voter. In other words, parties seek to maximize the number of voters to gain power and the greatest concentration of voters lie in center. If both parties operate under this logic, the natural conclusion would be for both parties to hold identical ideological positions in the middle. Parties, in seeking all 435 seats of the House, will nominate ideologically moderate candidates in order to win. Yet, polarization as measured via roll calls has been on the rise over the past forty years with party divergence at all-time highs (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008). Why do parties not respond to election losses by seeking the median voter? Do victories or losses affect ideology and whom the party nominates in subsequent elections, or do parties simply present choices to the voters? Do party elites, fundraisers, donors, and their primary electorate seek a candidate that will appeal to the median voter of the general election or to the core constituencies of the party?

Research has shown that for presidential contests, parties are quite cognizant of their ideological records personified through their candidates. As Figure 1 from *The Party Decides* shows, repeated election losses result in the party nominating a more moderate, "establishment" candidate (Cohen et al. 2008). One election out of power, Democrats were willing to nominate a liberal firebrand with McGovern or Republicans a conservative darling like Reagan. Nonetheless, taking heavy hits for several elections starts to take its toll on the party, leading to President Bill Clinton and the New Democrats or General Dwight Eisenhower and his generally indecipherable political ideology that was largely unknown until the summer leading up to the convention.

Winning, that is, begins to supersede ideology in the give and take of nominations and elections.

Figure 1: Moderating effect of being out of power from Cohen et al. (2008).



Yet, party nominations following wins and losses have not been explored within congressional elections. I investigate in this article if parties equally respond in congressional elections as they have in presidential races and do losses (wins) generate a moderating (polarizing) effect on future party nominees? If not, why? In scenarios in which ideology does greatly differ between a party's nominees in districts they won last cycle versus those in districts they lost, what caused this indiscriminate shift in polarization?

To isolate the effect of winning or losing the last election, I use regression discontinuity design (RDD) to compare parties who barely won the previous election to those who barely lost. Interestingly, nominees in the House whose parties narrowly won a given district last cycle exhibit more moderate ideology scores, relative to nominees in districts they narrowly lost last cycle. That said, after controlling for the effects of incumbency on candidate ideology, this moderation effect associated with winning the previous election disappears. Moreover, the effect of repeated party losses on the

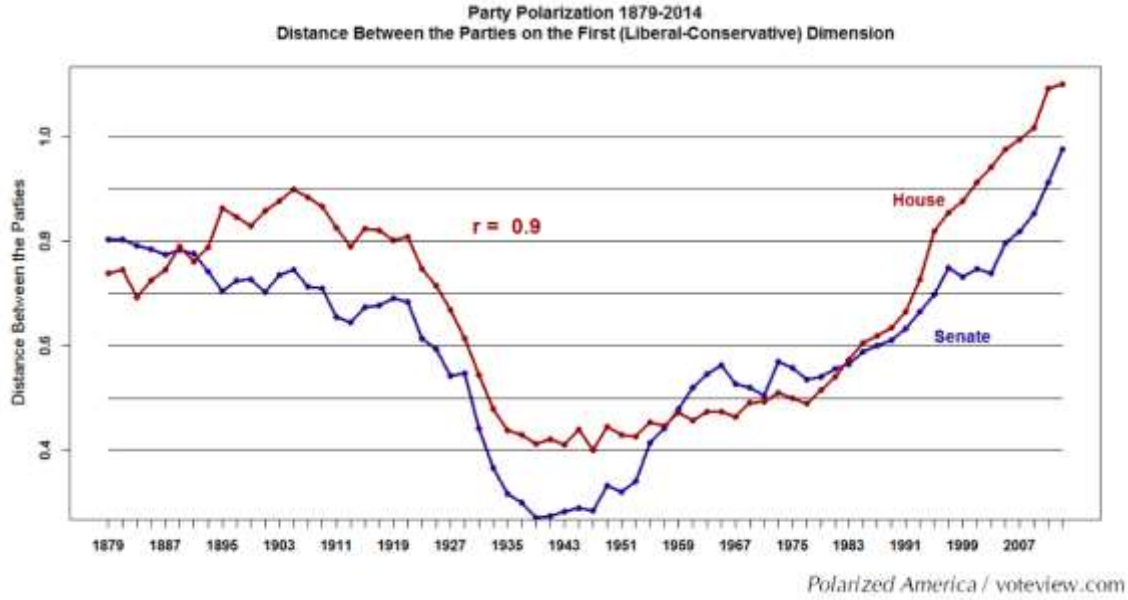
ideological difference between the current nominee and the previous nominee is statistically insignificant, which suggests that parties nominate ideologically similar candidates regardless of consecutive losses.

Previous literature supports my results using different RDD methods and ideology metrics, finding elected representatives' ideology did not polarize following an election victory in the previous cycle or moderate following a loss (D. S. Lee, Moretti, and Butler 2004). To that end, general election voters do not affect policy. My paper posed the question if, in the wake of a loss, primary election voters were more likely to nominate a moderate in order to win. I find that in the gamble of primary elections, voters and party nominees are largely unresponsive to general election wins or losses, and the source of this inertia is the party itself. This finding fits within the framework of parties as representatives of constituencies with core policy goals and a national party agenda. Voters, in that vein, value the credibility imbued through ideological consistency, and the two general election candidates justify their entry into the race only if they each hold sufficiently different positions. To that end, it is election victors within the party who define the agenda, and, given the national scope of elections, parties knowingly lose some seats in order to protect their national brand and that national agenda. Parties and their members, that is, will lose to win.

2 Polarization of Congress

Polarization as measured via DW-NOMINATE roll call estimates has been on the rise over the past forty years (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2008). Ideological polarization between the two parties was lowest in the 1960s and 1970s, and has dramatically increased since as can be seen in Figure 2 (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001).

Figure 2: Polarization and the U.S. Congress from Poole and Rosenthal (2015).



DW-NOMINATE is an intertemporal,[27] bicameral,[28] spatial map of members' voting ideology on a unidimensional scale, a common metric[29] for analyzing legislators' views (Poole and Rosenthal 1985). Polarization, as measured via DW-NOMINATE, has

[27] By covering all roll call votes, DW-NOMINATE therefore includes legislators from multiple Congresses, hence provides an intertemporal bridge for comparison from the 1st Congress to the current Congress.

[28] The scores have been calculated for both the Senate and the House of Representatives (Poole and Rosenthal 1985). Votes on conference committee conference reports in both chambers provide some comparison between members of the two bodies (Bafumi and Herron 2010).

[29] See Ahler, Citrin, and Lenz (2015), Bafumi and Herron (2010), Bonica (2013b, 2014), Brady, Han, and Pope (2007), Gerber and Morton (1998), Hall (2015), Hirano et al. (2010), Rogowski and Langella (2015), and Rogowski (2014).

increased from 1980 until 2012 by more than two standard deviations in the House and almost an entire standard deviation in the Senate.

The literature has suggested many hypotheses for this new age of polarization. Some contend that during the primary election process party donors only support candidates from the fringes of the political spectrum (Schumer 2014). Additional authors highlight the lasting effects of the party agenda and identity, whether it be the Tea Party and the Affordable Care Act or Newt Gingrich's *Contract with America* (Hetherington and Rudolph 2015; Krasa and Polborn 2015; F. E. Lee 2016; Ragusa 2016; Ragusa and Gaspar 2016). Others point to activists and volunteers that often lean further to the right or left than the general electorate, and which have gained greater significance in the 21st Century as campaigns increase e-mobilization and digital microtargeting efforts (Brunell, Grofman, and Merrill 2016; Fiorina and Abrams 2009; Jewitt and Goren 2016; McGhee et al. 2014; Panagopoulos 2016). Furthermore, this party network of elites may create a reinforcing selection bias for party ideology when leadership recruit like-minded candidates to run for office (Hassell 2017; Thomsen 2014). Some argue the general electorate no longer includes truly independent voters, who instead exhibit preferences and perceptions as distinct as partisan voters of past generations potentially due to rising education and political engagement levels (Abramowitz 2010; Jacobson 2015b; Smidt 2017). Recent literature supports this view, providing ample evidence that elites and politically engaged citizens simply hold more consistent policy preferences than less-engaged individuals, and thus the mean of all views appears more liberal or conservative (Broockman 2016).[30] Lastly, some studies argue that gerrymandering has heavily set

[30] That is, for a single view such as immigration, more politically engaged individuals hold more centrist views, but, due to those individuals holding more consistent views over all issue areas, a mean of their overall positions on guns, immigration, abortion, and gay rights are further from the center than less-engaged individuals.

districts to favor one party over another, providing greater significance to primary elections and thus primary voters who, like activists, hold more polarized positions relative to the general public (Fiorina and Abrams 2009; McGhee et al. 2014).

I should note that McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal (2009) find very little evidence to support gerrymandering as the predominant cause of polarization, despite its popularity in the media. Over multiple simulations using the computer-generated equivalents of neutral, independent redistricting boards, they find only slight decreases in Senate or House polarization. The more telling cause, they argue, is the political realignment from Democratic to Republican that occurred in the South (Chen and Rodden 2013; Knuckey 2015; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2009). In essence, the shift has turned the U.S. from a three-party democracy with a Southern Democrat, ideologically converged, center faction into a cohesive, two-party system with no centrist contingent. This "big sort" argument follows a natural process in which like-minded individuals geographically cluster around partisan views, whether it is liberals in cities or conservatives in rural areas (Abrams and Fiorina 2012; Bishop 2009; Bump 2014; Chen and Rodden 2013; Sides 2012). Moreover, Hill and Tausanovitch (2015) suggest the public's views have remained consistently dispersed from 1956 to 2012 throughout the age of increasing polarization, while ideological sorting has been on the rise since the 1980s. Hence, voters are choosing parties and geographies that better reflect their ideal points, which is manifesting itself as ideological divergence.

And yet, the persistence of moderate districts can be misleading. McCarty et al. (2018) find the ideological distance between liberal and conservative legislators representing moderate, heterogeneous legislative districts is larger than the distance between legislators in rural, conservative districts and those in urban, liberal ones. This bimodal distribution within "moderate" districts causes candidate uncertainty about the

ideological position of median voters, resulting in candidates "[shading] their platforms toward their or their party's more extreme ideological preferences" at levels greater than legislators from more partisan, homogenous districts (McCarty et al. 2018, 2). Thus, district median voter preferences are better reflected in legislatures for homogenous districts than heterogeneous ones (Gerber and Lewis 2004).

This uncertainty results in seemingly moderate districts being represented by Democrats and Republicans in starkly different ways, described as "leapfrog representation" by Bafumi and Herron (2010). Some have justifiably argued that this partisanship is rooted in leadership control of the agenda combined with an increase in procedural messaging votes, which I elaborate on in future articles (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Harbridge 2015; Rohde and Aldrich 2010; Theriault 2008). It is these phenomenon, along with the evidence from Lee, Moretti, and Butler (2004) that voters largely do not affect party ideology, that plays a central theme in this paper. Within the context of these moderate, swing districts, I observe how parties and their voters act in the fog of electoral uncertainty, with the resulting gridlock moving parties into their corners and no closer to the center.

3 Theory

My paper poses the question if general election voters affect the actions of primary election voters when they nominate their candidates. That is, previous elections may cause primary voters to elect more moderate nominees in order to win the next general election. In this way, do parties seek power and electoral outcomes that will provide them with a seat in government, or instead organize their activities around distinct policy preferences? By the former principle, they should respond to electoral losses by re-evaluating their grassroots strategies, candidate recruitment, voter engagement, fundraising operation, policy preferences, or ideology. Losses, following Downsian logic, lead local leaders to explore a different track in the next election by nominating a different type of candidate. Victories, even if narrow, may provide enough security through incumbency that candidates assume more extreme ideological positions that better align with the national party over the district, which is traditionally what has been observed (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; McCarty et al. 2018). Moreover, repeated losses would have a moderating effect if the U.S. Congress operates like the U.S. Presidency as Cohen et al. (2008) illustrates.

Downsian logic argues that both parties seek victories and thus would choose a nominee whose policies are most preferred by the general election median voter within a single district. In an arena in which both parties share the same understanding of the electorate, they would fully converge on policies favored by the median voter (Besley and Case 2003; Downs 1957). They accomplish this by "trying to resemble [their] rival" and "becloud their policies in a fog of ambiguity," placing greater emphasis on non-issue-based voting like personalistic appeals or blaming the other party for the dysfunction (Downs 1957, 134–36). This scenario includes the assumption that candidates fully act on promises and rhetoric made during the campaign once in office as

an elected official. Thus, in a one-shot game with pre-election commitments, convergence is expected.

The opposing view assumes that parties are collections of different constituencies operating through the motivations and values of the groups they represent. I will discuss the different facets of this view in turn: beginning with party policy preferences and credibility issues, then the citizen-candidate perspective, followed by the national dynamics of congressional elections, and finally by voter inferences of candidate positions.

Parties are well referenced in the literature as organizers of policy preferences. As Grofman states in his comprehensive critique of the Downsian view, "We may expect that parties/candidates have policy-oriented concerns of their own, just as voters/activists do, and are not solely concerned with winning elections" (2004, 37). He continues that the role of party nominations via primary elections "virtually guarantees a self-selection and weeding-out process in which candidates gravitate to and are chosen by the party whose policy positions most resemble their own" (2004, 37). In a repeated game, diverging from first election campaign promises would result in a loss of reputation among their voters and an expectation for party action to follow its most preferred policy in future elections. As Besley and Case note, "If parties care about policy, this may have significant implications for the credibility of their ex ante policy pronouncements" (2003, 10). By the same token, voters would rationally "expect a reversion to the non-cooperative Nash equilibrium if they observe a deviation from cooperation and vote accordingly" (Alesina 1988, 801). Thus, politicians would face no pressure to moderate, while party inertia would create an expectation of policy preferences.

The citizen-candidate perspective builds on this understanding. Assuming that: a) a first-past-the-post, plurality system results in two distinct parties (Duverger's Law), b)

voting is sincere for a two-candidate race, c) the election winner implements their preferred policy, d) both candidates personally believe they can win, and e) the benefits of holding office are greater than the costs of entering the race, then the two candidates will hold sufficiently different positions. In simple terms, they *must* hold different enough positions for each of them to justify their entry into the race. In the condition where more than two-thirds of citizens have a "strict preference for one candidate over the other and if strictly less than one-third of the electorate is indifferent between these two candidates," a two-candidate equilibrium position will be met (Besley and Coate 1997, 93). Osborne and Slivinski (1996) suggests a third party "consensus candidate" will enter if the two candidates are too far apart. Yet, party primary elections all but ensure a two-candidate equilibrium by reducing the incentives for independent citizen-candidate entrants and creating a "self-fulfilling prophecy, with citizens' beliefs in the inevitability of two-candidate competition guaranteeing that the system survives by deterring costly political entry" (Besley and Coate 1997, 97). That is, the citizen-candidate framework is theoretical. It exists in a world without political parties and with voters holding perfect information. Additionally, election scandals or campaign narratives can result in one candidate overcoming another even if they hold nearly identical ideological positions, which has been observed in several primary elections in recent years. Having noted this, I will discuss the implications of national political parties followed by voters' inferences of their candidates.

Candidates for any party are not independent candidates by any means, instead absorbing the national views of their party. Specifically, other congressional races and the presidential election "contaminate" the ideological positions of all candidates, tying them to national figures and party identity. Krasa and Polborn (2015) cite the example of Lincoln Chafee, a former Republican Senator from Rhode Island. Despite being a sharp

critic of the Iraq War and President George W. Bush as well as fitting in with the identity of his state party, he lost the 2006 race because a vote for him was a vote for President Bush, the Iraq War, and a Republican majority in the Senate. His actions could not disentangle his connection to the national party. The South in recent elections exists as another example, with former Confederacy states rejecting Democratic candidates despite their center-left voting record and disassociation from President Barack Obama.

Parties in that way represent the view of their median elected officials, and the "electoral prospects of candidates in a given district are influenced by the ideological positions of their parties' winning candidates elsewhere" (Krasa and Polborn 2015, 2). They continue that parties may intentionally lose some districts "in order to avoid 'contaminating' their national position" (Krasa and Polborn 2015, 11). Thus, a single election win is not the sole goal and there is an expectation that the party, through election wins with a majority of legislative races, will initiate policy that benefits their core constituency (Alesina 1988; Cox and McCubbins 2005; F. E. Lee 2016). The national party position in this framework only changes as legislators are replaced by co-partisans or by the opposing party, not by elites drastically changing their views, with the resulting effect constituting a shift in party medians (Autor et al. 2016; Boatright 2013; Brady, Han, and Pope 2007; Brunell, Grofman, and Merrill 2016; Gelman 2009). A party may be opposed to or accepting of that change depending on how it affects future electoral prospects. Therefore, these spillover effects complicate voters' assumptions about their potentially moderate local general election congressional candidates, more often than not lead them to national party cues when casting their vote.

This process has also been examined from the voter perspective. As Dancey and Sheagley (2016) and Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2018) both acknowledge, voters often do not know the actual ideological positions of the candidates they vote for. The former

paper finds that voters have greater difficulty predicting the ideological positions of their Senators when they hold more moderate voting records, defined as the degree to which Senators vote against their party (Dancey and Sheagley 2016). Thus, accountability and voter accuracy are heightened when members of Congress hold more polar views that align closer with the national party. This may be no fault to voters themselves. Political communication does not necessarily make inferences easy, often using cross-cutting issues to reveal left-right preferences without acknowledging the degree of those preferences (Schnakenberg 2016). Moreover, the design of American federalism disperses power over multiple subnational levels, resulting in local and state issues that pose greater challenges for voter inference (Dodd 2015). The latter paper by Tausanovitch and Warshaw utilizes data on citizens' ideal point preferences, finding voters select their House candidates on party spatial proximity rather than the roll call votes of individual legislators, and that elites are non-responsive to district preferences (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2018). Politically engaged moderate or cross-pressured voters are cognizant of roll call votes, although the effect relative to party identity is negligible. Along the same lines, voters value salient issue representation above all other responsibilities of public office. That is to say, they prioritize nationalized ideological issues over other issues such as acquiring earmark spending, opposing special interests, or solving constituent problems. By placing responsibilities like constituent services as a given, the rest becomes about who will "represent them [voters] on the issues" (Lapinski et al. 2016, 543). Procedural, non-substantive votes employed by parties for campaign rhetoric against the other party's candidates only complicate these matters (Harbridge 2015; Theriault 2008). Within the context of this paper, this provides clear incentives for candidates to not act within the confines of Downs's median voter theorem and instead to diverge with respect to the policy positions of the opposing party. Voters connect

candidates to the overarching ideology of their party and thus the candidates nominated following a loss or win cannot easily distance themselves from the larger, national brand.

In summary, parties organize around distinct policy preferences for a few reasons: parties drastically changing policy goals will face credibility issues over the promises of their candidates' campaigns; candidates only run when they personally believe they can win and their policy preferences are not represented among the current candidate pool; candidates cannot easily disentangle themselves from their larger party organization; parties may intentionally lose some seats in order to retain their national goals; and, voters often do not know the actual ideological positions of their legislators and/or value salient issues over the other responsibilities of the job. These factors all but ensure that a repeated-game electoral system will create parties with distinctly different policy agendas. I will now briefly focus on party-to-party leverage before moving on to the research design.

Whether an electoral system experiences differing levels of convergence or divergence will vary according to parties' discount factors, the degree of polarization between their most preferred policies, the number of parties and their relative size, and their popularity (Abou-Chadi and Orlowski 2016; Besley and Case 2003). Credibility of policy promises rests on if the incentive to select the party's most preferred policy is less than its cost. As Alesina (1988) elaborates, uncertainty over the credibility of the opposing party's leadership and their threats emulates the effect of a low discount factor, resulting in non-cooperative behavior and the party choosing its most preferred policy. Moderation, and therefore cooperation between the parties, is therefore more easily achieved in a balanced system where both parties have a discount factor sufficiently close to one. Finally, party popularity affects their leverage at the bargaining table. In the context of the House, controlling the Senate and/or Presidency is an additional

leveraging factor that can empower a party's ideological core. An increase in popularity enables a party to "impose an agreement closer to its point of view," thus increasing utility to their core constituents (Alesina 1988, 800). To that end, if there are no popularity costs to choosing their preferred policy, or those costs are less than say a primary election challenge (from a more polar position) for an individual member, then we would expect the party and their members to be non-cooperative (Harbridge 2015, 189). Of these four factors and their relation to polarization, party popularity and electoral security from incumbency are the focus of this paper.

Popularity in my analysis is measured by electoral strength via electoral margins in the previous general election. That is, do those parties who lose respond to their relatively lower popularity by nominating candidates with more moderate platforms in order to gain election victory? Lee, Moretti, and Butler build on the logic of Alesina (1988) and Besley and Case (2003):

> When politicians have incentives to moderate their platforms—as in partial policy convergence—the relative electoral strength of the two parties matter. More specifically, when electoral support is high, a candidate can afford to vote in a relatively more partisan way if he is elected; a weaker candidate would be forced to choose a more moderate policy (2004, 808–9).

In a repeated game electoral system in which pre-election campaign promises for moderation are not seen as credible and parties exert pressure on their members, electoral strength should have no effect on candidate ideology and stark policy preferences are expected. In other words, general elections become "means to decide which candidate's preferred policy will be implemented" (D. S. Lee, Moretti, and Butler 2004, 808). Ideology may trump policy pronouncements if there is no way to achieve binding pre-election promises.

4 Design

To measure party response in the wake of an election, I could simply compare outright the nominees from districts that Democrats won versus districts that Democrats lost. Yet, this inherently creates issues for causal inference given CA-12 (Nancy Pelosi's House district) shares little in common with WI-01 (Paul Ryan's House district). Left-leaning voters are a dominant force in CA-12, thus we would expect the local Democratic Party has vastly different levels of organization relative to that in WI-01. Comparing the mechanics of the Democratic Party, their primary elections, their candidate ideologies, and their fundraising in these two districts would be rife with bias. It is true that by most accounts a Democratic nominee in WI-01, where the Democratic Party is more likely to lose, would be more moderate than a Democratic nominee in CA-12, where the party is more likely to win. But, this outright comparison cannot demonstrate that a loss would lead to moderation or a win would lead to polarization. These nominees hold vastly different rates of electability. As Krasa and Polborn (2015) illustrate, sacrificing party goals for a win in WI-01 would both damage their credibility among core supporters and shift their median party member heavily to the right. The same would not be said of CA-12. What we need is two relatively comparable, swing districts that could go to either party.

Regression discontinuity design (RDD, or RD) provides an opportunity for that analysis by directly comparing nominees from districts that Democrats narrowly won to nominees from districts that Democrats narrowly lost, and the same for Republicans. Observing election margins from the last cycle, we can exploit deterministic treatment of electoral success (Angrist and Pischke 2009, 2015). It is a zero-sum game in which one candidate must lose and one candidate must win, with a sharp cut point deciding their

fate. By directly comparing party nominees on either side of the winning threshold, RDD isolates the causal effect of electoral success on subsequent polarization or moderation.

This design includes the assumption that party's candidates positioned on each side of the threshold are comparable in quality, thus allowing comparison between the control and treatment groups (those whose party lost in the last election versus those whose party won, respectively).

The regression model, therefore, is:

$$Y_{i,t+1} = b_0 + b_1 \text{PartyWin}_{it} + f(x_{it}) + e_{i,t+1}$$

where $Y_{i,t+1}$ reflects the party nominee's ideology score in election time *t+1*, subscripts *i*, *t*, and *t+1* reference district *i* at time *t* and time *t+1*, β_1 describes the RD estimator for the effect of the party winning the election at time *t* on the ideology score at *t+1*, $f(x_{it})$ is a flexible function for the party's vote share in district *i* at time *t* (calculated as the nominee's percentage of the two-party vote share minus 50%), and finally error terms. The model is run separately for each party to distinguish if parties react differently in the wake of the previous election.

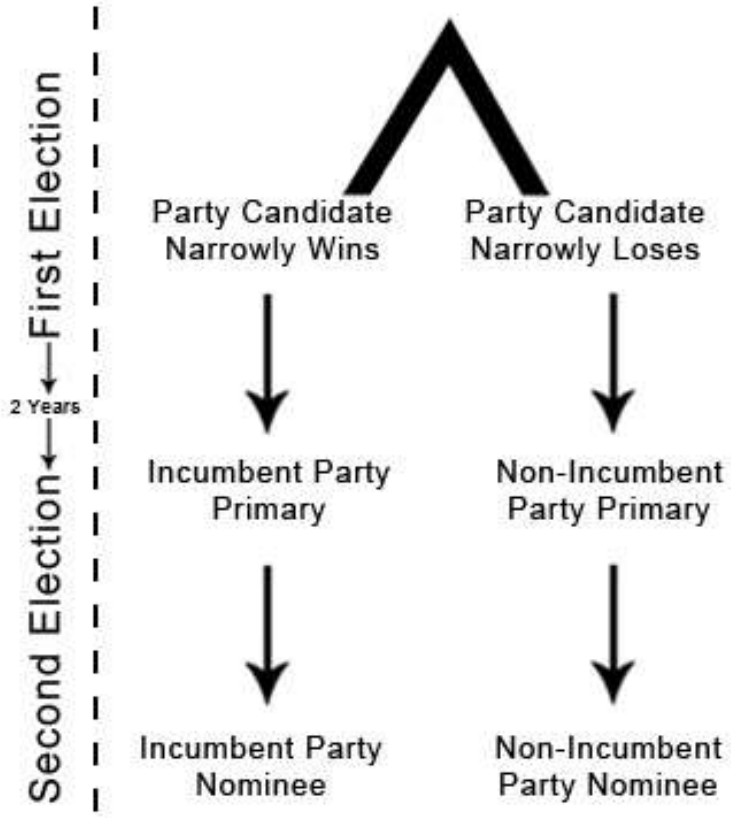
Treatment is contingent on:

$$\text{PartyWin}_{it} = \begin{cases} 1 \text{ if } x_i \geq x_0 \\ 0 \text{ if } x_i < x_0 \end{cases}$$

where x_0 represents 50% of the two-party vote share and x_i denotes the party's percentage of two-party vote share in district *i* at time *t*.

My analysis pertains specifically to the U.S. House from 1980-2012. Figure 3 describes the overall process. Congressional elections occur every two years. Because the House term is two years, all 435 members of the House of Representatives run for re-election every cycle. Given this, electoral success in the first election selects incumbency party status for the second election.

Figure 3: The repercussions of victory or loss in House elections.



In simple terms, if party nominees for districts the party narrowly won last cycle show increased levels of polarization relative to party nominees for districts the party narrowly lost last cycle, it would provide evidence of primary election voters *affecting* policy by nominating more moderate candidates, relative to districts they won last cycle, in order to re-gain the seat from the other party. The opposite too could hold true, instead showing that a win in time *t* results in more moderate party nominees in time *t+1* (the second election), relative to party nominees in districts the party lost in time *t*. Finally, if the function is continuous (i.e. there is no discontinuity in *t+1* around the election win threshold, 50% of the two-party vote total), parties instead do not respond to losses or wins, and may have policy goals that partially supersede election victories.

The testable hypotheses therefore are:

H_1: Parties will respond to an election loss in time *t* by nominating a more moderate candidate for election *t+1*, relative to nominees in districts they won last cycle.

H_2: Parties will nominate an ideologically identical candidate in *t+1* as that in time *t*, regardless of the election margins in time *t*.

H_3: Parties will nominate more moderate candidates after repeated losses in elections *t/t+1/ t+2/ t+3/ t+4* relative to nominees in districts they won.

I rely on the Rdrobust Stata packages for bandwidth selection, analysis, and plotting. Rdrobust uses nonparametric local polynomial estimators to ascertain the RD treatment effects (Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik 2014). RD specifications in general can follow local linear, polynomial, and difference-in-means, although the final is less regarded in the literature due to its propensity to create a discontinuity that may not exist on either side of the running variable cut point (Eggers et al. 2015). As Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik describe, local linear and polynomial functions on either side of the cut point involve "approximating the regression function above and below the cutoff by means of weighted polynomial regressions, typically of order 1 or 2, with weights computed by applying a kernel function on the distance of each observation's score to the cutoff" (2014, 2296).

For bandwidth selection, traditional methods have used arbitrary window settings based on a visual inspection of the RD plot followed by oversmoothing or undersmoothing tests (Imbens and Lemieux 2008; D. S. Lee and Lemieux 2010). This may result in windows too narrow providing low observation counts and false negatives and those too wide providing more observation counts but a large amount of false positives (de la Cuesta and Imai 2016). As such, the Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014) method, discussed in full in their paper, assigns weights based on an observation's distance to the cutpoint and provides "new confidence intervals for RD treatment effects that offer robustness to 'large' bandwidths such as those obtained from

cross-validation or asymptotic mean squared error minimization" (2014, 2296).[31] In short, Rdrobust corrects for bias from using other optimal bandwidth approaches and modifies confidence intervals to reflect this correction. Finally, it does not utilize a more arbitrary bandwidth method that relies on visual inspection and manual selection.

I provide additional care and analysis to balance pre-treatment covariates and detect evidence of sorting (or the absence thereof). As de la Cuesta and Imai (2016) and Eggers et al. (2015) demonstrate, a discontinuity among pre-treatment covariates could provide evidence of sorting and invalidate the as-if-random assumption of RDD. There is a divide in the literature on pre-treatment sorting, with the camps divided between Caughey and Sekhon (2011) and Eggers et al. (2015), with support from Erikson and Rader (2017) and de la Cuesta and Imai (2016). The divide pertains to the overrepresentation of incumbents among winners in close post-WWII House races. If RD analysis assumes narrow election losers are comparable to narrow election winners, then the winners cannot retain certain ex ante candidate quality, fundraising, or incumbency advantages, which enable them to cross the finish line with a narrow win. Caughey and Sekhon (2011) do not however suggest that these bare-winners won via manipulation or through legal action during election recounts. The response from Eggers et al. (2015), and the view I align with, contend that, given multiple candidates, unsystematic current events, and weather variability, no one candidate is singlehandedly able to control the outcome of an election. That is, a sorting assumption requires the "ability of well-organized campaigns to obtain precise information about likely outcomes and to take extraordinary measures to secure victory in very close races," and

[31] For more on cross-validation and asymptotic mean squared error (MSE) minimization, see Imbens and Kalyanaraman (2012) and Imbens and Lemieux (2008).

thus evidence of imbalance in one setting (post-World War II House races) does not likely indicate a fundamental problem with the RD approach (Eggers et al. 2015, 262).

For the specific aims of my research, to test for sorting I examine if the absolute value CFscore (the candidate ideology metric) is a continuous function in time *t* around the running variable cutpoint in time *t*, and if out-of-district campaign contributions, political action committee (PAC) contributions, and total contributions are continuous in time *t* relative to a party win or loss in time *t*.

I should underscore that my paper is not the first to explore how electoral margins affect future party ideology. Lee, Moretti, and Butler (2004) were the first to pose the question, also asking if party losses would beget moderation or wins beget polarization, but without the advantage of a candidate ideology metric. As a result, they instead examine legislator ideology, and the two factors that most drastically affect legislator behavior: party affiliation and incumbency advantages. To do this, they first calculate the effect of a narrow Democratic Party win in time *t* on legislator ideology in time *t+1*. Unsurprisingly, they observe a discontinuity. As they describe:

> We know that party affiliation is an important determinant of roll-call behavior. We also know that if a Democrat (Republican) is elected in period *t*, a Democrat (Republican) is more likely to be elected in period *t+1* in the same district, due to the incumbency advantage. The party effect, together with the electoral advantage of incumbency, suggests that we should expect to find a gap (D. S. Lee, Moretti, and Butler 2004, 829).

The crux of their research is finding that this gap is almost entirely explained by the differing ways Democrats and Republicans vote in office *times* the incumbency advantage from holding office (the increased probability of winning election *t+1* because the candidate is an incumbent). In other words, the only effect of a Democratic win at time *t* on the ideology score of the district's representative at time *t+1* is through the effect of a Democratic win at time *t* on whether a Democrat or Republican is elected at time *t+1*. In short, election outcomes affect subsequent party control, but not subsequent

ideological positions. Winning does not cause polarization; losing does not cause moderation. Thus, general election voters "do not influence policy choices as much as they are presented with choices" (D. S. Lee, Moretti, and Butler 2004, 848).

Of course, the downside of their design is that, without a candidate ideology metric, they can only observe winners. My paper expands the lessons learned from them, while improving and simplifying the design using new candidate ideology metrics. Their observations were limited to general election winners, as candidate ideology was based on Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) scores calculated from votes in Congress after the election. As such, their analysis cannot observe losing Democratic and Republican nominees (half of observations), or the ex ante ideological positions any candidate holds during the campaign that garnered them votes in the first place. Finally, their analysis occurs at the district level, and thus misses party level processes in which they selected their nominee among a conglomeration of the many local ideals personified through all the candidates running. As they state, within a framework where general election voters simply choose between alternative options, "it would then become more important…to understand how a nominee, and the policies that she supports, is chosen by the party" (D. S. Lee, Moretti, and Butler 2004, 813). In this way, I extend their question to observe if general election voters affect whom primary voters nominate for the subsequent general election. The next section will discuss the candidate ideology metric followed by the results.

5 Calculating Candidate Ideology

To quantify candidate ideology, I work within the Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME) and its metric, the CFscore (campaign finance score), which was developed by Stanford University's Adam Bonica for his PhD dissertation at NYU where he graduated in 2011 (Bonica 2013a). By providing *every* candidate a CFscore, rather than just officeholders per DW-NOMINATE or ADA scores, I have greater flexibility in my research and analysis and can examine the ideology of party nominees in the wake of the last election. I use the absolute value of CFscore for ease of interpretation, in which positive RD parameter values provide evidence of a win in the last election causing polarization and negative values as evidence for a win causing moderation. Normally, negative CFscore values constitute left-leaning candidates while positive CFscores constitute right-leaning candidates.

The DIME data required extensive grooming before any RD analysis could be performed. I first remove all Independent candidates to acquire a sharp cut point for the running variable. I also omit candidates who did not compete in the general election since they never attain party nominee status. Additionally, I remove candidates who incorrectly appear in the dataset twice for a given election year, keeping the observation with a higher donor count. Finally, 1,377 House candidates are missing general election percentages for at least one candidate in their race, which creates incorrect election margin figures, and thus they are excluded. These elections are mostly uncompetitive with the mean and median winning candidate taking 74% of the two-party vote share; in RD analysis that focuses on close elections, these observations would overwhelmingly be ignored even if the complete data were available. In the end, I work from 10,879 observations among 5,677 unique House candidates for election years 1980-2012. Furthermore, House districts face the issue of redistricting every decade. Like Fouirnaies

and Hall (2014), Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001), and Hall (2015), I exclude elections before redistricting since the nomination process in the next election occurs within newly drawn districts. For my period of analysis, I therefore omit observations in which the time *t* election is 1980, 1990, 2000, or 2010 and the time *t+1* nomination process is 1982, 1992, 2002, or 2012. I will now discuss how the metric is estimated.

The intuition behind Bonica's CFscore can be described as follows. Imagine a scenario where Candidate A receives $50 total in campaign contributions, all from Donor 1. The same happens for Candidate B, who already holds office and has voted in Congress. Donor 1 gives the same amount to both of them. Given this, one can approximate that Candidate A and B have similar ideologies, and if elected Candidate A will vote similarly to Candidate B. Bonica's CFscore does this, but using millions of donors, billions of dollars, and thousands of candidates, weighted by contribution amount through the network of money.

Comparable to roll call estimates of ideology with Poole and Rosenthal's DW-NOMINATE, DIME aggregates information from 3.93 million campaign donors and 262,000 PACs to provide an indicator of candidate ideology (Bonica 2014). Donor ideology is calculated as a contribution-weighted average of the DW-NOMINATE scores for incumbents they have given to, excluding the candidate the CFscore refers to (Hall 2015). Whereas DW-NOMINATE aggregates ideal point estimates from legislative voting, CFscores determine ideology from legislative campaign donations.

For that reason, CFscores provide dimensions unseen by other metrics. While others largely reflect how a legislator votes, Bonica's metric gives insight into how a candidate *campaigns* through speeches, campaign materials, and voter interactions, manifesting itself via whom they sought/received donations from. Moreover, the post-*Citizens United* era of nearly uninhibited cash circulating through all levels of

government has only improved our inference abilities. Money, that is, talks and provides a signal about a candidate's ideology and the way they will vote once in office.

Admittedly, CFscores and DW-NOMINATE are not the only measures of candidate/legislator ideology. Project Vote Smart's National Political Awareness Test (NPAT, now called the Political Courage Test) and Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) interest group ratings are both used within the literature, the latter central to Lee, Moretti, and Butler (2004).[32] Both metrics have their shortcomings. NPAT relies on self-reporting from candidates, which has reached response rates as low as 30% in recent years and creates concerns over selection bias, such as which candidates are responding and what are their motivations. Likewise, ADA interest group ratings are conducted by an outside group and again only apply to successful candidates who hold office.

This is not to say that the CFscore is foolproof. It only begins in 1980, largely because the Federal Election Commission and its requisite record keeping for campaign donations did not begin until the mid-1970s. As such, we cannot explore any trends in polarization that may have existed before 1980. Furthermore, the CFscore's design includes the assumption that campaign donations occurred because the donor has an ideological expectation of how the candidate would vote if elected, based on who they have given to previously. The donation does not legally bind the candidate to vote in Congress as the donor expects[33] nor does the donor have to be entirely giving for ideological reasons. Rogowski and Langella (2015) cite that half of donors give for material gain or social reasons. To that end, individual donors and PACs may not share

[32] Additionally, see Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) and McGhee et al. (2014) for NPAT use. See Bonica (2013b, 2014), Gerber and Morton (1998), and Poole and Rosenthal (1985) for ADA use.

[33] Although, if a candidate diverged from the donor's preferred policy then we would expect they would not donate again, and thus would be a small portion of the candidate's total donation pool.

the same motivations. Per Barber, individual donors are "on average more ideologically extreme than voters…more likely to be expressive in their giving patterns…[and] choose to give to the candidate that is ideologically closest to them" (2016, 298). He continues that PACs are instead motivated by material reasons, with the overwhelming majority "interested in gaining access to legislators in office in an effort to craft legislation that is favorable to their interests and ensure that legislators are aware of their preferred policies" (Barber 2016, 298). In this regard, PACs often arise from heavily regulated industries or those experiencing drastic change, many of which seek candidates from both parties willing to compromise for their interests.

For these reasons, CFscores may not fully reflect DW-NOMINATE scores, which in their own right may not fully encapsulate the actual preferred policies of the legislator. Still, they are both fairly accurate at predicting votes, with CFcores accurate 88% of the time in the House to DW-NOMINATE's 90% (Bonica 2014). I provide a full discussion comparing the two metrics in the robustness section.

6 Results

6.1 Regression Discontinuity Design

To have a reference point for the RD results, I first list the CFscore summary statistics, separated by party and using the absolute value. For all House candidates, the standard deviation for CFscore is 0.38, although the distribution is a little narrower for Republicans (0.33) compared to Democrats (0.41). The mean CFscore is slightly higher for Republicans (0.91), suggesting Republican candidates are slightly more ideological than Democratic candidates (0.75).

Table 1: House Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Candidate Absolute Value CFscore	0.83	0.86	0.38
Democratic Absolute Value CFscore	0.75	0.75	0.41
Republican Absolute Value CFscore	0.91	0.94	0.33

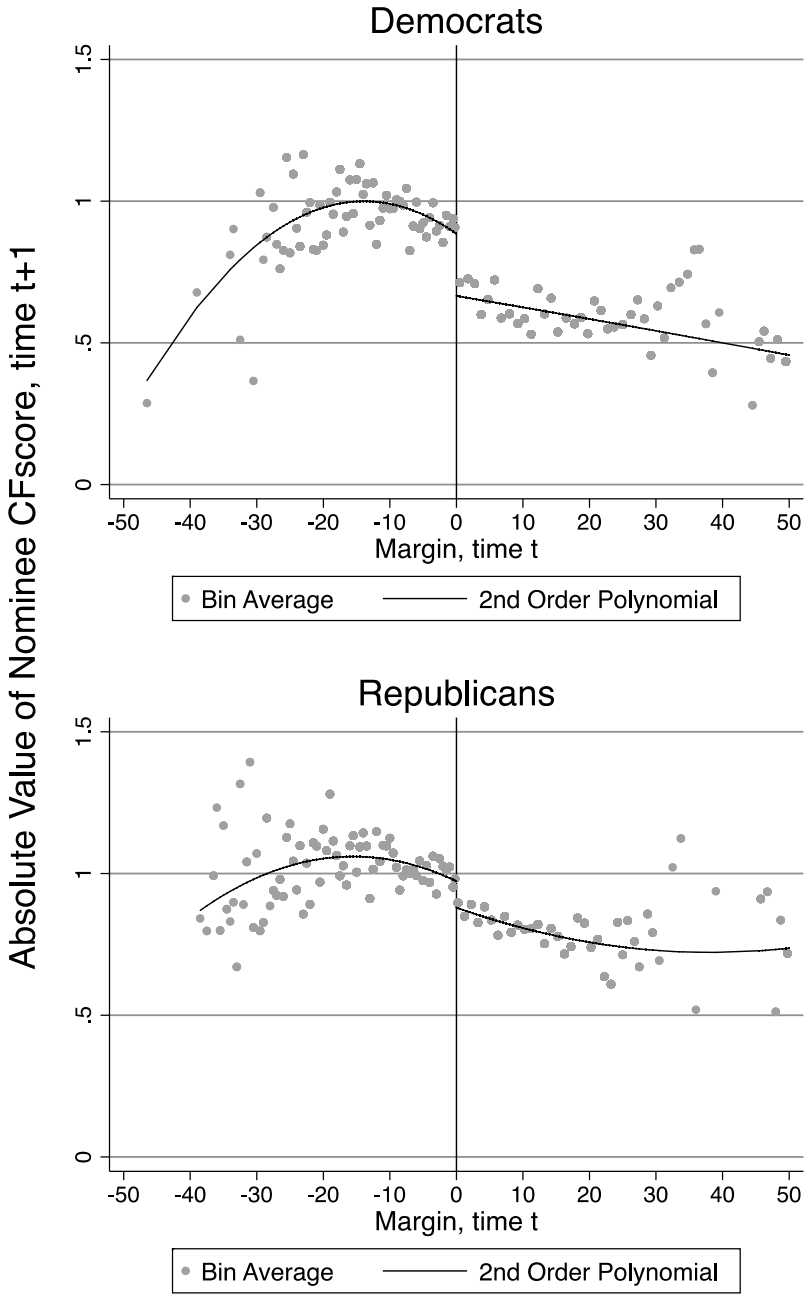
Noting these summary statistics, the RD models are shown below in Table 2 and Figure 4, which includes all races, 1980-2012. Observing the results for party response in time *t+1* in the wake of election time *t*, a narrow win causes a decrease in the average absolute value CFscore by 0.19 for Democrats and 0.10 for Republicans, relative to party nominees whose party narrowly lost in time *t*. This constitutes slightly above 45% of the standard deviation for Democrats and 30% for Republicans. That is to say, contrary to Downsian logic, candidates whose party won last cycle have lower ideology scores relative to candidates whose party lost cycle.

Table 2: Representative Absolute Value CFscore, time t+1

	Democrats	Republicans
Party Win, time t	-0.189***(***) (0.0357)	-0.101***(**) (0.0306)
Bandwidth	±10.66	±9.134
N	1,404	1,179

Parentheses denote standard error and robust significance levels.
***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

Figure 4: RD models for the House, 1980-2012.



These results should be approached with caution however, considering the nature of how the CFscore is calculated as well as the incumbency advantages associated with winning the previous election. Given this, the next section will examine how incumbency may affect the CFscore.

6.2 Incumbency, Access-Seeking PACs, and the CFscore

As discussed previously, political action committees largely seek access to elected officials from both parties; therefore, PAC campaign contributions have the potential to taint the CFscore metric. A Democratic incumbent may hold a very liberal voting record, for instance, but due to an infusion of campaign cash from access-seeking PACs that also contribute to a Republican incumbent with a very conservative voting record, the CFscore may incorrectly assign them a moderate record toward zero. If a candidate wins office at time *t* and subsequently has a more moderate CFscore in time *t+1*, part of the change may be attributed to the candidates' incumbency status and the resulting infusion of PAC money. Incumbency is heavily linked to increases in campaign contributions, more recently examined by Fouirnaies and Hall (2014).

To account for this likelihood and to accompany the RD results, I designed a differences-in-differences (diff-in-diff) regression on the panel data of candidates. Diff-in-diff models control for differences in the dependent variable across year and candidate, while for this model recognizing within-candidate differences associated with a binary incumbency variable.

Because some candidates may never lose and be favored from the beginning of their first congressional race, observations are limited to candidates who lost and won multiple times. The model includes races on both sides of their first winning election. Thus, I am observing the candidate as a candidate who lost, a candidate who won, and then an incumbent.

The regression model is as follows:

$$Y_{ct} = f_c + d_t + a\text{INCUMBENCY}_{ct} + e_{ct}$$

where Y_{ct} reflects the candidate CFscore in year *t* for candidate *c*; f_c describes candidate fixed effects; d_t describes time fixed effects for election year; a references a binary

variable for incumbency; and finally error terms. The standard errors are clustered around candidate, considering they are the panel unit and a candidate in 1994 is likely to behave similarly in 1996. The results for the diff-in-diff model yield interesting results, seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Effect of Incumbency on Absolute Value CFscore

Dependent Variable: Absolute Value of Dynamic CFscore Panel Unit: Candidate		
Variables	Democrats	Republicans
Incumbency	-0.142*** (0.0196)	-0.0933*** (0.0137)
Constant	0.954*** (0.0116)	1.007*** (0.00749)
R^2	0.97	0.96
N	120	115

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

The findings illustrate a slightly larger effect from incumbency for Democrats, and a slightly lower effect from incumbency for Republicans. After controlling for time and candidate, the same Democratic candidate has a 0.14 lower absolute value CFscore as an incumbent relative to when they were not (35% of the standard deviation). For Republicans, the value is slightly lower at 0.09 (27% of the standard deviation). The lower incumbency effect for Republicans likely exists because their "business friendly" reputation precedes their campaign and hence access-seeking industry PACs provide contributions from their initial candidacy.

Given this, the counterintuitive RD results shown in Table 2 and Figure 4 are less surprising. Those results found for both parties that candidates whose party narrowly won last cycle held on a average 0.19 lower absolute value CFscore for Democrats and 0.10 for Republicans, relative to similar candidates whose party narrowly lost last cycle.

That is, winning is associated with moderation. As the diff-in-diff models show, this effect is largely attributed to incumbency. The candidate running in time *t+1* whose party won in time *t* is very likely an incumbent and thus with that status gains additional contributions from access-seeking PACs. In fact, the difference between the RD results and the incumbency regression ($b_1 \text{PartyWin}_{it} - a\text{INCUMBENCY}_{c,t+1}$) is 12% of Democrats' standard deviation and 3% of Republicans'. A Z-test between the unstandardized coefficients is statistically insignificant for both Democrats and Republicans, and thus the two coefficients are statistically indistinguishable. In other words, the effect of a time *t* win on the *t+1* nominee's CFscore is entirely explained through access-seeking PAC contributions to incumbents.

These results support Lee, Moretti, and Butler (2004), illustrating that, when selecting their party nominee, primary voters are largely unresponsive to general election wins or losses in the previous election. This result suggests that parties are representatives of core constituencies who they must represent whether they win or lose, and they value credibility imbued through ideological consistency. Moreover, these findings confirm Grofman (2004) in that primary elections are a weeding-out process which select candidates who fit within the party brand. The next section will explore the effect of repeated losses on party nominations in House districts followed by the conclusion. Robustness checks are included in the appendix.

6.3 Repeated Party Loss and Candidate Tenure

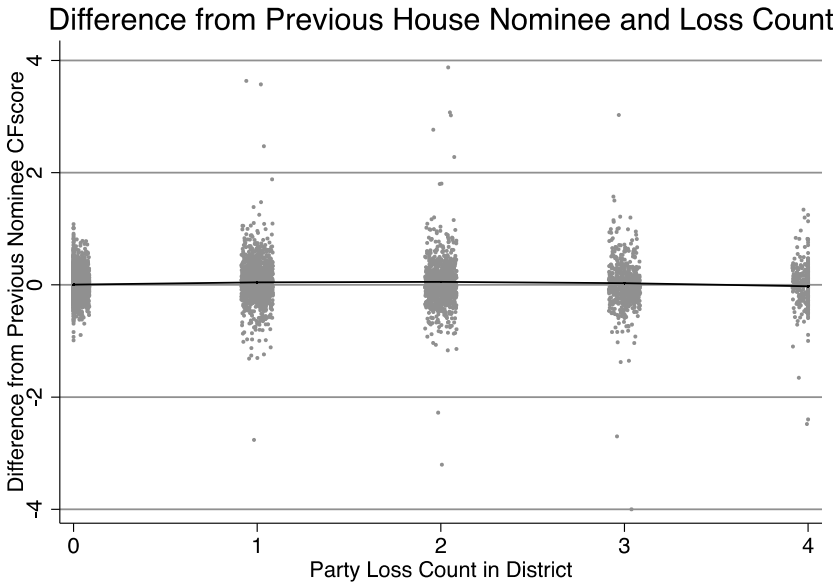
I create two different panel regressions to examine ideological consistency over multiple wins or losses, first observing repeat losses and then repeat wins. For repeated losses in a district, it is necessary to regress the nominee's *difference* from the previous nominee against the party loss count in the district, rather than regressing just the nominee's CFscore against the party loss count. This is significant because districts that the party repeatedly loses likely face problems of candidate recruitment and/or are overlooked by bipartisan access-seeking PACs unwilling to donate to a likely loser, the overall effect showing heightened polarization from repeat losses. The RD model inherently focused on swing districts in which both parties were competitive, hence this distinction was unnecessary for it. This first diff-in-diff panel regression is as such:

$$Y_{pt} - Y_{p,t-1} = \phi_p + \delta_t + \beta_1 \text{FIRSTLOSS}_{pt} + \beta_2 \text{SECONDLOSS}_{pt} + \beta_3 \text{THIRDLOSS}_{pt} + \beta_4 \text{FOURTHLOSS}_{pt} + \varepsilon_{pt}$$

where $Y_{pt} - Y_{p,t-1}$ reflects the difference between party nominee CFscore in year *t* for party *p* relative to their last nominee; ϕ_p describes party-district fixed effects; δ_t describes dummy variables for election year with 1980 as the reference category; β_1 to β_4 reference a dummy variable for loss count with zero losses (won previous election) as the reference category; and finally error terms.

Figures 5 and 6 show the plots and Table 4 list the coefficient results. Both the scatter plot and the regression coefficients show no statistically significant relationship between loss count and the change in a party nominee's CFscore relative to the last. A fitted line is added to the scatter plot to illustrate the non-effect. In this vein, parties nominate ideologically consistent candidates regardless of winning or losing previous elections, stemming from party policy goals and further confirming my RD results in support of Lee, Moretti, and Butler (2004).

Figures 5 and 6: Repeated party loss and ideological consistency (jitter added to provide context of observation counts).



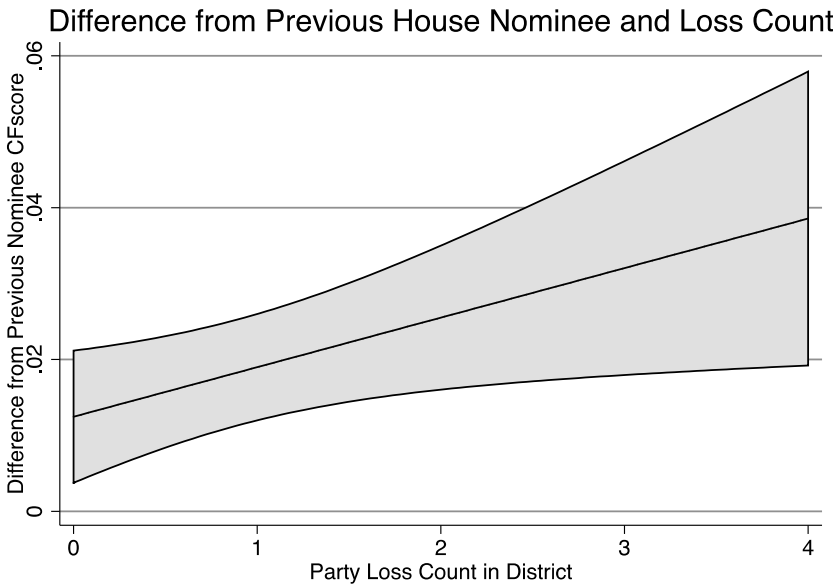


Table 4: Effect of Repeated Losses on Absolute Value
CFscore Difference from Previous Party Nominee

Dependent Variable: Difference of Absolute Value Dynamic CFscore from Previous Nominee Panel Unit: District-Level Party		
Variables	Democrats	Republicans
Loss Count		
First	0.102***	0.0306
	(0.0286)	(0.0249)
Second	0.0365	0.00445
	(0.0320)	(0.0289)
Third	0.00857	-0.0212
	(0.0358)	(0.0353)
Fourth	0.00368	-0.0545
	(0.0442)	(0.0417)
Constant	-0.0227	-0.00312
	(0.0177)	(0.0156)
R^2	0.22	0.33
N	3,412	3,251

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

The next regression explores how repeated wins (incumbency) affect a candidates' CFscore through relationships with access-seeking PACs. Some candidates were elected to the House for the entire period of my analysis, 1980-2012, or 16 terms in total. The regression is:

$$Y_{ct} = \phi_c + \delta_t + \beta_1 \text{FIRSTTERM}_{ct} + \beta_2 \text{SECONDTERM}_{ct} \ldots + \beta_{16} \text{SIXTEENTHTERM}_{ct}$$

where Y_{ct} reflects the candidate CFscore in year *t* for candidate *c*; ϕ_c describes candidate fixed effects; δ_t describes time fixed effects; β_1 to β_{16} represent dummy variables for terms in office with zero as the reference category (has not held office); and finally error terms.

Shown in Table 5, I observe lower CFscores as candidates increase their terms in office. These are not especially surprising results given the connection between access-

seeking PACs and incumbency. Candidates who have been in office for more terms have stronger relationships with political action committees and/or hold senior positions in the party or committees and thus exert greater influence than a one-term Representative. With these PACs providing campaign funds to Democrats and Republicans alike, they would unsurprisingly lower the CFscore for long-time incumbents relative to the more fresh-faced members.

Table 5: Effect of Tenure on Absolute Value of Dynamic CFscore

Dependent Variable: Absolute Value of Dynamic CFscore Panel Unit: Candidate		
Variables	Democrats	Republicans
Term		
First	-0.0384***	-0.0628***
	(0.00745)	(0.00619)
Second	-0.0609***	-0.0858***
	(0.00835)	(0.00711)
Third	-0.0633***	-0.107***
	(0.00899)	(0.00776)
Fourth	-0.0791***	-0.136***
	(0.00974)	(0.00850)
Fifth	-0.0573***	-0.163***
	(0.0105)	(0.00925)
Sixth	-0.0639***	-0.167***
	(0.0110)	(0.0106)
Seventh	-0.0707***	-0.173***
	(0.0125)	(0.0115)
Eighth	-0.0590***	-0.200***
	(0.0138)	(0.0131)
Ninth	-0.0423**	-0.192***
	(0.0160)	(0.0152)
Tenth	-0.0490**	-0.178***
	(0.0176)	(0.0171)
Eleventh	-0.0299	-0.282***
	(0.0224)	(0.0232)
Twelfth	0.00636	-0.246***
	(0.0287)	(0.0260)
Thirteenth	0.0252	-0.210***
	(0.0326)	(0.0310)
Fourteenth	-0.0432	-0.128**
	(0.0382)	(0.0391)
Fifteenth	-0.0244	-0.198***
	(0.0475)	(0.0369)
Sixteenth	0.137**	-0.228***
	(0.0507)	(0.0590)
Constant	0.646***	0.907***
	(0.00517)	(0.00431)
R^2	0.91	0.91
N	2,894	2,680

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

7 Conclusion

Cohen et al. (2008) and Lee, Moretti, and Butler (2004) investigate power and punishment within the American electoral arena. Their evidence illustrates how the Presidency differs from Congress. Cohen et al. (2008) finds that repeated losses for a party helps moderate the ideology of future presidential nominees, resulting in a more establishment candidate. Lee, Moretti, and Butler (2004) find general election voters largely do not affect the policy positions of party's elected legislators, and parties instead present them with two distinct choices.

This paper extends the view of the literature, finding that primary voters largely ignore whether they won or lost last cycle when nominating their candidates. Candidates from a party who won last cycle exhibit more moderate CFscores; yet, after controlling for incumbency these effects dissipate. That is, general election outcomes do not affect the actions of primary election voters. Instead, primary voters repeatedly nominate candidates with consistent ideologies, suggesting that: voters believe winning elections requires maintaining credibility and ideological consistency; voters believe winning elections requires taking positions sufficiently distinct from the opponent; and, voters value salient issue representation. In the trade-off between winning elections and sustaining policy goals, they do not sacrifice the latter to gain the former.

Given today's age of polarization, these answers pose real significance for modern policy and government. In an effort to win control of Congress in an increasingly competitive arena, parties nominating House candidates in moderate, swing districts are not yielding to loss or moving any closer to the center. The repeated game nature of American elections results in credibility issues between candidates and general election voters, particularly as to if campaign promises for moderation will manifest themselves given that parties exist for particular constituencies and policy priorities

(Alesina 1988; Besley and Case 2003; Grofman 2004; D. S. Lee, Moretti, and Butler 2004). The identity and brand of the national party and national legislative agenda further implicates candidates regardless of their voting records and to that end voters are largely unaware of their legislators' roll call votes to begin with. Voters instead rely on party identity when casting their votes (Dancey and Sheagley 2016; Krasa and Polborn 2015; Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2018). Parties and candidates, to that end, polarize to sustain the policies that benefit their core supporters.

8 Appendix

To examine the robustness of my results, first I inspect for evidence of sorting, followed by observing bandwidth, specification, and cutpoint effects, then investigate for time trends, illustrate additional incumbency advantages, and finally compare DW-NOMINATE and CFscore metrics.

8.1 Pre-Treatment Sorting, Density Tests, and Covariate Balancing

I employ a variety of placebo tests to detect any pre-treatment sorting around the running variable cut-point for time *t*, given it determines treatment in time *t+1*. First, I run the RD regression using both electoral margin and CFscore in time *t*, which if statistically insignificant illustrates there is no evidence of pre-treatment sorting and the continuity assumption holds. In other words, this confirms that candidates who narrowly lost in time *t* do not differ from candidates who narrowly won in time *t* vis-à-vis their CFscores. The results, shown in Table 6, are statistically insignificant, using both conventional and robust confidence intervals, thus showing no relationship between winning in time *t* and the party nominee's CFscore in time *t.*

Table 6: Representative CFscore, time t

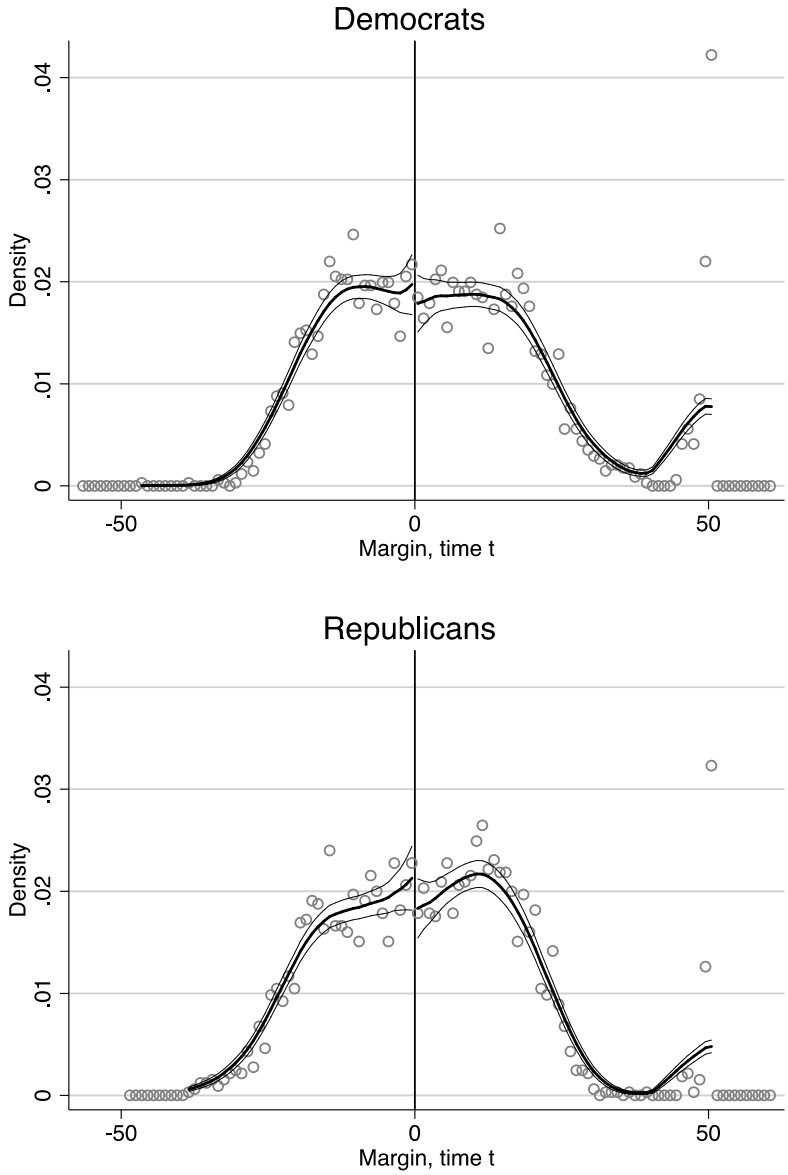
	Democrats	Republicans
Party Win, time t	0.0130 (0.0334)	0.0119 (0.0247)
Bandwidth	±9.452	±9.4
N	1,814	1,815

Parentheses denote standard error.
***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

Next, I employ a McCrary density to test for sorting in time *t.* That is to say, if observation densities differ at a statistically significant level around the threshold for winning, it would provide evidence of running variable manipulation and challenge the

as-if-random assumption of RDD (Imbens and Lemieux 2008; McCrary 2008). On the other hand, a continuous density function across the election win cut-point provides evidence that losing or winning at narrow thresholds is as-if-random. The results, shown below and separated by party, illustrate a continuous density function and an overlap of standard errors, thus providing evidence of exogenously random treatment.

Figure 7: McCrary density test.



Next, I test for imbalance among pre-treatment covariates with more placebo tests. The results largely support the continuity assumption. For both the percent of

contributions from PACs and the percent of contributions from out-of-district, there was no discontinuity in time *t* around the cutpoint threshold (i.e. candidates who narrowly won in time *t* did not exhibit PAC or out-of-district contribution advantages relative to candidates who narrowly lost in time *t*). There was however a subtle discontinuity for share of total race contributions, showing that candidates who barely won in time *t* had a 4-5% larger share of the race contributions, an advantage noted in Caughey and Sekhon (2011). This effect is minor and I do not believe it diminishes the internal validity of this design.

As a final test for sorting at the cut-point, I re-run the RDD model in post-treatment with additional, fixed effects controls for state and year, similar to Fouirnaies and Hall (2014). Inclusion of these covariates, shown in Table 7, does not drastically change the results. A Z-test confirms the RD parameters are statistically indistinguishable from the primary models, indicating my results are robust to controls across state and time.

Table 7: Representative Absolute Value CFscore with Fixed Effects, time t+1

	Democrats	Democrats	Republicans	Republicans
Party Win, time t	-0.189*** (0.0357	-0.184*** (0.0245)	-0.101*** (0.0306)	-0.13*** (0.0201)
Bandwidth	±10.66	±10.66	±9.13	±9.13
State/Year Fixed Effects	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	2,186	2,186	1,179	1,179

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

8.2 Bandwidth Selection, Model Specification, and Within-Group Placebo Tests

To verify that bandwidth selection methods or threshold choice are not affecting results, I re-run the model using a variety of specifications and bandwidths. Specifically, I compare the Rdrobust default bandwidth selector from Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (CCT, which I use in the primary model) to the Imbens and Kalyanaraman (IK) and Ludwig and Miller cross-validation (CV) methods described in Calonico, Cattaneo, and Titiunik (2014). I also manually change the bandwidth to electoral margins of 2 points, 5 points, and 10 points. I list the results in Tables 8 and 9 below. The primary RD model is shown in columns one and four of Table 8 for comparison. A Z-test between the RD coefficients and the incumbency panel values from Table 3 again finds the values are statistically indistinguishable. The results, that is, are robust to varying model specifications or bandwidth selections, and provide further confidence in my findings.

Furthermore, I use within-group placebo tests for treated (party won last cycle) and non-treated (party lost last cycle) Democrats and Republicans in time *t+1* using threshold values at the median of the running variable for the four groups, per Imbens and Lemieux (2008). These are thresholds in which there should be no discontinuity, therefore the results should be statistically insignificant. By separating observations between treated and non-treated groups, I avoid detecting a discontinuity where we would expect it (narrow winners versus narrow losers). I list those results in Table 10 below, with all results statistically insignificant using both conventional and robust confidence intervals, and the coefficients are in the direction I expect.

Table 8: Representative Absolute Value CFscore with Varying Bandwidth Specifications, time t+1

	Democrats	Democrats	Democrats	Republicans	Republicans	Republicans
Party Win, time t	-0.189***(***) (0.0357)	-0.19***(***) (0.0364)	-0.185***(***) (0.0341)	-0.101***(**) (0.0306)	-0.106***(*) (0.0242)	-0.113***(***) (0.0212)
Bandwidth Specification	±10.66 CCT	±10.01 IK	±12 CV	±9.13 CCT	±15.33 IK	±21.4 CV
N	1,404	1,297	1,545	1,179	1,984	2,651

Parentheses denote standard error and robust significance levels. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

Table 9: Representative Absolute Value CFscore with Varying Bandwidths, time t+1

	Democrats	Democrats	Democrats	Republicans	Republicans	Republicans
Party Win, time t	-0.229** (0.0747)	-0.193*** (0.0502)	-0.19*** (0.0365)	-0.045 (0.0616)	-0.083* (0.0395)	-0.104*** (0.0294)
Bandwidth	±2	±5	±10	±2	±5	±10
N	240	621	1,265	243	619	1,259

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

Table 10: Representative Absolute Value CFscore for Within-Group Placebo Tests, time t+1

	Democrats Treatment	Democrats Non-Treatment	Republicans Treatment	Republicans Non-Treatment
Party Win, time t	-0.117 (0.0664)	0.0384 (0.109)	-0.0451 (0.0606)	0.0322 (0.112)
Bandwidth	±7.05	±4.64	±6.7	±6.7
Cutpoint	15	-11.5	12.5	-12.5
N	836	954	1,000	798

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

8.3 Time Trends in the Regression Discontinuity and Incumbency Panel

The credibility of my results partially rests on the interplay between campaign finance and the CFscore metric over the time period covered, 1980-2012. For instance, if the effect of incumbency on the CFscore metric increased or decreased over the decades as campaign finance laws changed and it explained the CFscore discontinuity between winning or losing last cycle at increasing or decreasing rates, my analysis would be missing a clear trend and this would suggest parties have actually changed in the intervening decades in regards to how they nominate candidates in the wake of losses versus wins. To understand if there are any time trends in the data, I run a litany of models with varying time periods to compare the results. Interestingly, no time trends in the treatment effect are found between 1980 and 2012 using a battery of different time frames. For both the RD models and incumbency panel models, I use five-year overlapping windows (1980-1985, 1985-1990, etc.) and ten-year census periods (1982-1990, 1992-2000, etc.), and also run models with the parties separated or together. Z-tests between the two coefficients illustrate the two values are statistically indistinguishable throughout; hence, candidate behavior did not change across the thirty-two-year period I observe in the main model.

This result is unsurprising, but worth explaining. The qualitative paper outlines many of the trends in full, which began in the 1970s and 1980s and have caused an increase in parliamentary-style voting. The evolution resulted in congressional party caucuses that require team players to form a unified party message for governing or to provide an image of the government in exile. The lack of any cohesive time trend throughout the data thus argues that since at least 1980, candidates in the House of Representatives have been expected to be team players and to retain ideological consistency, despite the strength or weakness of their election margins.

8.4 Party Incumbency Financial Advantages

To justify that candidates whose party won last cycle do indeed hold advantages over candidates from the out-party, the RD regressions in Tables 11-13 illustrate how the incumbent candidates experiences an increase in out-of-district contributions, an increase in percent of contributions from PACs, and an increase in their share of total race contributions in time *t+1* after a narrow win in time *t*. These results are consistent with the literature on campaign donations and incumbency (Fouirnaies and Hall 2014).

PAC contributions go up by 13% for Democrats whose party won last cycle and by 15% for comparable Republicans, relative to their co-partisans that lost last cycle. Democratic candidates' proportion of contributions coming from within their district goes down by 4.5% for those whose party won last cycle and down by 5.4% for Republicans. Taken together, this implies these candidates gain more money from outside their district and that source is likely PACs. The share of total race contributions also increases by 24% for Democrats and 25% for Republicans.

Table 11: Representative Percent of Contributions from PACs, time t+1

	Democrats, All Races	Republicans, All Races
Party Win, time t	0.127***	0.150***
	(0.0215)	(0.0142)
Bandwidth	±8.063	±10.714
N	1,046	1,398

Parentheses denote standard error.
***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

Table 12: Representative Percent of Within-District Contributions, time t+1

	Democrats, All Races	Republicans, All Races
Party Win, time t	-0.0453*	-0.0536*
	(0.0205)	(0.0226)
Bandwidth	±10.048	±8.242
N	936	749

Parentheses denote standard error.
***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

Table 13: Representative Share of Total Race Contributions, time t+1

	Democrats, All Races	Republicans, All Races
Party Win, time t	0.239***	0.248***
	(0.0204)	(0.0191)
Bandwidth	±11.466	±10.984
N	1,448	1,402

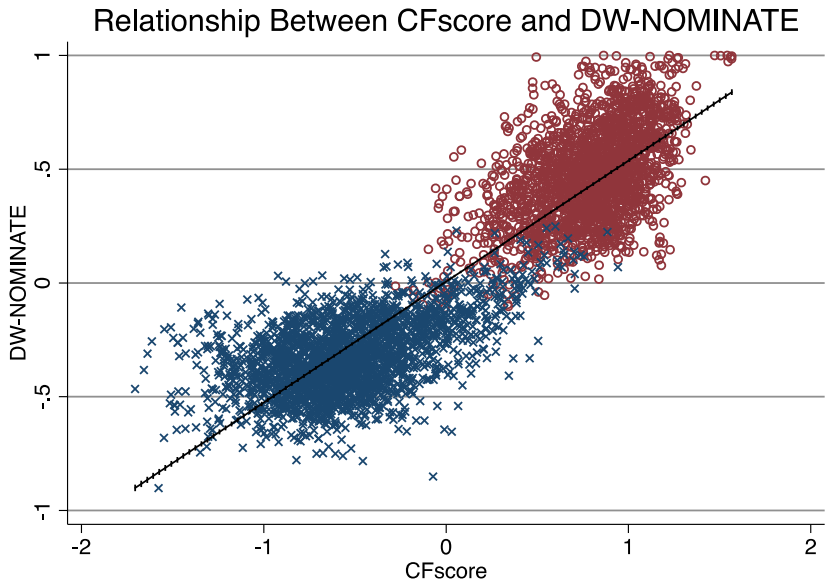
Parentheses denote standard error.
***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

8.5 Comparing the CFscore and DW-NOMINATE

As I note in Section 5, the CFscore is not infallible nor does a donor's contribution bind a candidate to a certain voting record. The CFscore approximates how a candidate campaigned, not necessarily how they voted. Thus, it is necessary to compare its relationship to DW-NOMINATE.

This is not to say DW-NOMINATE is inerrant. It too is an approximation of a legislator's preferred policies calculated through patterns in roll call voting. These voting patterns may be affected by leadership personality styles, by incumbency, by partisan or access-seeking PAC contributions to the legislator, or to the unique conditions of the district the Representative is representing. In the context of this paper, it is important that candidates with moderate CFscores also hold moderate DW-NOMINATE scores if elected. Figure 8 illustrates this relationship, showing a positive, diagonal trend between the two metrics.

Figure 8: Relationship between CFscores (x) and first dimension DW-NOMINATE scores (y), with a fitted line, 95% confidence intervals, and parties separated.

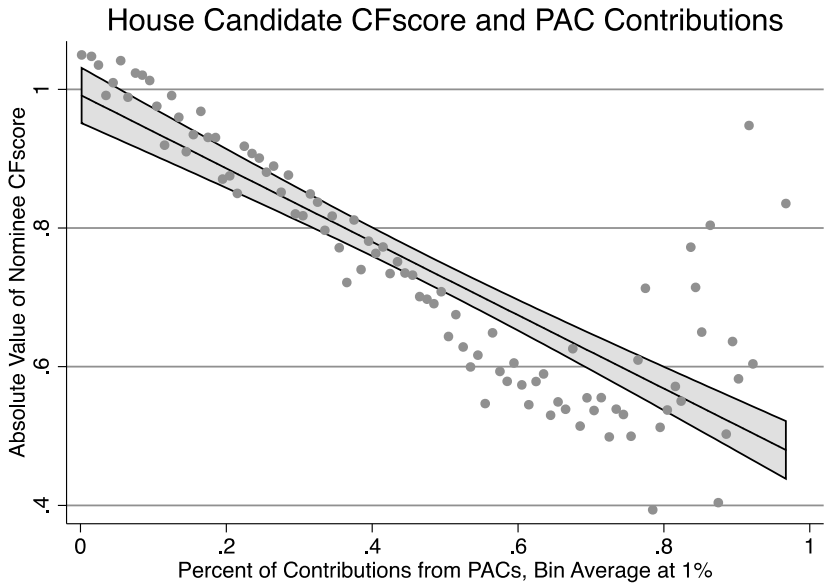


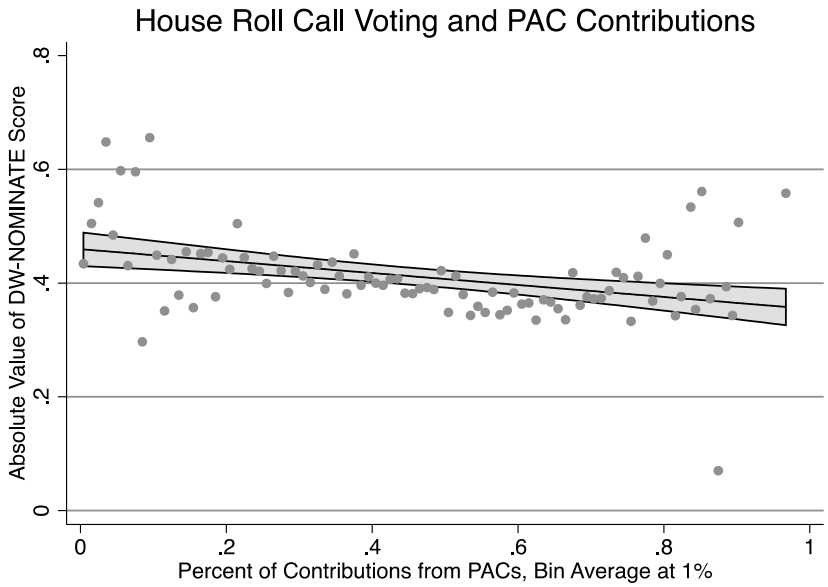
Additionally, I noted the issues from access-seeking PACs distorting the internal validity of the CFscore. That said, validity concerns are dampened if both DW-

NOMINATE and CFscores exhibit a similar relationship to the percent of contributions from PACs. The campaign finance plots follow in Figures 9 and 10.

CFscores show a clear negative relationship (downward slope) for both the CFscore and DW-NOMINATE in regards to percent of contributions from PACs, albeit a stronger relationship for the CFscore given it and PAC contributions are more intertwined. In other words, candidates with higher CFscores or DW-NOMINATE scores receive fewer contributions from PACs. Again, this is not surprising considering PACs are motivated by access and legislative goals, and by and large not ideology.

Figures 9 and 10: CFscores, DW-NOMINATE scores, and campaign contributions, with a fitted line and 95% confidence intervals.




House Roll Call Voting and PAC Contributions
Absolute Value of DW-NOMINATE Score
0
.2
.4
.6
.8
0
.2
.4
.6
.8
1
Percent of Contributions from PACs, Bin Average at 1%

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All Politics Is National: Downsian Convergence and Polarization from a Practitioner's Perspective

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Table of Contents

1 Interviews with the Elites on Polarization

In support of the previous Paper 3, I undertook interviews with twenty-three elites both in Washington, D.C. and by phone around the United States. I utilized snowball sampling to build out my interview base, but primarily targeted individuals based off specific conditions or experiences (Esterberg 2002). In particular, I reached out to former party leaders who were no longer in office and more likely to speak frankly and campaign managers in competitive districts who no longer held a role on the campaign or in the legislative office. These parameters created a finite number of potential interviewees, to whom I reached out via contacts or cold emails. Their campaigns fit the profile of races included in the regression discontinuity analysis, although I did not mention the data work or allude to the results. The format of the interviews typically began by asking about their previous experiences in Congress, their perspective on the party and its candidate recruitment tactics, and a closer look at the polarization of Congress and why legislators (and therefore the party) may not react to narrow wins or losses in forging a collective ideology. I recorded every interview and directly transcribed the contents myself. They were all on the record, except for two individuals still currently working in the campaign operative space. I allowed them to speak on background to provide more honest and forthright answers.

The individuals include three former chairs of the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), two former chairs of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), three other former Representatives, one former Senator, one chief of staff, four NRCC/DCCC staff serving a variety of roles, four former campaign managers, one former campaign finance director, and four think tank officials at American Enterprise Institute (AEI), the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), and FairVote. These individuals' employment histories span both campaign and governance,

serving roles on a members' campaign, on the parties' campaign committees, or as a candidate themselves followed by stints as chief of staff, district director, leadership staff, or a member of Congress. The members who served as DCCC or NRCC chairs nearly all went on to serve other positions in the House Democratic Caucus or Republican Conference, ranging from leader to chair of an influential committee. This analysis includes a large amount of quotes directly from the interviews. It is best to view them as illustrative in nature, supporting the quantitative data rather than standalone evidence. Some quotes remain the interviewees' opinions, yet that itself provides value. Although I find my analysis in between relevant and useful, it also important to hear how members and staff view the chamber they served in and their analysis of my question: Why is it that members in swing districts do not vote in centrist ways in accordance with Downs' median voter theorem and why does elite ideology not vary based on election margins?

From a broad point of view, the interviews re-affirm my theory. I found examples of members citing difficult votes and the credibility concerns over changing positions, or being a "flip-flopper" in the eyes of voters. Many of these positions were developed during the primary election, and the ever-present fear of being challenged in a primary election kept those positions constant. As one House member said, "You can't go from being pro-life to pro-choice, from being anti-gun to pro-gun. You have to hold your core base."

Furthermore, elites echoed the sentiments of the literature on voter inferences. The sheer number of votes, most procedural and some substantive, combined with the modern press and communications shop of congressional offices, poses challenges for voters to actually know the ideology of their elected representative. One former executive director of the NRCC said it this way, "I never bought any of the

quantification stuff. Having been up here, the only numbers that I think matter [for elections] are the party unity score on your voting and how often you vote with the President." Another former member argued that a lack of interest combined with misinformation resulted in a public without a "real grasp of reality." When specific votes do come into view, it was on highly contentious bills such as the assault weapons ban in the 1990s, immigration reform in the mid 2000s, and the Affordable Care Act in 2010.

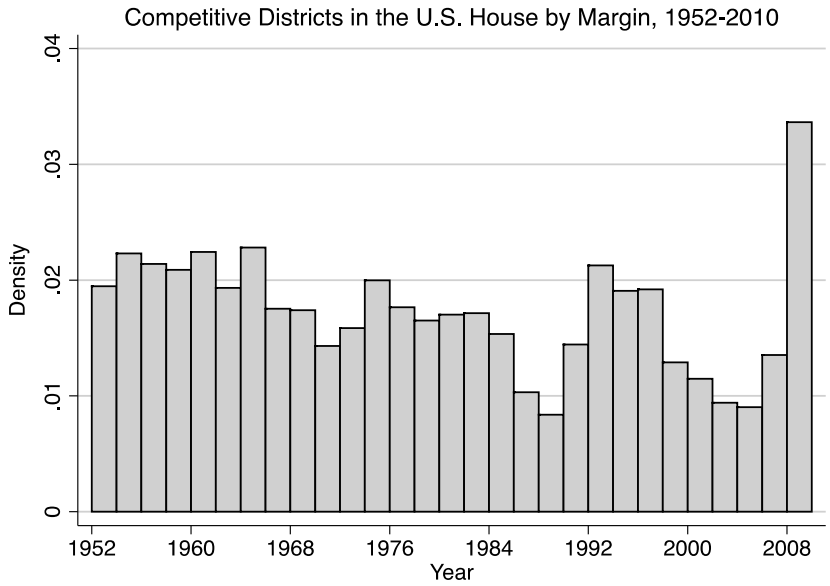
Even in instances when a member of the majority voted against a piece of legislation, the national scope of campaign committees and campaign finance makes distancing oneself nearly impossible. As another former campaign committee staffer said in regards to the Affordable Care Act, "If you were a Democrat, you basically were assumed to have voted for that or supported the people who did vote for that. It really didn't matter that you voted against it." Former NRCC Chair Rep. Tom Cole, who covered the party's operations for the 2008 election, said nearly the same verbatim: "Even if you didn't vote for Obamacare, it didn't matter. Because your party had done it, you got punished." That is to say, national identity and national policy goals do indeed contaminate all races. Congress is a team-based sport, and those who do not play with the team usually get cut. Thus, while moderation may improve one's re-election odds in a swing district, it is a *net negative* if the party does not see the member as ideologically committed enough to merit their involvement and if the member's votes are not salient to begin with.

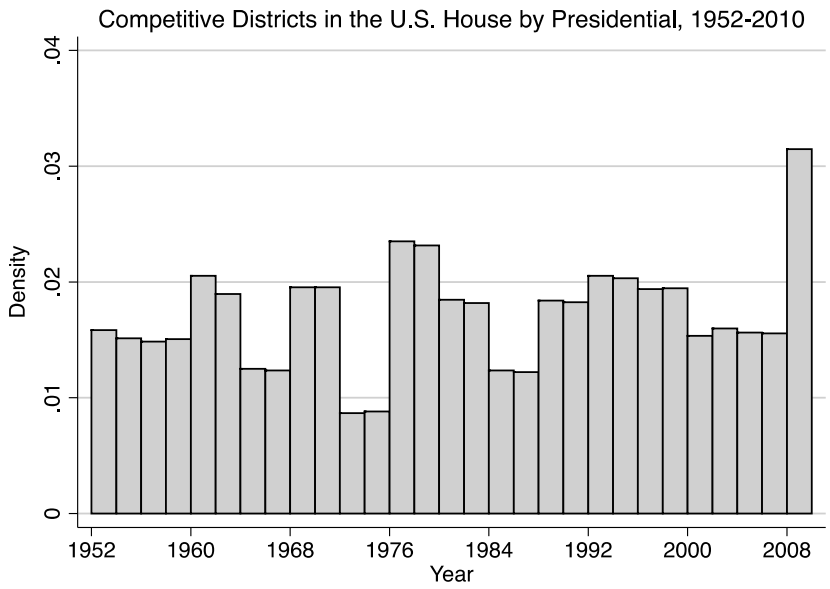
Finally, many chairs highlighted the shrinking field they are playing on when it comes to competitive districts they are able to flip for their party, blaming the larger sorting phenomenon introduced by Bishop (2009) and elaborated by Chen and Rodden (2013) and McCarty et al. (2018) in which Democrats are clustering in cities resulting in ideologically homogenous districts across the country. Rep. Martin Frost, who chaired

DCCC for the 1996 and 1998 cycles before chairing the House Democratic Caucus for the 106th and 107th Congresses (January 1999-January 2003), supports this view, telling me, "Eighty percent of districts are safe for one party or the other, and probably even more than that now. Very few districts are going back and forth between the parties." Former NRCC Chair Rep. Tom Reynolds, who handled the 2004 and 2006 elections, said similar, "When you look at the House, when it's all said and done—a full 435 seats—there's only about three dozen, 36 seats, that are going to be heavily in play."

This of course also has the effect of decreasing the views of swing district members within their own party conference. The median party position, elaborated by Krasa and Polborn (2015), shifts further to the extremes when more members in the caucus naturally come from relatively safer districts. This small share of swing districts can be observed visually in Figures 1 and 2 using either electoral margins (considered competitive if within the thresholds from the regression discontinuity design) or presidential vote share in the district (considered competitive if the presidential vote falls between 40-60%). Across the 1980-2012 period I analyze in my regression models, the number of competitive districts is around 1% of races, albeit increases in the mid-1990s around the era of Newt Gingrich's *Contract with America* and President Clinton's 1996 re-election as well as again in 2010 in the wake of the Affordable Care Act.

Figures 1 and 2: Competitive districts in the U.S. House, 1952-2010, compiled from Snyder (2010). Competitive districts in the top panel are categorized based on the margins of members in the districts, while those in the bottom panel are categorized from the previous presidential election.

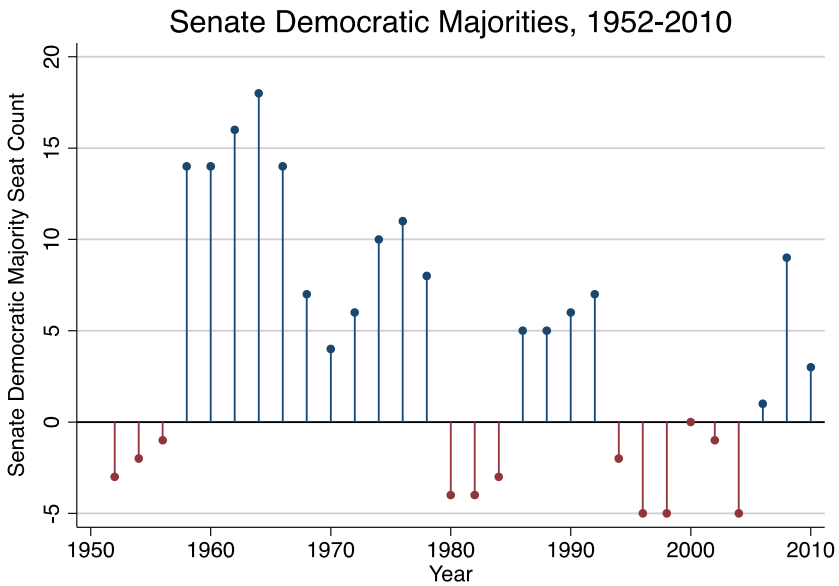


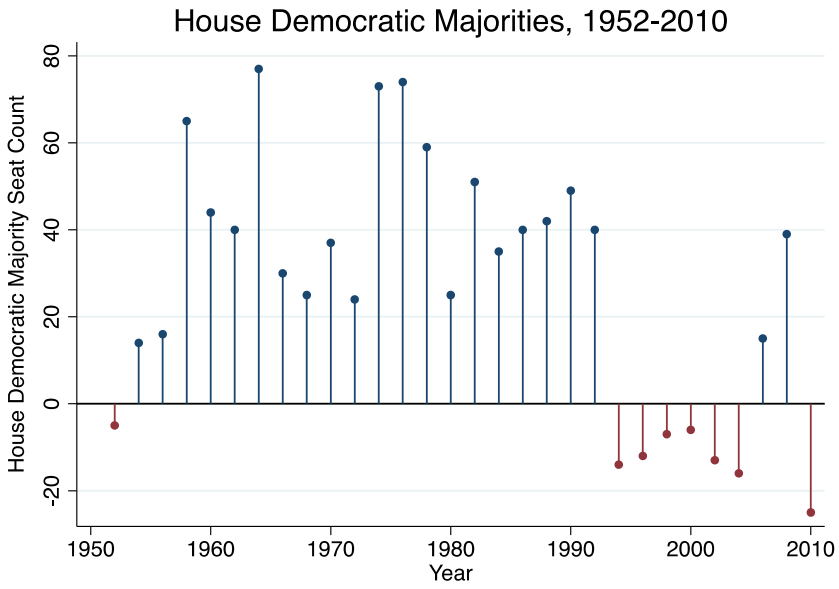


Yet, observing the proportion of competitive districts alone misses another trend, which is the increasing likelihood of both chambers to change hands between the parties every few years as well as tighter seat counts holding the majority. Increasing competition means neither party sees itself as a minority stakeholder and opposition party-style message voting is increasingly rewarded. Moreover, the Democrats' long reign in the House made it "their institution" with its own set of norms. When no party

retains that permanent presence, so with it goes regular order. In fact, from 1980 to 2016, each party held the Senate and House for nine separate congresses. The central thesis of Frances E. Lee's *Insecure Majorities*, she describes it as such: "Neither party perceives itself as a permanent majority or permanent minority. The argument is that this shift altered members' partisan incentives and strategic choices in ways that help drive the sharp and contentious partisanship that is characteristic of contemporary American politics" (F. E. Lee 2016, 5). The uncertainty of chamber control strengthens incentives to vote along partisan lines "with members' individual interests becoming increasingly linked to the fate of their parties" (Barber and McCarty 2015, 37). This uncertainty effect is further supported at the state legislature level, with slightly stronger partisan voting among majority party members versus minority (Carroll and Eichorst 2013). A simple plot for the House and Senate illustrates Lee's point.

Figures 3 and 4: The ever-changing hands on the wheel of Congress.





In essence, the decline of a true minority stakeholder in the House drives incentives and behaviors for all members, regardless of party or the competitiveness of their seat, to vote with their party more often than not. National party goals become a higher priority if the member's party controls both chambers of Congress and/or the Presidency, placing pressure on members in swing districts to not respond to the needs of their district. Furthermore, the lower number of members from truly competitive seats diminishes their weight within the caucus when it comes to deciding the party's policy priorities.

The remainder of this paper will be divided into several components discussing first the team player nature of the House caucuses, followed by majority overreach and national policy, then by rising trends in parliamentary voting, and finally the ramifications of campaign finance and earmark reforms that nationalized previously local affairs.

2 Team Mentality

Being a member in a swing district certainly is not an easy affair. As one member described it, "I had a district that whatever I did somebody was going to be pissed off." Yet, playing with your team is a way to extend one's life expectancy on Capitol Hill. When it comes to getting bills for your district, getting committee appointments that benefit your constituency or your re-election, climbing up in party leadership, or receiving the protection of the party campaign committee, it is integral that members support "their team." One former district director described her boss's constraints like this:

> I think if you want to be effective and get your bills even out of committee, those things can be stopped really easily. If you don't play nice, then people can say, "I'm not going to help you out with that bill. I'm not going to help you." Then, what do you have to show your constituency that you've done? You look like you haven't achieved anything…you can be asked to really represent your party before you represent your constituency, and I think that's on both sides. I don't think that's necessarily a Republican problem or a Democratic problem.

Norm Ornstein of AEI said just as much, finding that members from swing districts are "shunted aside" and "have moments of discomfort in [their] own conference" if they do not play with the team. The member knowing they have a target on their back from the other party only increases those pressures.

Moreover, having the blessing of leadership in all House activities is an absolute necessity for members. One House member disputed the nature that members are entirely constrained by party, but noted "it's a lot easier if you know your leadership supports you voting differently than the recommended vote." When it comes to ideology, a former chief of staff and campaign committee staffer said that frankly the campaign committees "don't give a shit." Yet, what does matter is yielding to House leadership. He elaborated that "the fastest way for you to get de-funded by the NRCC—aside from a

scandal where you essentially make yourself unelectable—isn't by being too conservative or by being too moderate, it's by threatening the Speaker."

It is worth noting that this mentality is not just confined to swing districts. Even in very partisan seats, like Kansas's 1st Congressional District, there is an expectation to be a team player. Former Rep. Tim Huelskamp (R-KS-01), who lost his Republican primary during the summer of 2016, was oft-cited in my interviews as the case in point of what happens when one is not a team player, is not working with leadership, and is not contributing to the party's campaign committee. As former Democratic leader Vic Fazio said, "They wanted to make an example of this guy, because he hadn't played with the team." In addition to not providing any party funds in his primary election, Speaker Boehner removed him from his House Agriculture Committee position, a fatal blow for a member representing much of western Kansas's farmland. They knew the seat was safe for Republicans, so given a choice between a team player and not, the choice for the party becomes easy. This is not to even say his primary challenger was drastically different. As another leader put it, "Only by comparison was the other guy moderate. But he wasn't Tea Party, and he wasn't a dumbass. It's a funny world sometimes." Former Republican Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R-GA-03), who held one of the most conservative records during his time in Congress, noted how the dynamics changed between 2010 and 2016, creating an environment where gridlock for gridlock's sake is no longer viable. "The Hell No's are not going to do well in primaries because people realize coming to Washington to represent a district is a lot more than just voting no on everything." If they do not play for the team, the expectation is sooner or later those rogue players get cut.

If a member is in a more marginal seat, that risk is even more pronounced than for a candidate like Huelskamp. Tom Davis (R-VA-11), who chaired the NRCC for the

2000 and 2002 cycles and went on to chair House Oversight and Government Reform Committee for the 108th and 109th Congresses (January 2003-January 2007), said "Our leadership would talk about what are we going to allow up. You talk in the conferences about how many kids you're going to feed today." When in the majority, leadership can be an undisputed champion for your bills. Former Nevada Republican Rep. Joe Heck's (R-NV-03) campaign manager highlighted in my interview how it helped their re-elect in his Democratic-leaning district. Rep. Heck had two bills pertaining to veterans' benefits and search and rescue operations in national parks. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor scheduled the bills for a vote under a suspension of the rules, with both bills passing and giving Rep. Heck a talking point in his district as he headed into his next election.

And when it comes to getting legislation like Heck's that benefits their district or their campaigns, committee placements are imperative. Particularly when it comes to padding out their re-election coffers, it was clear not every committee is equal. Tom Cole (R-OK-04), who before his election to Congress was chief of staff of the Republican National Committee and executive director of NRCC, knew it to be true for vulnerable members. "You can put them on an important committee that both enhances their status at home and puts them in the position to raise funds. Obviously, if you're on Ways and Means or back then on Appropriations or Energy and Commerce, your fundraising potential is just higher." The earmark ban in more recent congresses, he noted, led to a subtle decline in the prestige of Appropriations or Energy and Commerce. For that reason, Transportation and Infrastructure has grown in influence as being an avenue to bring dollars back to the district. Keith Davies, who managed former Democratic Rep. Tim Bishop's (D-NY-01) 2014 race in his Long Island swing district, believed it helped his candidate whose district relies heavily on road and train infrastructure to get into New York City as well as port infrastructure, given the area is almost completely

surrounded by water. In another instance, the committee helped pad out the portfolio of former Democratic Rep. Jim Oberstar of Minnesota (D-MN-08), who as then chairman of the committee expedited a bill providing $250 million to rebuild the collapsed Interstate-35 bridge in his state within days of the tragedy. Work began immediately and a new bridge was in place a year later.

In other instances, the opposite may happen, in which a member works with leadership to not be appointed to an influential committee because of the controversial issues it deals with. Former Senator Mark Pryor (D-AR), who before his time in the Senate served as a state Attorney General, recalled that after his election Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle wanted to place him on the Judiciary Committee. He understood Leader Daschle's motivation, but was cautious because contentious social issues like abortion, federal judgeship appointments, and gay marriage come through the committee, a particular danger for a member elected from a socially conservative state. As Senator Pryor describes their meeting, he told him, "Probably I would be better off and you'd be better off, if I got on a committee that didn't have those types of controversial issues coming through." Yet, still this required a direct conversation with leadership to highlight the potential risks and pitfalls of a certain committee placement, both for the member as well as the caucus.

In addition to committee placements, climbing the ranks of party leadership necessitates cohesive party loyalty and a consistent ideology. If a member from a competitive seat is eying leadership or within leadership themselves, their voting record creates inherent tension between their party and their constituents. On more than one occasion, this posed problems for party campaign committee chairs from competitive districts once they achieved leadership status. In one specific instance, a former House member recalled former Rep. Steve Israel's (D-NY-03) difficulties while chairing the

DCCC in the 2012 and 2014 cycles, whose Long Island district borders former Rep. Bishop's swing district and retains many of its characteristics. As the member said, "His numbers collapsed a little in these good years for Republicans so he has to vote more moderate than what his conference wants in seeing a liberal leader. What's that mean? Means he can stay here, but it'd be very difficult for him to be elected in leadership." Perhaps unsurprisingly, he opted not to run for re-election in 2016.

Finally, being with the party is vitally important if a candidate expects or needs contributions from the party's campaign committee. On the topic, former Rep. Tom Reynolds (R-NY-26), who chaired the NRCC during 2004 and 2006 cycles, said, "It always helps to have made your own investment in the NRCC as kind of the insurance that—everyone takes a bad race. It can be a primary. It can be a general election, all sorts of reasons. If you haven't helped the committee of which you are a part of, how do you turn around and say, 'I need help now.'" And insurance they can provide, in the form of a wide array of resources. "Obviously, you do everything you can to support your most vulnerable members, everything from helping them raise money to making sure they're taking advantage of the opportunities of incumbency—direct mail, the franking privilege—making sure they have proper staff and that they are doing all the things they need to do to be prepared," said former DCCC Chair Vic Fazio on the subject, who chaired for the 1992 and 1994 cycles. Shannon Fuller, who has held campaign finance roles on a variety of federal and state races in California, saw the importance firsthand in a 2014 House race, telling me, "The fact is that the party has money. The party has the bandwidth to manage these races. The party can provide help."

Support also comes in the form of technical and staffing capabilities. Both committees play an active role in guiding members towards consultants and pollsters that have gained respect within the party's sphere. Tom Reynolds noted:

> Most people that win a tough seat didn't do it just with luck. They did it with skillsets and an ability to relate to the voters, and have enough money to get their message out, likely along with help from the party and other sources…There are so many ways to be of assistance: 1) raising money, 2) getting volunteers to go into a campaign, 3) making sure that the best consultants are available to help the outside independent expenditure of both the NRCC and DCCC plus allies that are outside groups.

Mark Ciavola, the campaign manager for former Rep. Heck's races in 2012 and 2014 in his Las Vegas swing district, also found the NRCC as a valuable partner. They ran attack ads and targeted communications, excelling at "being the attack dog" so that the campaign did not need to "jump down into the mud," as Ciavola said. The NRCC's aggressiveness helped boost Heck's margins from 0.6 of a percentage point in 2010 to 7.5 points in 2012 (while President Obama won by one point in the district) and 25 points in 2014, all while allowing them to run a campaign focused on his strengths.

In another instance, former Democratic Rep. John Tierney (D-MA-06) won a competitive seat in Massachusetts with the direct help of Minority Leader Dick Gephardt. After narrowly losing the seat in 1994 to a Republican incumbent, Mr. Tierney returned to his law practice and wrote off his future in politics until he received a call from the Minority Leader himself. As he told me, "They figured [the Republican incumbent] was vulnerable if we didn't have a primary. One thing they thought they could do is put out the word that as a Democratic Party they didn't want a contested primary. They had decided they were going to support me and discourage anybody else from jumping in." This was specifically a response to the 1994 Democratic primary that resulted in a run-off and nearly month-long recount. Given there were only eight weeks in between the primary run-off and the general election, losing half to a recount period limited eventual nominee Tierney's fundraising and campaign potential. He ran again, this time without primary opponents and with the cover of Gephardt, and beat the Republican by 380 votes to serve in Congress eighteen years. By creating cover and

assisting members, party leaders develop loyalty and political capital that they can then employ for policy.

To that end, the support of the party does not come without strings attached. In one of the more stark examples, one Republican leader told me,

> In exchange, they make certain commitments about what they're going to do or their fundraising activity or what are the sorts of things they can do. You can try and use our ability to raise them $100,000 from leadership PACs and other members to encourage good behavior. This is the sort of carrot—you do these things, we'll do this. You'll show up, and leave the Capitol Hill Club [unofficial headquarters for Congressional Republicans] with $100,000.

With this in mind, I will now discuss the national policy goals that distort the incentives of swing district members.

3 Majority Overreach and National Policy Goals

In the modern Congress, where no party retains a permanent majority and the chambers change hands once or twice a decade, both parties develop a laundry list of policies waiting in the wings for when they can enact them unencumbered by the policy tendencies of the other party. In other words, when the party gets in the majority they want action now. Former Rep. Vic Fazio (D-CA-03), who served in the House from 1979 until 1999, chairing both DCCC and the House Democratic Caucus during his career, observed to me,

> The way that things have been going for Democrats recently is that you hope for a period of time where you've got a majority in both houses…and *make hay while the sun shines*. Get the Affordable Care Act through. Do the things that were extremely important for the party and its platform and its constituencies, and then realize that you'll pay a price for that, knowing that in an off-year election, particularly, there will be a backlash.

Michael Thorning at the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) equally argued that parties have a much longer time horizon for policies, and face the political costs early on while the benefits may not come initially. "The party would rather win the long-term game than keep their majority by letting a Rob Portman [Indiana Senator] vote how he wants on something or letting Kelly Ayotte [New Hampshire Senator, at the time of the interview] vote how she wants on something".[34] Michael Barone of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) sees backlashes as the political marketplace at work. When it comes to the Affordable Care Act, he argued they expended their political capital and majority and took a political risk to pass a contentious piece of legislation. Despite its problems, he argued, "They passed it anyways and paid a political price. I would say that's the political process working."

[34] See Krasa and Polborn (2015) for this contamination effect from the national party.

In this way, recruitment and campaigning strategies can sometimes be at odds with governance once the party takes power. Both former DCCC Chairs Martin Frost (D-TX-24) and Rahm Emanuel (R-IL-05) used a strategy of recruiting moderate, pro-life, pro-gun Democratic candidates who could win their seats. For Frost, he says, "The key was getting to 218. As long as you can elect a Democratic Speaker, the party can certainly tolerate having some conservatives in the party, because the Speaker sets the agenda." Keith Davies, Tim Bishop's 2014 campaign manager, put it within the context of campaign staff at DCCC and NRCC, arguing that employees are not working their entire careers at the campaign committee and single wins and losses can drastically affect their career trajectory. At best, they are working two or three cycles before moving on, and hence their entire record is judged on these races. "The type of people you get into Congress or how they're going to vote, that is an afterthought. From the top of the organization to the bottom, they are all judged on wins and losses."

Yet, policy positions and increasing competition for the control of the chamber can just as easily drive these members away in their re-elect. Robert Jones, who served in NRCC through the 2012 and 2014 cycles, saw this firsthand in wake of President Obama's first term in office. "By getting a lot of moderate members, you can create yourself some policy problems, which is what I think ultimately happened to Democrats," he told me during our interview.

> All the members they lost in 2010 probably should not have voted for the President's healthcare bill, the Affordable Care Act, but they all did because *that's why they got their majority*. Now, basically they will probably not have a majority for the foreseeable future because they passed that bill. They lost 60+ seats because a bunch of people were forced to vote for a healthcare bill that was unpopular.

To be fair, this change was happening even before the 2010 cycle, but prioritizing landmark legislation expedited the transition. Throughout the 1990s, the Democratic base was changing. Democrats, some Watergate Babies elected in and around 1974

through anti-Republican waves, were buoyed from long-term incumbency, earmarks, and holding influential committee chairs, and yet still feeling the pressure in their Republican-leaning districts. As former Democratic Caucus Chair Fazio told me, "They could see the change, and we had run out of room. We had been so used to giving people a pass, that when you really needed them, they still needed that pass." And when it came to newer legislators in the House with more moderate Democratic views, Fazio worried that party hubris sometimes gets in the way of preserving the majority and moderate legislators' careers. "There was a period where Democrats thought their majority was immutable and they didn't make a lot of room for people who might not be around too long." This was a sympathy I heard from the Republican side as well. Swing seat members may need to hold more moderate positions, but their share within the caucus and their time on Capitol Hill can both be seen as limited. Former Republican Rep. Tom Coleman, who represented Missouri's 6th Congressional District from 1976 to 1993, saw this tension throughout the 1990s. While agreeing with most of his party's policies, his critique of the 1994 GOP takeover was based on strategy. "When you have a big change like that, it doesn't go over well." Mr. Coleman's entire career was spent in the minority, yet this led him to empathize to a degree with the leaders after he left Congress. "Because the Republicans had been out of the office for forty years—when they took over, they thought, 'We don't know how long this is going to last? So we better move while we can.'" This narrative has been supported elsewhere, with Harbridge arguing the House Republicans' forty-year "institutional deficit" resulted in an aggressive agenda that overread their mandate (2015, 108). Compare this outlook to a now bygone era of the institution. Describing Congress in 1963, James Robinson writes, "The traditions of the House are hallowed with majority leaders' respect for minority leaders [or vice versa], and it is inconceivable that the majority party would discontinue the long-

standing practice of consulting with the opposition party in scheduling items for debate and vote" (Robinson 1963, 125). Arguably some may find umbrage with Robinson's description considering it predates the manifestation of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act, thus the respect or cordiality within the chamber may have existed via racial disenfranchisement and a racial order.

It also became apparent through my interviews that presidential-congressional relations has an effect on leadership pressure and members' voting, especially when a party regains both the presidency and both chambers of Congress, and every President is looking for a piece of legislation that can cement their legacy. In fact, presidential success, as measured by the passage percentage of roll call votes the President issues an opinion on, unsurprisingly rises when the President retains a majority in the House or Senate, relative to minority status. And, in the House where majority control reigns, the differences are even more pronounced as party polarization rises (Bond, Fleisher, and Cohen 2015, 145).

For President Obama, his legacy piece of legislation was the Affordable Care Act. For President Clinton heading into his first midterm with Democratic control of both chambers, it was his crime bill. Yet, there's danger in forcing your legacy through one piece of legislation. Rep. Vic Fazio believed he could protect vulnerable members in the lead up to the 1994 election if the White House separated the more contentious assault weapons ban from the larger crime bill.

> I begged Leon Panetta, who was Chief of Staff, and President Clinton not to force the assault weapon ban, which was the contentious issue for the NRA, into the crime bill. It had already passed the House separately. There was a different cultural mix of people who were going to support that versus the crime bill…and of course that was one of the major reasons we lost the majority.

He went on to say, "We forced people to walk the plank on the Second Amendment, when we could have avoided it…Everybody thinks they have a new coalition, a new

majority, and that suddenly hits the reality of having a major reduction in people going to the polls in off-year elections." Along with the crime bill, the gas tax increase for infrastructure projects and proposed changes to healthcare also played heavily in the cycle (Brady, Cogan, and Rivers 1995). And yet after the election, Fazio recalled a caucus meeting directly after the '94 election in which many members who would not be returning to the new Congress said, "I don't regret it. I took the hard votes. I lost. But, I think I did the right thing." And perhaps it is that members truly believe in what they are voting for. Primary elections have the weeding out effect of recruiting party believers who fully believe in their party's legislative agenda (Grofman 2004; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2001). But, with two-year cycles there is not enough time to illustrate the efficacy of policies and as Rep. Fazio stated so clearly, "at the time no deed goes unpunished." For a member to swallow that risk, they are likely true believers or at best true loyalists.

Democrats again found the same story for the Affordable Care Act in 2010. Senator Mark Pryor felt the strain directly. Attributing himself as proud Democrat, he realized there were times his party's policies did not line up with his home state of Arkansas, largely losing his 2014 re-election because of his support for the Affordable Care Act. And yet, he personally realized this was a narrow opening for action. During his twenty years in public life and even longer in private life, he had seen countless candidates for President, the Senate, and the House argue for healthcare reform. But nobody would actually push through the pain of accomplishing it. "They all said it, Democrats or Republicans, didn't matter who it was, how conservative or liberal they were. They all had different ideas on how to do it, but they all wanted to do it. We finally had a President who did it." Even though that national party position led to his loss, he said he did not regret the votes and he is proud several hundred thousand Arkansans have

insurance now. “There are times when things are so important that you don’t mind your own troops walking the plank. *That’s why they are there, to get things done.*”

This is not to say the opportunity was seamless during the Democrats’ time in power. Republicans, having had the privilege of the majority for twelve years, were unwilling to play the role of acquiescing minority party. As former Rep. Tom Davis said of Nancy Pelosi strong-arming Democratic members into supporting the national party policy agenda, “She did it because that’s the only way they could get Obama’s agenda through. Republicans—you try to be reasonable about it, and we just throw a wrench in it.” Republican Tom Cole understood where Republicans’ motivation was arising from, citing that under Speaker Pelosi his party had very little opportunity to affect policy. Yet, his long career in both the minority and majority has given him an adept understanding of how Congress operates. “To be fair, they didn’t need our votes, so why would you make concessions, just for the sake of bipartisanship?” Vic Fazio observed the same of a Pelosi-controlled House: “Nancy has been extremely impressive about her ability to rally the troops when needed. I don’t think the Affordable Care Act would have been enacted if she hadn’t kept the pressure on telling Rahm Emanuel and the White House that we’re going to pass this. Don’t stop. And making the votes happen.” Just to underscore this, former members of Congress, both Democrats and Republicans, all highlighted Speaker Pelosi’s ability to whip votes on contentious pieces of legislation. Whether that occurred through a carrot or a stick or both, I cannot know, but the votes happened. Former NRCC Chair Cole saw it similarly but noted the costs. “If you’re Nancy Pelosi and Barack Obama, and your three big items you’re pushing when you’ve got super majorities are: Obamacare, the stimulus, and Dodd-Frank. Believe me, you just killed off all the [moderate Democrats] who were the difference makers for you.” Reflecting on this period, he said, “[Rahm Emanuel, as chair of DCCC] did a great job, but then they put a

political strain on the moderate members that they won with. They were up here basically as cannon fodder for two to four years. Now, they're all gone again."

On this specific issue of taming an aggressive agenda, Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH-13), a Democrat from Ohio, has suggested increasing the number of seats on his party's steering committee for members from competitive seats in part to decrease this strain (Ryan 2016). Such a move from either side of the aisle would likely face intense pressure from the more ideological members, and may not have the effect of tampering passions or creating more stable coalitions. In the wake of Ryan's proposal, I followed up by email with several of my interviewees to see their thoughts. Martin Frost noted its intrigue, but said, "The elected leader ultimately calls the shots on something like this," suggesting it is unlikely to happen with Democrats unless Minority Leader Pelosi, Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, or other leadership came on board. Vic Fazio said similar, questioning the actual power of the steering committees. "The more important questions are who's chairing the various committees, who's chairing the subcommittees, who's on important committees," Fazio said. "The steering committee, unless it's changed dramatically since I was there—and maybe it has—hasn't really got a lot to say about the context and content of legislation." He noted that criticism of Pelosi's power structure is not necessarily ideological, but more a critique of the image she is projecting. "It was as much symbolism and stylistic. Nancy isn't listening to the younger members. She isn't listening to members who have a more diverse district and who are not coastal liberals. To that extent, [Tim] Ryan was accurate in being critical of that. What the legislative effect of that would be? I don't know."

Across the aisle, Tom Davis did not see its current viability in either party. For Democrats, he noted there are not enough vulnerable members like Ryan to force a center-left agenda next time Democrats take over both chambers and the presidency. As

for Republicans, he again wielded a point he had noted several times over in our D.C. interview:

> The Republicans have over-performed [in the 2016 elections], and they need to give those members protection instead of bowing to the Freedom Caucus [legislative caucus of the Tea Party movement], which are in safe general election seats. However, that would require the Freedom Caucus to cooperate. Those members *care more about their primaries than holding the majority*. They can stay principled, but majorities need coalitions and compromise to survive.

Tom Cole, currently in office, argued opposite terms, noting that while it often takes seniority gained through a safer seat to have steering committee membership, the committee is more protective of the establishment wing of the party over the rigidly conservative wing. On swing seat members, he said, "I just don't see our steering committee breaking down in ways that disadvantage moderate members or members from swing districts. Quite the opposite, often they are given extra consideration because they hold tough ground."

On the Senate side, Mark Pryor said Majority Leader Harry Reid was notably good at balancing views within the Democratic Party, specifically by including moderates like himself, fellow Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln, Alaska Senator Mark Begich, and others on Reid's informal leadership team "to build Democratic consensus before going public, as best he could." That said, Pryor noted that defining an ideology is not easy, given the layered nature of American governance. Technically speaking, it is the national convention the summer before a presidential election, but there are thousands of elected officials from the party with different views and ideas. While a House steering committee may build some semblance of a unified ideology and coalition, Senator Pryor stressed Tim Ryan's proposal is only one piece of a larger party structure. "It only speaks for House Democrats—not Democratic Senators, Governors, [state] legislators, county officials, et cetera—in fact, it doesn't do a great job of

reflecting the diversity of views in the House democratic Caucus." So while a President or leadership may be pushing a specific policy initiative, governance does not occur from a single office or single steering committee, so simple tweaks to membership can only go so far.

And this is not to say Presidents of the United States always get what they want. Tom Reynolds recalled the give and take for Republicans during the Bush Administration. "If you have a President who is trying to move his agenda, as we did with Bush in those days, sometimes I think members felt they had to take a vote for the aspect of moving the Bush and Republican agenda along." That said, there were times when they were able to push back. When President Bush wanted immigration reform, Reynolds and other leaders focused instead on protecting their majority. "I think there was a sense of reality sometimes…why put members through that if it's not going to pass? It wasn't supported inside the House Republican majority. Why take that vote?" Speaker Pelosi, in the wake of large gains in the 2008 election, exhibited the same caution as Republicans when it came to immigration reform. She was unwilling to bring the bill to the House floor until the Senate passed a bill. As Michael Barone of AEI described it, she did not want to "ask these people to walk out on a limb and have the Senate saw it off." Part of this was linked to previous bad blood in the Senate related to immigration reform. Barone argued the bill had previously failed in the Senate in the previous Congress when, under a Republican President, Democratic Majority Leader Harry Reid passed poison pill labor union amendments intentionally to deprive President Bush of a victory on immigration reform.

The final point I would like to make on national party policy is the susceptibility it creates for wave elections. National narratives and identity creates constraints that simply put candidates cannot overcome regardless of what they do, and the campaign

committee chairs often see the writing on the wall. The general guidelines they all followed and understood was that Democrats do better in presidential years, Republicans do better in off years, and midterm elections nearly always hurt the party of the President, particularly in their second midterm election. Republicans knew the 2006 election, after six years of President Bush and a Republican Congress, was going to be a tough year. “We used our money to save as many candidates as we could, most of them incumbents in 2006,” said Tom Reynolds, as part of my interviews, “[but] Independent voters wanted the change. You had the Bush fatigue, the Iraq War, and the problem of the recession—the whole doldrums of that.” Former NRCC Chair Tom Davis, then Chair of the House Oversight Committee, faced this problem personally in his 2006 re-elect in his district. “People were sick and tired of Bush. They were sick and tired of the war…I remember a guy telling me on Election Day, ‘Hey, I appreciate you appointing my kid to West Point. You’ve done a lot. I’m proud to call you my Congressman, but I can’t vote for you…I’ve got to send a message to Bush.’” From the Democratic side, former Rep. Fazio said, “It really comes down to turnout, and there’s only so much a congressional candidate can do.” In 2008, it was the same story for NRCC Chair Tom Cole who felt the winds turn against him. “What everybody forgets is in late September, before Lehman Brothers, McCain was ahead, and all those challengers who ended up losing were all ahead. We had a big list of challengers who had the issues, they had the ability, and they had the money. Then Lehman Brothers happened. The bottom dropped out.” When it came to Chris Van Hollen leading the DCCC in 2010, Cole noted just how nationalized these races have become: “There’s no way he’s even remotely responsible for losing 63 seats. You have to put that directly at the doorstep of the President and the Speaker.”

From the perspective of a member in a competitive district, perhaps they want a long, storied career as a legislator and remain a team player in hopes of attaining committee posts that benefit their district and improve their re-election odds. Alternatively, they may be true believers in their party's goals and priorities, well aware that their votes will put them at odds with their district and lead to their demise. Both scenarios nonetheless provide a narrative for why members vote with their party and succumb to majority overreach. The next section will discuss this rise of parliamentary voting and its sources.

4 The Rise of Parliamentary Voting

The question coming out of all these interviews was why is the attitude so explicitly to "make hay while the sun shines." I will argue that this attitude can be linked to Newt Gingrich and the advent of the opposition party as well as the consolidation of power from committee chairs to the Speaker beginning in the 1970s.

To understand parliamentary voting, it is worth noting that members despise their time in the minority, especially when the chambers change hands so frequently and the majority party is dead set on their agenda. In other words, when in the minority, your bills are not going anywhere. Rep. Vic Fazio, who chaired DCCC during the 1994 Republican upset and then went on to be Chair of the House Democratic Caucus during the early years of minority status, put it to me this way, "There's only so much you can do. The way the system works in the House, particularly, it's the majority's decision. The Rules Committee and leadership pretty much decide the process and who will get to go forward. They might give you a post office, but you're not going to get anything significant. It's just the way it works." This phenomenon is relatively new as well. For example, in 1974 more than 70 percent of roll call votes had bipartisanship sponsorship. By 1995, that number had fallen to 27 percent (Harbridge 2015, 62).

The challenges can be even steeper for members in competitive districts, with their seats being targets for the majority party. From the majority party's perspective, they essentially box out any vulnerable minority members by blocking all of their co-sponsored bills from reaching the floor and by coercing their members from co-sponsoring with the targeted member. As a former Republican member said, any bipartisanship co-sponsorship has

> given this target, so to speak, something that they can go home and campaign about that is bipartisan. In a swing district, they go back and say, "Hey look I co-sponsored this bill with this Democrat or this Republican, we got it passed, and these are the good things it does." You

> want to try to make sure that people understand that even something that small can make a big difference in a very close race.

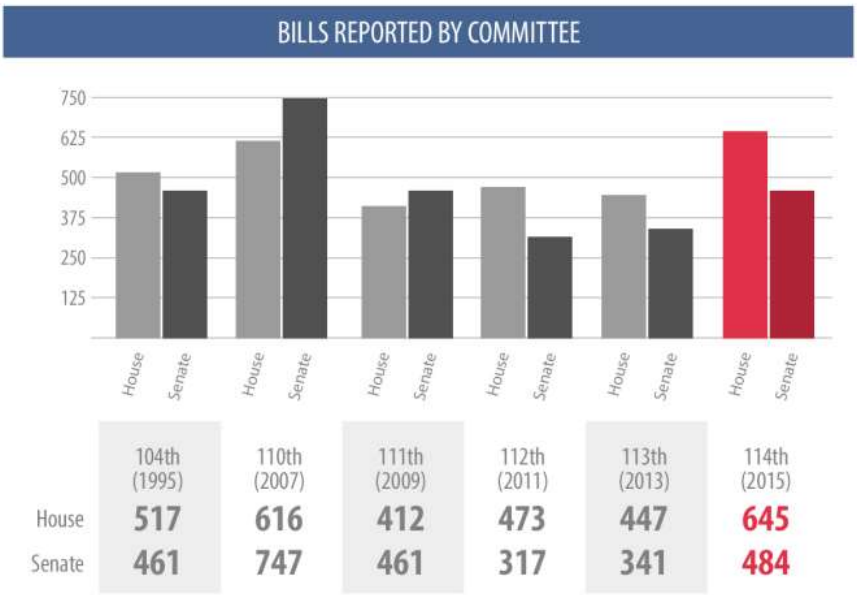
One former campaign staffer for a highly competitive California seat held by Democrats said the same of his former boss. "He's in the minority in one of the Republican's highest coveted seats. There's no way he's ever going to get anything out of committee. They wouldn't allow it. Leadership on the Republican side would never let any of his legislation see the light of day, purely for political purposes." With the majority party blocking them out, it is understandable that these members have very few opportunities or incentives to work with the other side. Nonetheless, this dynamic may be unique to the majoritarian, Speaker-led nature of the House, as evidence in the Senate shows vulnerable Senators, relative to their co-partisans in safer seats, actually garner more votes from members of the opposite party for their budget resolution amendments (Reynolds 2018). Arguably the Senate Majority Leader, per the special budget rules, cannot outright block amendments during the fifty-hour debate period for budget resolutions, unlike normal procedure, and the amendments occur symbolically by establishing unfunded "deficit neutral reserve funds" ideal for messaging.[35] Yet, vulnerable members gaining more messaging support from members of other parties suggests Senators may feel less threatened by leadership relative to the more majoritarian, hierarchical House.

The pressure builds up with every Congress the party exists in the minority. As Michael Thorning of BPC told me, "There's a frustration with being the minority party for an extended period of time. The most you can do is stymy the President and his party. If that's all you can do for six years—I think for most people that's not really what they

[35] Per Reynolds, "A reserve fund provides for flexibility in the budget process by allowing for future adjustments to the overall budgetary aggregates set forth by the budget resolution," signaling their support without acquiring funding (2018, 8).

came to D.C. to do." He noted the best way to see this is for bills reported out of committee, which has been observed as part of the center's *Healthy Congress Index* seen below. The minority party has in effect been writing legislation throughout their period in exile, with the bills sitting dormant in committee. Once they control both chambers, the uptick is pronounced. "There's a lot of pent-up momentum."

Figure 5: Bills reported out of committee from the Bipartisan Policy Center's *Healthy Congress Index* (Thorning 2016).



What Newt Gingrich understood was being in the minority offers very few advantages. Whether it is controlling the calendar and therefore message, dishing out earmarks, or providing sponsorship or amendments on bills for the benefit of their members, the majority is everything. "That's the way the game works. Being a majority and controlling the agenda gets you a lot more toots," said former Rep. Tom Davis. Controlling the majority means controlling the Rules Committee and therefore controlling the votes in such a way to make their members look in line with their district while vilifying vulnerable minority members in theirs. More specifically, that entails preventing votes that could potentially damage their members' re-election (and therefore

their majority) from making it to the floor, also known as negative agenda control.[36] Rep. Tom Cole defined it in very parliamentary terms, "It's the job of the majority to sustain the majority, for the government to maintain the majority. It's the job of the minority to try to become the majority."

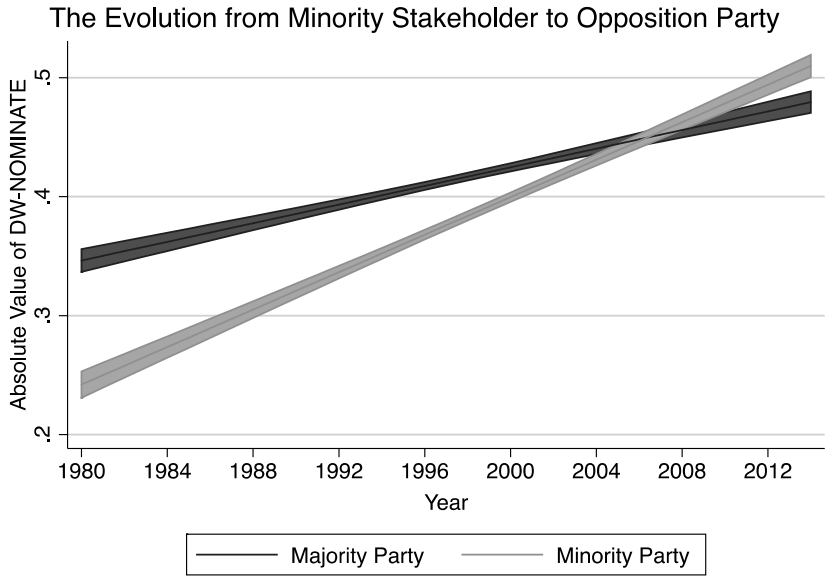
In building up to the 1994 House flip that gave Republicans power for the first time in decades, Gingrich, as House Minority Whip (second ranking in the Republican minority), employed tactics that forced procedural party votes or "message votes," specifically through roll call votes for Committee of the Whole amendments, special rules, previous motions, or motions to recommit organized around his Conservative Opportunity Society.[37] With little access to power after losing their brief control of the Senate in 1986, Republicans "became more willing to prioritize messaging over legislating" (F. E. Lee 2016, 106). Norm Ornstein of AEI sees this as a chief driver of congressional polarization, arguing that Gingrich "tried to leverage his power, by polarizing and tribalizing. The best way for him to do that and gain leverage was to use procedures to his advantage in a starker fashion than what you'd seen before." The incentives were there for him too. As Thorning at BPC pointed out, the majority party is the one that must govern and has everything to lose. From Gingrich's perspective in the 1980s and 1990s, Thorning said, "The minority party is always in this easier position of being on the attack. You're not trying to protect anything. You're trying to win at all costs."

As former Democratic Rep. John Tierney, who spent his first House term in the minority under Speaker Gingrich, said, "[He] didn't have any notion of compromising at all. He knows the House runs by majority, and he was going to get that majority and jam

[36] See Cox and McCubbins (2005) or Smith (2007) for agenda control.
[37] See Theriault (2008).

through whatever he wanted, 100%." His methods, Tierney recalled, had the effect not only driving out vulnerable Democrats, but also pushing many moderate Republicans to retire. Citing Republican House Minority Leader Bob Michel specifically, who held the post from the 1980 election until 1994, he recalled Michel telling him, "I didn't leave Congress. Newt Gingrich ran me out. He ran me out at the same time he was after you guys." Their stark differences came down to strategy. Michel was focused on the short-term and how to achieve agreements given his party's minority stakeholder status. Gingrich on the other hand believed in a long-term strategy of dismissing bipartisanship outright in hopes of better defining the parties' differences (F. E. Lee 2016, 94). Another former Republican member also blamed Gingrich, saying he was someone "who made the issue of political personal destruction a way of life, who ran against the institution and felt that he had to blow it up in order to restructure it. [He] became the first bomb-thrower of the Congress." We can see the evolution of "bomb-throwing" clearly in Figure 6 below, using Poole and Rosenthal's DW-NOMINATE as a measure of ideology. Interestingly, Gingrich's tactics continued once Democrats were in the minority from 1994-2006 and again with Republicans in the 2006-2010 period. "Action breeds counter-reaction," as Ornstein said.

Figure 6: Newt Gingrich and the government in exile.

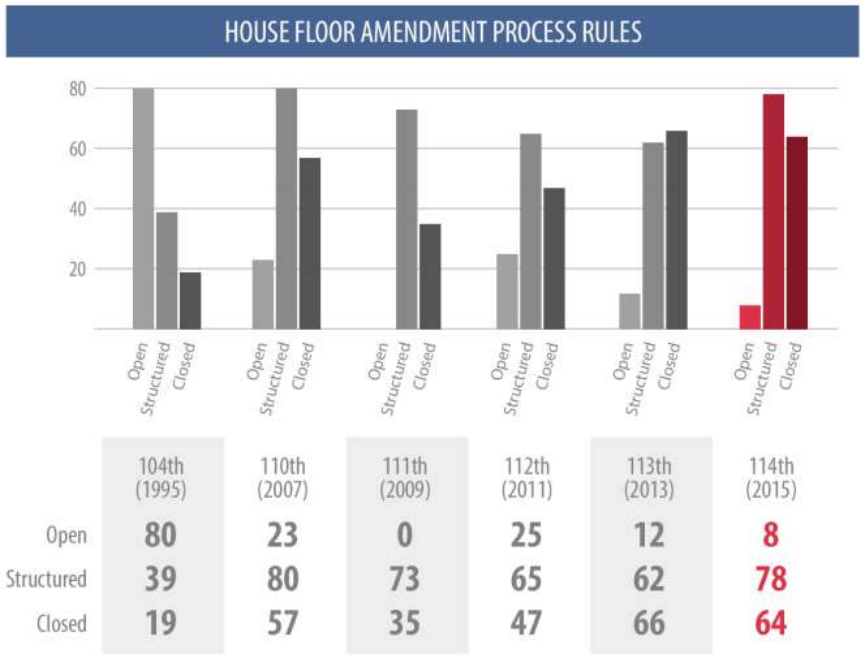


Forcing message votes has its advantages. Unified votes as a party "place the blame for outcomes solely on the shoulders of the majority, and can stand the minority in a credible position to criticize the majority in the future" (Egar 2016, 17). That is, they nationalize every issue and every election. To that end, I would argue this position also applies to a party who does not hold the presidency or Senate but holds the House. In other words, the Republican House in the 112th and 113th Congress (January 2011-January 2015) had an incentive to provide an alternative to the Democratic Presidency and Senate, and the strategy has yet to yield a cost (Grunwald 2016; Harbridge 2015, 175). Norm Ornstein at AEI agreed, noting Republicans had not taken up the bipartisan ideas developed at AEI because "with a President of the other party, they're looking to oppose and create their parliamentary minority." And with divided government, there exists a tendency to fan the fire when voters do not punish the obstructionists. As Tom Davis said leading up to the 2016 election, "Republicans control the Congress. They don't control the President, and their base is so upset they turn to Trump, because these

guys are doing nothing. You produce Ted Cruz and the Tea Party. All of a sudden, you cannot fit the rising expectations." The obstruction can prove cyclical, Davis was noting.

In more recent Congresses, the majority's response to minority intrusions has been to exercise their powers via the Rules Committee. They have employed closed rules (limiting or banning Committee of the Whole amendments when a bill makes it to the floor) to muzzle these more aggressive tactics, which can be observed in the figure below also from Bipartisan Policy Center's *Healthy Congress Index*.

Figure 7: Closed rules become the House norm (Thorning 2016).



Yet, motions to recommit still and will always remain, and continue to be used effectively.[38] Tom Davis noted their ability to divide the other party over a controversial issue, arguing, "That's the whole purpose of the motions to recommit. You always pick something that divides the other side, that's a good, tough vote." A former chief of staff underscored the power of specificity in a motion to recommit:

> If you have a vote on Obamacare and the motion to recommit is identical except it repeals the device tax, then you can focus on the device tax, and you can talk about that issue. That means so and so voted for it, and we

[38] See Egar (2016) for minority-employed amendments.

> voted against it. You can focus the campaign around that. Particularly when you have limited resources, you have to have that level of message discipline to punch that across.

From a majority party perspective, procedural votes are a distraction, yet powerful in that they force party votes that can be used in campaign attack ads. Former Senator Mark Pryor conceded that it is extremely difficult to explain the difference to voters. "People try to explain it otherwise, but in terms of public perception that's the story that gets told. Trying to make a distinction between a procedural vote and a substantive vote doesn't work with people very well. It's a wash." One current campaign committee staffer directly blamed operatives like themself for rising polarization by seizing on these votes, knowing that they were planted by one party for campaign rhetoric at the expense of the other party. "It's the easiest message to try to polarize people, to try to force them to make a choice, and to paint your opposition as terrible as possible. It raises money. It gets people fired up to go volunteer. It gets them to knock on doors. It's the single best motivator that you have."

In another final example of parties utilizing party votes to their advantage, one interviewee highlighted his party's work to squash the presidential hopes of Democratic Minority Leader Dick Gephardt. As Bob Holste, former NRCC staffer directing incumbent retention, told me, he learned during his work in Iowa that the state held the lowest Medicare reimbursement rate in the country, a rate based on cost of living. Knowing that Gephardt would begin his campaign for the presidency in Iowa like all other candidates, the party arranged for a Republican member from the state to introduce an amendment to the Medicare Part D bill (part of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003, which subsidized prescription drugs for users of Medicare) that raised Iowa's Medicare reimbursement by statute and sidestepped the normal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services rule-making process. Unsurprisingly, every member of the Iowa

delegation, Republican and Democrat, voted for the amendment, but the remainder of Democrats, including Minority Leader Gephardt voted no. This laid the foundation for the NRCC and the Iowa Republican Party to run ads against Gephardt throughout Iowa during his presidential exploratory committee period. Holste admitted, "I don't think it's particularly clever. I think it's basic legislative politics 101. There was a problem out there. People were upset about it, and we offered to fix it."

Part of this evolution in parliamentary party voting is driven from both Democratic and Republican reforms that shifted power to the ideological core of their party once they gained their majorities, in effect strengthening the parties and consolidating control to the party leader. Although Newt Gingrich exploited it in the 1990s, it began earlier with young Democrats in the House and Senate in the early 1970s. The group included notable names like Joe Biden (D-DE), Tom Foley (D-WA), Gary Hart (D-CO), Ted Kennedy (D-MA), and Henry Waxman (D-CA), all coming of age politically in the wake of Watergate and concerned about the corroding influence of consolidated power to committee chairs.[39] Under the leadership of California Representative Phil Burton (D-CA-05) and Missouri Representative Richard Bolling (D-MO-05), the movement found an opening with the sexual scandal of powerful House Ways and Means Committee Chair Wilbur Mills (D-AR-02) to pull power from senior conservative Democratic committee chairs and build on the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970. Prior to then, Mills and the House Ways and Means Committee had held the unusual position of being the Democrats' Committee on Committees (the modern steering committee), meaning they selected members for committee positions (Davis, Frost, and Cohen 2014; Barbara Sinclair 1983; Zelizer 1998). Moreover, Mills held a close relationship with Republican Ranking Member John Byrnes of Wisconsin (R-WI-

[39] See Rohde (1991) for changes in leadership structure.

08) that enabled the duo to block the more liberal elements of the Democratic agenda. Interestingly, the move to strip committee chairs of their power was in fact a reversion to earlier Congresses, prior to Progressive Era reforms that removed power from the economically conservative Speaker Joseph Cannon in 1910 and Democratic Caucus changes in 1915 that decentralized power to committee chairs (Davis, Frost, and Cohen 2014; Zelizer 1998).

During this same period, Burton also ushered in changes to committee chair selection that moved the caucus away from seniority and to elections. The resulting effect was a pronounced increase in liberal voting records among members on track to take chair positions by seniority alone, most notably Mississippi Democratic Rep. Jamie Whitten (D-MS-01) whose ADA score increased 30 points nearly overnight to cement his place as the next chair of the House Appropriations Committee. AEI's Michael Barone also noted in my interview that an earlier 1961 reform to the Rules Committee helped break down a power pact between senior conservative Democrats and Republicans that prevented liberal bills from making it to the House floor. Specifically, the Kennedy Administration and liberal lawmakers passed a resolution 217 to 212 that expanded the Rules Committee to fifteen members and enabled them to pack the committee with liberal Democrats.

Altogether, these reforms shifted the axis of power away from the moderate wings of the Democratic Party, and gave "access to a larger number of policy activists, interest groups, and congressional representatives," and produced "a more porous political environment that invited an increased number of participants" (Zelizer 1998, 356). Moreover, the 1970s reforms made roll call amendments much easier (which as mentioned Gingrich exploited), resulting in "majority-party members' greater need for the sort of assistance that only the party leadership can provide" (Barbara Sinclair 1995,

49). The days of Ways and Means, Appropriations, and Rules Committees and their chairs acting as "control committees" grinded to a halt, and laid the groundwork for Gingrich's changes in the 1990s.

Upon flipping the House in 1994 with his *Contract with America*, Speaker Gingrich maximized his political capital by gaining the power to appoint committee chairs and doing away with seniority-based selections used for Ranking Members during their minority years. Specifically, the party leader held five votes on the House Republican Steering Committee to other members' single vote, appointed at-large seats, and directly named committee chairs that would uphold his agenda (Davis, Frost, and Cohen 2014). Moreover, Republicans instituted six-year term limits for committee chairs, all but ensuring senior members could not overpower the Speaker with long tenures as the chair of an influential committee. Already controlling the agenda, he could now squash dissidents within his ranks and further his initiatives through committee work. As Rep. Fazio said,

> Newt was the guy who took no prisoners, who made left-right, who tried to use the power of incumbency to benefit his people. For example, in 1995 when all his people came to Congress, he would put people on Appropriations Committee because the [Democrat] they replaced, either through retirement or defeat, was on the committee. It was blatant.

This power dynamic continued once the Democrats took back over the House after the 2006 elections, further consolidating the power to the Speaker. Rep. Martin Frost, who controlled DCCC under Rep. Dick Gephardt, said his arrangement with the Minority Leader enabled him to "call the shots" when it came to targeting seats. "That's not been the case for all DCCC chairs, particularly with Pelosi as Speaker. She's played a very activist role in trying to decide which districts are targeted." When it came to committee chairs, elections all but ensured the median caucus view was represented and Speaker Pelosi's effectively 18 votes on the Steering and Policy Committee gave her

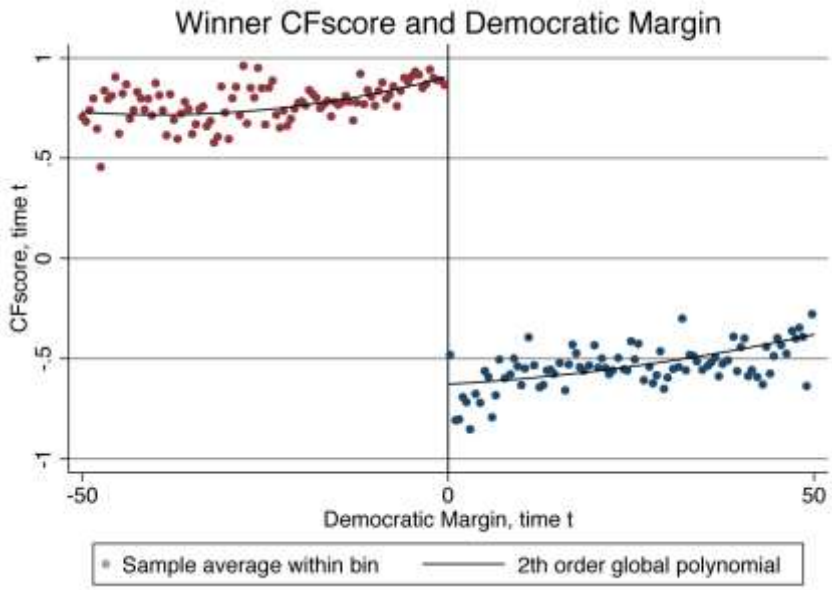
views significant weight. “Nancy Pelosi, all her committee chairs were pretty liberal lawmakers. They had seniority, but they had a common bond of viewpoints on how to run the government,” said Republican Tom Reynolds. In other instances, Speakers were directly involved in chair elections. One member recalled Speaker Boehner openly supported Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX-32) for the 2010 cycle NRCC Chair position, actively working against incumbent Chair Tom Cole. “The next time, Sessions made have had an opponent, but Sessions, who stayed involved and had the blessing of leadership, moved forward to chair two cycles.”

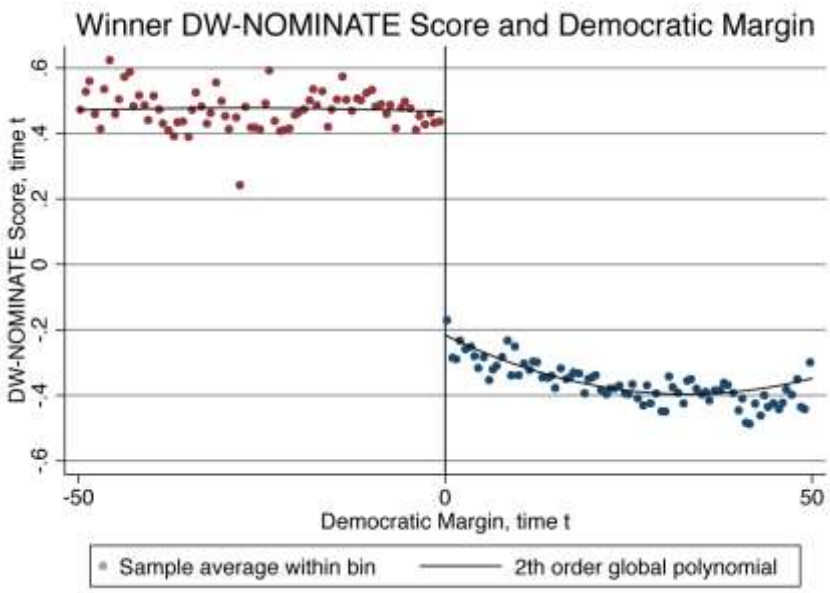
From a legislative perspective, running everything through the Speaker’s office and centralizing power makes it easier to pass legislation no doubt (Barber and McCarty 2015; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Rohde and Aldrich 2010). Yet, inherently this control results in bills that are more national in scope and more partisan in effect than if committee chairs retained the power they once did (Binder and Lee 2015). The think tank community is largely supportive of this return, with both Norm Ornstein at AEI and Michael Thorning at BPC suggesting national policy might be different if bills went through the normal process of hammering out details in a committee with diverse views from the members’ local experiences.

In closing, this consolidation of power to party leaders has been a driving factor in parliamentary voting. Again and again I was told members “vote their district” yet heard story after story of other members bucking their district for their party. Maybe they voted with the other party on ten final passage votes but for all the procedural votes, they are expected to be with the party. This can be understood by most measures of ideology, shown in these plots for both CFscore and DW-NOMINATE in time *t* around the narrow threshold Democratic margin of victory in time *t* (right side meaning a Democrat won, left side meaning a Republican won). Members winning near the threshold (i.e. members

in competitive, swing districts) are just as partisan as everyone else. Recent literature affirms this perspective as well. Hassell argues that party ideology is propagated by the preferences of leadership when recruiting candidates "within the network of party elites who [hold] similar ideological views," rather than strategic decisions to win via moderation (2016, 2017, 7). Thomsen writes that "it is likely that party recruitment also shapes perceptions of party fit," in turn reinforcing and self-selecting who decides to run (2014, 788). In other words, we may expect moderation in swing districts only when moderate legislators hold leadership positions and forge a symbol of the party that is amicable to moderates.

Figures 8 and 9: The election margin and legislator ideology, 1980-2012.





Examples of Representatives voting against their district are rampant. In one instance, former Rep. Davis cited the repeal of the assault weapons ban. Representing an urban district, he voted against the repeal. Walking around the House floor, he suggested the same to two Republican colleagues representing parts of Philadelphia and Long Island, telling them "Look, we don't need you on this one. I'd go the other way on this one." He recalled their responses varied between "I feel comfortable" and "Well, probably not, but these people [the NRA] helped me in the primary, and I really owe them. I think I can get away with it." They both lost in their re-election efforts.

Norm Ornstein of AEI highlighted another example in the form of Republican Rep. Joseph Cao (R-LA-02). Cao was elected in 2008 in a predominantly Democratic district in New Orleans, largely because the Democratic incumbent was embroiled in a corruption and bribery scandal at the time and the Louisiana primary election timeline hindered the Democratic Party's ability to nominate another candidate. The district was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina and still recovering when Rep. Cao took office. Yet, when the 2009 stimulus bill came to the floor, which provided funds directly to his district as

part of that recovery, the newly minted Republican congressman voted no. Ornstein describes the vote as such:

> [Cao] goes on the floor and Eric Cantor and Kevin McCarthy basically go on either side of him and put him in a vice because the symbol for them—of everyone Republican voting in unison against—overwhelmed his own self-interest, and they forced him fundamentally to vote against the stimulus. That was the death blow for him, but you get this party pressure because the whole larger electoral strategy in the permanent campaign is to behave like a parliamentary minority.

He lost by 31 points in 2010, a year Republicans gained 63 seats nationally.

From the other side of the aisle, Democrats in 2009, fresh off gaining a majority in the House and Senate as well as the Presidency, were supporting cap-and-trade, carbon emission regulation with the Waxman-Markey bill (formally the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009). Speaker Nancy Pelosi made it a priority in the House without knowing if it would pass in the Senate. Applying pressure to Energy and Commerce Subcommittee Chair on Energy and Air Quality Rick Boucher (D-VA-09), a Democrat who represented southwest Virginia's coal country, Boucher and his committee passed the bill, despite the interests of his district. Ultimately, the bill never came up for a vote in the Senate and Rep. Boucher was unseated in 2010 with cap-and-trade playing a dominant role in the race.

In the end, pressure from party leaders and a consolidation of power to the ideological core is driving members' voting, regardless of the safety of their seat. One former House Democratic leader summed up parliamentary voting in my mind with: "It's not going to matter. How many votes of principle can you cast in a given cycle?"

5 Super PACs, McCain-Feingold, and the Earmark Ban

This final section explores a common critique I heard from party leaders. While the 1990s consolidated power to the party, campaign finance reforms of the 2000s combined with changes in the procedural budgeting process has had the effect of further nationalizing once local races and transferring power to unelected, puritanical interest groups. Strictly from the Republican perspective in recent years, I will argue they in particular have lost control of the message, and the unwinding started in 2002 with the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA).

The members I spoke with were all highly critical of McCain-Feingold, as BCRA is more commonly known for its sponsors Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Russ Feingold (D-WI). Martin Frost said to me as part of my interviews,

> McCain-Feingold's worthless. [Tom] Davis and I were opposed to it because it took money away from political parties and forced it to the fringes. I talked to campaign finance advocates at the time. I said, "Don't you understand you're going to be harming political parties." And some of them said, "Well, we don't like political parties anyways." And then I said, "Well, don't you understand if you take the soft money away from political parties, where it has to be disclosed—we had to disclose every single dollar that I raised to the DCCC from corporations and unions and large contributors—you're going to force it out to the wings, out to the extremes, some of whom don't have to report."

Bob Holste echoed Frost's points, noting that the "parties' historic role in assembling the majority in the United States…was driving people toward the big center because the parties had to assemble 51% majorities nationally in a continental-size country with seven or eight time zones." Removing control over their funding vastly weakened the parties. Tom Reynolds said similar,

> *Citizens United* and other changes—McCain-Feingold—those guys that campaigned and wanted very badly to create McCain-Feingold have actually created a party that has less money, less resources, and have enabled outside groups to have enormous presence in campaigns. Sometime that works good if they're working with you, and sometimes it's like having Niagara Falls come down on you if that money is coming from the other side at you.

Another former NRCC staffer said that the dominance of independent expenditures means that "candidates are spectators in their own campaigns." The resulting effect has been not only a consolidation of power to party leaders but a power that binds them to special interests, many of which who have no interest in compromise and governance and very little accountability or reporting requirements. That is to say, while party organization may be strong, there exists a "relative weakness of party organizations and leaders vis-à-vis outside groups" (Persily 2015, 123). On that now distant pre-McCain-Feingold and pre-*Citizens United* past, Reynolds recalled, "It used to be parties set the ground rules on how campaigns were conducted." The aforementioned NRCC staffer described the situation in more colorful terms: "If you're a pissed off whatever—you know, a hedge fund guy and a member of Congress pisses you off, you can now shove a million dollars up their ass and never have it show up in a report anywhere, but people know exactly who pissed you off."

Former members from both sides conceded that the post-*Citizens United* Washington, D.C. has empowered the PAC world. Former Senator Mark Pryor observed of his former Republican Senate colleagues, "If you step out of line, the Koch brothers and others, they'll actually not just find a primary opponent but that primary opponent will be better funded than you are." Former Rep. Vic Fazio said similar. "Jim DeMint has got more power at Heritage Action than he did as a second-line Senator from South Carolina…Members run in fear of not having any ability to control the environment in which they are running." Martin Frost sees the same trends, saying, "Members live in fear of a well-financed, well-organized minority in their own party taking them out. The way you avoid that is not to work with the other side." Alfonso Sanchez, former campaign manager and later chief of staff for former Rep. Gloria Negrete McLeod (D-CA-35), saw that fear first-hand. "They're always so afraid of their own shadow cause

they don't know who and what issue is going to be toxic for them." In simple terms, the electoral costs of obstruction—or choosing their most preferred policy as Alesina (1988) says—are less than the costs of a primary challenge, which may also prove to be greater than the benefits of office for some House members and result in retirement. Add in the instability of a swing seat, and perhaps it is less surprising the members bind to their party.

The resulting effect of limiting the party and empowering political action committees means the parties have lost control of their own message, and due to the demographics of donors this has posed particularly damaging to Republican legislators. As former Republican Rep. Lynn Westmoreland, who consistently was the most or second-most conservative legislator among his party during his time in Congress, said,

> McCain-Feingold was a complete disaster. It should be totally killed because that's what created these Super PACs and 527s [referring to tax-exempt political advocacy groups]. The party and the member or the candidate lost control of the message that they're trying to put out. If you're a candidate and you have a group that is supporting your candidacy, whether they're supporting you or opposing your opponent, they can come out with any message they want to and you don't have anything to say about it. You can deny. You can say you don't agree with it, but after seeing it on TV for seven weeks—typically people don't listen to a policy and so it makes it extremely hard.

A former NRCC staffer lamented that is was exceptionally frustrating when conservative PACs challenged their sitting members, noting Rep. Mike Simpson (R-ID-02) of Idaho who was primaried in 2014 by a candidate with $500,000 in support from the Club for Growth. As the staffer said, "That's annoying to us because Mike's a good member of the conference, he raises money for the NRCC, and we like having him around." When it comes to money, their independent expenditure accounts face an uphill battle, even more pronounced when PACs need only target a few races around the country to achieve sufficient member fear while party committees must assemble a governing majority nationwide (McCarty 2015).

The story does not always have to be strictly campaign finance either. Civic groups can equally place pressure on members. As one member told me, the flag burning constitutional amendment of the early 2000s placed him in a precarious position.

> I talked to my staff. I'm a good law school graduate, graduated in the top part of my class. You know, this just doesn't make any sense. The flag's a great symbol but if people want to burn it—it's free speech. I remember my chief [of staff] said, "That's fine if that's how you feel, that's how you vote. But just remember this, you're the keynote at the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] next week, and think about what you're going to tell them." I said, "I got it." I voted no. I couldn't explain it.

Put another way, one former chief of staff said, "Members know acutely who sent them."

Others have argued that the right wing think tank development of the 1990s provided a conduit by which conservative ideas could flow to the public, especially with groups like the Cato Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and to some extent the American Enterprise Institute.[40] Without a left alternative (Center for American Progress was not founded until 2003), the right built an infrastructure that could fully take advantage of *Citizens United* with groups like Americans for Prosperity, Club for Growth, and Americans for Tax Reform. One former Republican campaign committee staffer now lobbying for a large non-profit noted that Center for American Progress was a response to influence of conservative think tanks. "There were a constellation of these groups on the right that were doing some pretty impactful work, and there really wasn't something similar on the left."

This has become the modern story of the GOP. During the interviews, there was a stream of frustration from more moderate members who noted it had become harder to govern when the more ideological in the party refuse to cooperate with leadership because they are bolstered by outside influences. In a body that necessitates getting 218 votes to govern, this has forced members in competitive districts, who need the support

[40] See Rich (2004).

of the party's campaign committee, to vote with leadership on everything. Once upon a time it was the more ideological members who carried the party to 218, with the more vulnerable members needing to be coerced into joining the party's position. The dynamic has now flipped. As a former Democratic Party campaign committee staffer described Speaker Paul Ryan's relationship with the Freedom Caucus in the 114th Congress (January 2015-January 2017), "He's essentially held hostage by 40 members. They didn't see that coming." Interestingly, a Republican counterpart described it in parliamentary terms. "He's got, in the parliamentary sense, a junior partner who's cranky. They frequently won't put up a vote. He's not assembling 218 out of 240 or whatever. He may be assembling 218 votes out of 210. He's got to go scramble to get the other eight." Speaker Ryan agrees, saying in one recent interview, "We basically run a coalition government without the efficiency of a parliamentary system" (Alberta 2017). Former Speaker John Boehner put it in more blunt terms, referring to the first chair of the Freedom Caucus, fellow Ohioan Representative and Republican Jim Jordan (R-OH-04), as a "legislative terrorist" (Alberta 2017). The feud between Boehner and the Freedom Caucus famously reached a fever pitch in July 2011 when Jordan and Senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina, with the help of outside conservative groups, helped scuttle a debt ceiling agreement between President Obama and Speaker Boehner that would have approved entitlement reforms to Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, $1.2 trillion in spending cuts, and $800 billion in tax increases. Previously agreed to by both sides, the uprising created concerns for the White House, with Vice President Biden saying they did not know if "what was being sold by John in the House was going to be able to be delivered" (Alberta 2017). Boehner recalled the deal as his "biggest disappointment" and said, "If I could have pulled this deal off, they could have thrown me out the next day" (Alberta 2017). Instead, the U.S. nearly approached the brink of

default and Congress created stark, future budget sequestration that along with the expiration of the Bush tax cuts precipitated the fiscal cliff of 2013. In short, the implicit threat from external groups has vastly limited the party's ability to form a cohesive governing majority.

Likewise, the dual effect *Citizens United* in 2010 and banning earmarks in 2011[41] was like flipping two levers, driving down any potential for localization while empowering nationalizing themes. That is to say, members can no longer highlight the work they are doing in Washington, D.C. for the benefit of their local district, and are increasingly controlled by national political action committees. From a mere governance perspective, the majority party has no ability to entice minority party members into supporting their bills anymore or fighting back their instinct to be the opposition party, forcing the Speaker to "lead with all sticks and few carrots" (Alberta 2017). As Smith (2007) describes, leaders have four modes of influence on their members: indirect positive influence (including their bills in larger bills), indirect negative influence (preventing votes that may damage some of the party's members' re-election from reaching the House floor), direct positive influence (earmarks), or direct negative influence (personally pressuring members against discharge petitions). Removing earmarks effectively limits a quarter of their influence and hinders their ability to form a governing majority. Former Senator Mark Pryor, who served on the Senate Appropriations Committee, believed they were integral to getting everyone on board for large budget packages. "As the earmarking was going down, the appropriations and budget productivity was going down. It's really hard to pass these big, massive

[41] The first true ban was technically in 2006, but brief. Upon being elected Republican Majority Leader, John Boehner instituted the ban via the then Republican-controlled House Appropriations Committee. Later that year, the House Majority flipped to the Democratic Party and earmarks returned (Alberta 2017).

appropriations bills if nobody has any skin in the game." Former Rep. John Tierney agreed, arguing that bills a member may not fully support become more compelling when they include funding for projects in their district, providing some leverage for leadership. On bringing earmarks back, former Rep. Vic Fazio said, "They'll become something that, frankly, will aid the majority in getting its bills through." Rep. Martin Frost, another former House leader, agreed. "It gives the leadership, first of all, more control over the process, to get people to vote for appropriation bills. You take care of people."

The fact is pre- and post-McCain-Feingold and pre- and post-*Citizens United*, members from swing districts had and have to be team players. But, flipping these two levers of localization and nationalization has made it ever more difficult to run or vote as a moderate anymore, while making it harder for leadership to govern from the center-right or center-left. Modern campaign finance simply makes it nearly impossible to distance one's self from these extreme national party positions. As Drew Spencer Penrose, Legal Director of FairVote, told me, "Campaign finance allows polarization to be a little bit more ossified." For a moderate Democrat running in a swing or mildly Republican district, Super PACs simply need to run a torrent of ads equating that Democrat with other Democrats in Congress. "Probably the most clear example of this was Elizabeth Colbert Busch running against a very unpopular Republican incumbent [in South Carolina]," Penrose said, "but she still lost because the campaign ads did a great job of tying her to the Democratic Caucus." In another example, Rep. Vic Fazio, who then chaired the House Democratic Caucus, found himself on the wrong side of the Chamber of Commerce, another substantive player in the modern campaign finance arena. As he tells it, he had a history of speaking at Chamber events in D.C. about issues important to the business community. One day, he was slated to speak on a panel, but

received a call that the panel had started early and they no longer needed him. He soon understood why: The national Chamber of Commerce had organized the Chambers of Commerce in his district to oppose his re-election. Despite his moderate, pro-business stances, they realized his last electoral win of only 3.7 points and his being in the minority party made him a target. As he says, “I was vulnerable. I had done a lot of good business votes, but that wasn’t good enough. You could have a Republican, and that would be even better.” In that regard, vulnerable, minority members in swing districts often have very little incentive to work with the other side, and even less so when their affiliated outside groups are actively working against them despite their record.

6 Conclusion

While the quantitative data suggests parties do not feel pressure to nominate a moderate following a loss or nominate an ideologue following a win, these qualitative interviews give us some expectation of how behavior changed over the last fifty years and further unpacks members' interactions with their parties' legislative caucuses, campaign committees, and affiliated campaign finance allies that sustain polarizing inertia. As discussed in this article, we have observed the House and Senate changing hands between the parties more frequently and at more narrow thresholds, both of which demand a cohesive brand and swift lockstep action once in the majority (F. E. Lee 2016). Sorting has also resulted in more ideologically cohesive parties with members representing more homogenous congressional districts than previous eras (Bishop 2009; Chen and Rodden 2013; McCarty et al. 2018). In an effort to present itself as the government in exile, the minority party in the House, starting with Newt Gingrich and Republicans in the late 1980s, has employed procedural tactics to force party-based, message votes to differentiate the policy proposals of the two parties (Egar 2016). Moreover, a consolidation of power to party leaders since the 1970s has increased the demand for party loyalty from members regardless of the safety of their seat, particularly if they have any reasonable expectation of getting their legislation passed, receiving committee positions that can benefit their district or fundraising portfolio, or moving up in party leadership themselves (Davis, Frost, and Cohen 2014; Rohde and Aldrich 2010; Barbara Sinclair 1995; Zelizer 1998). Finally, the rise of Super PACs and demise of earmarks has nationalized races, weakened the parties, and removed the localizing effects that a highway or infrastructure project previously provided House members. The dual effect has stripped the majority party of their ability to entice minority members, while empowering the more ideological wings of both parties.

The largest takeaway I gleaned from these interviews is that there is no silver bullet, but a few reforms might enable members from swing districts to be more responsive to their constituents and their district. That solution should entail a return of earmarks. Former House members were clear that it would make a difference, based on their experiences before the 2011 earmark ban. Additionally, I do not necessarily find the consolidation of power to party leaders as a completely corrosive phenomenon, but it becomes toxic when they are bound by outside interests that influence their internal decisions. Requiring disclosure of outside PAC spending and/or removing all limitations for donations to the political parties would provide them a defense to independent expenditures and make their job of governance easier (McCarty 2015; Persily 2015; Pildes 2015). Money in politics is not going away, but if reforms can strengthen parties from the deluge of cash it will make government more effective, enabling the governing party to better protect vulnerable members and force those from more partisan districts to yield to party leadership. Moreover, providing more steering committee seats for members from competitive districts, as proposed by Rep. Tim Ryan, could tamper ideological passions, improve optics, and lead to more stable majorities over the long run. Finally, a decentralization of power to committee chairs would buffer the increased tendency of parliamentary voting and usher in a return to a more traditional norm of processes that existed in the House before Newt Gingrich.

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Too Many Cooks: Outside Influence and Caucus Cohesiveness in U.S. State Legislatures

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1 Introduction

"The question is not where are the Lyndon Johnsons of today, but could Lyndon Johnson exist today." –Richard Pildes[42]

"We basically run a coalition government without the efficiency of a parliamentary system." –Speaker Paul Ryan[43]

In 2014, a mid-term election free from the influence and financial weight of the presidential campaigns, Democratic and Republican party campaign committee independent expenditure (IE) accounts[44] respectively spent $123 million and $105 million, or $228 million total (Kim 2016). Within the official, coordinated accounts, Democratic and Republican committees spent $7.7 million and $11.5 million, for a total of slightly over $19 million (Federal Election Commission 2018). Altogether, the parties spent $247 million through coordinated and independent programs. That same cycle, political action committees (PACs), separate from any official party, totaled nearly $550 million (OpenSecrets 2018). The official parties were outspent over twofold. From a legislature management perspective, party elites have suggested to me that this may pose a hindrance for coalition building. When outside PACs carry more force than party leadership or party organizations, exactly how is leadership able to countervail these forces to organize a stable and healthy caucus capable of creating, deliberating, and passing legislation? What happens to party caucuses when outside organizations

[42] From Pildes (2015, 154).
[43] From Alberta (2017).
[44] Party IE accounts face no spending limits, but like PACs they must remain independent of a candidate's campaign and cannot directly coordinate. The IE programs are within yet distinct from the national parties, which still face spending limits. Per Federal Election Commission (FEC) contribution limits, in 2014 the national parties could contribute up to $5,000 in total to House candidates from the Republican National Committee (RNC), National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC), Democratic National Committee (DNC), or Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) and up to $45,400 in total to Senate candidates from the RNC, DNC, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), or National Republican Senate Committee (NRSC).

interfere? Separately but equally important, do caucuses go awry when party members are not the only voters in a primary election? Are all these outside influences a hindrance to coalition building?

In this paper, I take that question to the state legislatures by combining several new sources of data. Using Barber (2016) for PAC contribution limits, campaign finance sources from Bonica (2016), primary format data from McGhee et al. (2014), professionalism metrics from Squire (2007), and leadership agenda setting powers from Anzia and Jackman (2013), I exploit variation in PAC contribution limits and party primary election formats to examine how those components affect caucus heterogeneity as measured via the standard deviation of roll call voting within Republican and Democratic state legislature caucuses from Shor and McCarty (2011). I predict that as PAC contribution limits increase—or become unlimited—and as primary formats become more inclusive the caucus will increase its ideological spread as leadership loses ground to outside interests. As the parties cede power to PACs, the latter will further cajole members into sharing their narrow interests or ushering candidates into office who share their unique vision. Moreover, while more inclusive primaries increase the number of participants in the democratic process, they have the potential to dilute party ideology and hence affect voting cohesion once candidates take their seats in the legislature. This is not a story about polarization per se, but coalition management and leadership leverage.

The results largely affirm my predictions. I find that allowing unlimited PAC contributions increases caucus heterogeneity by three and a half to four standard deviations for both parties, and doubling a PAC limit increases heterogeneity by nearly a third of the standard deviation. More inclusive primaries equally increase the ideological spread by about half of the standard deviation for Democrats; yet, they have no effect on

Republicans. Elaborated in full in the discussion subsection, I propose this divergent effect stems from how the parties respond to inclusivity in primaries. Democrats experience a sharper increase in PAC spending from closed to open primaries relative to Republicans, whereas Republicans shore up their candidates with a slightly higher percentage of campaign funds from the party campaign committee. For PAC spending models, I separate the legislatures into high- and low-limit states per Barber (2016) and again find different patterns between the parties. For both parties in high-limit states, higher spending limits for PACs lead to a greater ideological spread in the legislature. The effect is slightly stronger, however, for Democrats. This may be because higher spending limits have a larger effect on where Democrats get their contributions: While the average Republican share of contributions from PACs is 10 percentage points higher in high-limit states than in low-limit states, the corresponding difference is 20 percentage points for Democrats. Likewise, fixed effects regressions controlling for state and time show Democrats in high-limit states receive 8% more of their contributions from PACs than those in low-limit states, and yet there is no discernible effect for Republicans. This is consistent with my hypothesis that more outside money leaves party leaders with less control over their caucuses.

Overall, these results suggest "anti-party" reforms wishing to weaken partisanship in U.S. legislatures, such as increasing PAC spending limits or an opening up of primary elections, do in fact increase outside influence and have an effect on caucus cohesion in legislatures. If we wish to strengthen official institutions within legislatures, we must empower leadership vis-à-vis third party, outside organizations. Such "pro-party" reforms may entail uncapping official, coordinated party contributions to strengthen the parties' hands or—if the Supreme Court, House, and Senate memberships change considerably—a re-thinking of the role of money in politics and

what constitutes the First Amendment. For the time being, state legislatures and Congress will continue to experience fragmentation, polarization, and weak leadership.

2 Literature Review

This literature review begins first by discussing agenda setting in the traditional sense from an era of political science predating *Citizens United*, followed by more recent literature that addresses the impact of outside interest groups on coalition building and caucus cohesiveness.

Party cartel theory, as described by Cox and McCubbins (2005), reflects the baseline understanding of agenda setting in legislatures. Under this view, majority party leadership use their calendaring powers to prevent legislation that divides their party from reaching the floor for a vote (negative power) and advocate for bills that carry wide support within their party (positive power). Similarly, conditional party government theory describes the conditions necessary to empower leadership. Specifically, it contends that, historically, high intraparty homogeneity and interparty divisions resulted in members yielding to party leadership to reflect the views of the caucus as a whole (Rohde and Aldrich 2010, 249). The reverse evolution exists as well of course: "When parties are heterogeneous and many members face cross-pressures from their constituents and their party, the risks of giving party leaders power increases" (Harbridge 2015, 48–49). Other authors argue delegation is linked more closely to how frequently the chamber changes power, with increased competition begetting stronger branding operations to forge a cohesive bloc in spite of intraparty conflicts (Koger and Lebo 2017; F. E. Lee 2016). Taken together, a leader can only exert calendar pressure when a homogenous caucus ideology exists or interparty competition is sufficiently high; without those conditions members are less likely to extend power to party leadership.

One apt metaphor Cox and McCubbins (2005) employ involves driving a car. Traditional party theories assume the majority party sits in the driver's seat with full access to the steering wheel, accelerator, and brake. Cox and McCubbins amend this

view, arguing the majority party in fact only has access to the steering wheel and brake, via agenda setting and negative agenda control. Because of internal division, acceleration is not always possible. I expand this view to include outside interests and political action committees. While they may not directly control the steering wheel, their influence over members' campaign war chests provides ample ability to sow division within the caucuses and affect choices regarding the accelerator and brake. Harbridge (2015) cites electoral pressures as well, noting that party members' agenda support is contingent on reelection, itself highly contingent on PACs. Other factors affecting agenda support may include policy influence within the caucus and majority party status, but not necessarily the policy preferences of their constituents (2015, 48). Indeed, interest groups play an integral fundraising role for elections, constituting about a third of total contributions on average for state lower house campaigns and a quarter on average for U.S. House campaigns (Bonica 2016). Equally important, they push issues to the forefront in such a way to create "institutionalized conflict" in which every elected official must take a side (Harbridge 2015, 56). Paul Weyrich, co-founder of the Heritage Foundation and American Legislative Exchange Council (commonly known as ALEC), described their intentions to not just advocate for aligned agendas of elected officials, but to "change the agenda" (Brownstein 2007, 117). Former Heritage Vice President for Research Burton Yale Pines described the tactics more specifically in Sidney Blumenthal's *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment* in which they synthesized their studies into op-eds that were then disseminated to newspapers and congressional staffers: "Our targets are the policy-makers and the opinion-making elite. Not the public. The public gets it from them" (Blumenthal 2008, 43–44).

Reviewing the procedural-based literature of the U.S. House, one can detect the slow evolution on the role of interest groups within agenda setting, but it is notably

minor in pre-*Citizens United* articles or books. Barbara Sinclair's extensive, thirty-year qualitative work on Congress and procedural machinations largely represents the era when leadership more often cajoled aligned interest groups than was cajoled by them. Yet, we can slowly see her work evolve as it highlights the increasing role of outside groups. In 1983, she seldom mentions them, instead focusing on leadership's function in building coalitions and limiting division within the party. Leadership resources are "not negligible," yet deployed with constraints so as to construct durable coalitions that minimize caucus conflict in the long run through many policy debates (Barbara Sinclair 1983, 174). By 1995, her work began to include interest groups, particularly their role in lobbying members and the subsequent complications. In one interview, a Majority Whip staff member admitted difficulties that outside groups posed for vote messaging: "It's hard to explain to someone that you want them to go talk to the member about supporting the rule. If it's a new group, they may not understand what a rule is, they may not understand what the procedural process is, and even under the best intentions, the message can get bogged down and get diluted and you can have some problems" (Barbara Sinclair 1995, 238). Nonetheless, their stature in coalition building was improving as that interview was being conducted. Directly after the 1994 Republican takeover of Congress, House leadership created the Thursday Group to cement interest groups' role in the process and create a foundation for what was to come. Membership consisted of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Americans for Tax Reform, Citizens for a Sound Economy [now separately FreedomWorks and Americans for Prosperity], the National Federation of Independent Business, the Christian Coalition, the National Association of Wholesaler Distributors, the National Restaurant Association, and the National Association of Home Builders. Republican Conference Chair John Boehner met weekly with the Thursday Group and coordinated their member lobbying with Majority

Whip Tom Delay (Barbara Sinclair 2006, 314). Ironically, many of the interest groups within this network would lead the revolt against Boehner as Speaker twenty years later, ultimately resulting in his resignation (Alberta 2017).

With the ascent of Speaker Gingrich, the fluid PAC coalitions of prior years that operated within the permanent Democratic majority were fading away to "two armed and hostile camps" with interest groups "firmly aligned with one or the other of the major parties, and in many cases, [were] functioning as full-fledged members of one of the two party 'teams'" (Barbara Sinclair 2006, 308). By the new millennium and in the run up to the 2002 election and eventually the 2003 Medicare Part D bill, Sinclair notes drug industry PACs contributed $26 million, mostly to Republican candidates, and millions more on TV ad buys in swing districts around the country with language befitting "independent" partisan organizations running issue advertisements: "Thank Congressman X for coming up with a prescription drug program for seniors." Sen. John McCain, who voted against Medicare Part D, argued it favored drug manufacturers and did little for seniors, "helping these guys get re-elected who had done nothing" (Barbara Sinclair 2006, 325). In a prescient view of the post-*Citizens United* world, Sinclair said, "Clearly the pharmaceutical industry was pursuing its own interests, but it was doing so as an adjunct of the Republican Party" (Barbara Sinclair 2006, 325).

Cox and McCubbins place these third-party organizations within a larger context, noting their self-interest is "construed too narrowly and pursued too vigorously," while the parties have been ill prepared to restrain interest groups' claims to public goods (2005, 229). Without clear party power, caucus homogeneity, or leadership disciplinary actions (such as expulsion or lack of renomination), Cox and McCubbins specify "in both the responsible party and conditional party government theories—*party government falls away* [emphasis added], to be replaced by something else: committee government,

floor government, or whatever" (2005, 224). I would posit committee government, also described as "the feudal period" by others, is unlikely to return given current power structures (Peters 1990, 211). In fact, during the feudal/committee period when the Rules Committee reigned, Robinson suggested the need for reforms that moved Congress away from feudal committee chairs and instead centralized power within the majority party leadership to maintain a strong system of checks and balances (1963, 126). The post-reformed, post-1970 House essentially followed this trajectory, entering "the democratic period" as Peters elaborates (1990, 211). And yet, in the democratization of electoral influence, one must question if leadership has been coopted by forces larger than the Majority Whip team and we have instead entered "the PAC period." Written a few years before Speaker Newt Gingrich heavily consolidated power within his caucus, Peters predicted what was to come without recognizing the role that PACs would play. He pessimistically said that the more diffused power would "eventually lead to greater centralization of power in the hands of the political and cultural elites in control of a governmental establishment that will often serve to perpetuate the status quo" (Peters 1990, 287). The agenda setting literature, that is, establishes Congress's evolution near the end of the 20th Century, while missing the significance of campaign finance. Having discussed the traditional view of coalition building and agenda setting, the remainder of this literature review focuses on Congress and PAC influence in the years since the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and *Citizens United* as well as the interplay between primaries and party building.

Beginning first with primary elections, reforms that open primaries to include voters outside the party run the risk of producing interference on party activities that is potentially against the wishes of party leadership actively involved in brokering the agenda and policy. At the simplest level, open primaries dilute the parties' control over

the nomination process and therefore the parties' ideological stances. Given American democracy has only two dominant parties, a weakening of clear party stances, goals, and identities results in a weakening of the system as a whole. When choosing the candidate to represent them in the general election, the inclusion of non-party-aligned voters goes against the mission of primary elections as a means of choosing a candidate who reflects the party ideals (Kaufmann, Gimpel, and Hoffman 2003). An opening up of primary elections would at a minimum pose some difficulties for elected elites as they infer their constituents' preferred policies and seek to maximize their re-election chances. Broadening the tent, to that end, may have an effect on party ideology among legislators and therefore an effect on the caucus as a whole. Nevertheless, these caucus-level effects have not been explored at either the federal or state level.

Equally significant, the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) of 2002 in combination with *Citizens United* posed immense challenges for both state and federal party organizations and coalition building. BCRA, also known as McCain-Feingold, prevents the parties from raising unlimited soft-money donations, which former Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI) told me he viewed as clear quid pro quo from his time in the Senate:

> The DSCC apparently kept a tally of whom each incumbent Senator called and how much each Senator raised. Despite the law against raising very large contributions by Senators for their own campaigns, at the end of the day the tally device would typically be used to skirt this limitation. I did not participate in this system as I felt it violated the spirit of the law inviting corruption.

His and McCain's bill created campaign caps for the first time on soft money (while doubling the individual hard money limit), but left open the possibility of unlimited donations to "527" organizations (in reference to the IRS tax code section they arise from) for issue advocacy or voter mobilization drives as long as the activities did not explicitly support or criticize a candidate (Francia 2010). *Citizens United* eroded that

component, allowing outside organizations to raise unlimited funds for campaigns that explicitly support or criticize candidates, as long as their work maintains independence from the candidate's campaign. Following the decision, a donor reaching the contribution limit to the party or candidate could just as easily continue contributing via more indirect routes. Thus, the combined effect of BCRA and *Citizens United* "drained [parties] of a significant source of funding at the same time that powerful new incentives were created for donors to send their money to nonparty entities," thus emboldening ideological purists and weakening party pragmatists actively involved in gaining and retaining governmental power (Pildes 2015, 153). Without significant party-based funding, candidates must seek out alternative funding most often from these ideological extremities of each party (La Raja and Schaffner 2015). This phenomenon has been repeated at the state level as well, culminating with the same predictable results. In 2002, when Colorado voters approved Amendment 27, their state version of BCRA, as an attempt to reduce outside influence and spending in the state legislature, it simply re-routed money and decreased the ability to trace funds between donors and candidates. While the reform's ideals may be admirable, there still existed a system in which thousands of individuals hoped to influence the direction of a race and hundreds of would-be officeholders were more than happy to receive their donations (Masket 2015). In doing so, at either the state or federal level, the events had the effect of reducing leadership's leverage on their members and proliferating less transparent and less pragmatic networks of campaign fundraising.

Prior to BCRA, parties' soft-money sources combined with economies of scale and institutional expertise created a dependency among candidates to party leaders (Pildes 2015). The shift in power now enables outside groups to set the agenda, using ad buys, mail, voter mobilization drives, or public events to both gain media coverage and

prompt grassroots action. Parties and candidates alike must court interest groups, with candidates acting as "independent entrepreneurs" rather than party members (Pildes 2015, 152). "These groups can provide a party with critical financial and organizational support, in elections and beyond," while if a candidate or party leadership goes against their wishes they can become a significant opposing faction (Hacker and Pierson 2010, 169). Parties in this sense must court both their voters and the financial resources of aligned interest groups if they are to be successful. "Party-linked lobbies" hold the official parties to account by creating voting scorecards, setting preferred votes, and requiring pledges for candidate endorsements or contributions with the implicit failure to do so potentially instigating a primary challenge (Karol 2015a, 2015b, 75). Working as a team, separate groups can in effect create a quasi party coalition that transcends or directs official party leadership, creating a quagmire where the party is both directing and being directed (Bawn et al. 2012, 576).[45] From a negotiation perspective, principal-agent problems ensue when constituents, instigated by grassroots voter mobilization campaigns, have non-rational policy expectations for their representatives. If voters feel their elected officials are not meeting their demands, they may simply choose alternative sources of information from vocal extremes of their party's caucus or interest group activists. As such, officeholders "must continually cope with constituencies, activists, and supporters who push them to take a tougher line and refuse compromise," resulting in gridlock or fragmentation beyond the control of official party leadership (Binder and Lee 2015, 243).

[45] One recent paper, Kolodny and Dwyre (2018), argues most partisan PACs support the party campaign committees' anointed candidates by informally acting in unison, but the conclusion should be taken with extreme caution as the paper only looks at the two party campaign committees and three outside PACs for each party, while excluding all other partisan nonparty groups, PACs created to support single candidates, and 501c organizations (which admittedly are difficult to include given they face very few disclosure requirements).

3 Pro-Party Versus Anti-Party Reforms

This debate on the appropriate role of money in politics for Congress or state legislatures can be roughly divided as between anti-party or pro-party approaches. Persily succinctly describes it as such: "The anti-party approach hopes to promote the election of moderates by fostering electoral competition or liberating candidates from the constraints of party loyalty and discipline. The pro-party approach aims to empower the median party member and the party leadership against the extremes" (2015, 123). The top two primary or BCRA both represent typical anti-party reforms. A pro-party approach "starts from the proposition that the causes of polarization are long term and structural" (i.e. long-term ideological clustering along geographical and partisan lines), and therefore "cuts its losses and resigns itself to curbing the worst abuses of the current system…by amplifying the voice of the parties so they can compete with outside groups" (Persily 2015, 126). The general pro-party approach involves either: 1) public financing of elections in some form, or 2) increasing contribution limits to the parties so corporations, unions, and wealthy individuals can provide more means through official channels. From a political and legal standpoint, the former is likely a nonstarter, but the latter "might be the most effective way of making individual members more dependent, once again, on party leaders and thereby recapture some of the leverage those leaders have lost" (Pildes 2015, 153).

The United States' reticence to strong parties may stem from both a fear of Tammany Hall-style party bosses enriching themselves as well as a yearning for prior eras of fluid political-ideological coalitions that made logrolling and horse trading more feasible (Bishop 2009; Maisel 2007). And yet, without a patronage system largely fed through the tradition and norms of the U.S. Senate before the Seventeenth Amendment as well as the now public (rather than party) provision of a social safety net, it is unlikely

an era of party bosses would return (Maisel 2007). In actuality, party leadership's primary goal "distinct from that of ideological outside groups, is to help run candidates who win general elections" (Persily 2015, 128). Whereas some wealthy contributors may choose to remain operating independently of the party, previous party contributors may choose to re-enter the fold or expand their influence by increasing their donations to the official parties. As he elaborates, "the same entities that have been funding Tea Party challengers of late are not the same entities that contributed soft money to the Republican Party before the BCRA" (Persily 2015, 128). Were contribution caps to be lifted for the official parties, it is highly unlikely outside spending from the likes of Americans for Prosperity or Club for Growth could retain an even stronger place hold on the process than they currently do. Moreover, BCRA's anticorruption goals have largely floundered in regards to containing the corrosive effects of wealth on public policy, while limiting the parties in their ability to contain independent organizations. In other words, stronger parties will enable leadership to mitigate free agent behavior as well as to provide more cover to moderate legislators concerned about primary challengers (McCarty 2015).

And evidence suggests a pro-party approach may work. La Raja and Schaffner (2015) investigate state legislatures with more "party-centered laws," and find that there is less polarization, more ideological overlap between the parties, and closer caucus medians in states in which parties are able to raise and contribute unlimited amounts. They argue that the more pragmatist wing of the party organization will "trim the sails of ideology to suit the median voter because its members reflect the pragmatists who want to gain and hold power," rather than seek narrow policy interests that benefit a specific sect of the population (La Raja and Schaffner 2015, 68). Along the same vein, McCarty (2015) finds a relationship between stronger parties, using the traditional party

organization (TPO) metric from Mayhew (1986) and the difference of caucus medians from Shor and McCarty (2011). After controlling for time, percent African-American, income inequality, and if a state is Southern (traditionally one-party states), moving from the lowest TPO score (1, weakest parties) to the highest (5, strongest parties) results in about a 0.4 closer difference in party medians, or a one standard deviation reduction.

The pro-party versus anti-party dichotomy, overall, provides a novel approach to viewing coalition building in Congress and state legislatures since BCRA and *Citizens United*. Purist factions inspire ideals, and although their aims are potentially admirable, "governing in a separated system of powers often requires the lubricant of impure material interests to forge deals and bipartisan compromises" (La Raja and Schaffner 2015, 37). Anti-party approaches do very little in forging such agreements, further ingratiating outside interests at the expense of official leadership needed in forming coalitions and creating governance. The next section places this research design within this larger frame of anti-party and pro-party reforms, provides a justification for using state legislatures and their relevance to Congress, and discusses the metrics I use in my analysis as well as the theory and hypotheses.

4 Research Design and Theory

To investigate the pro-party policy approaches proposed in the literature, this research design utilizes variation within state legislatures as a proxy for reforms that could occur at the federal level. Specifically, this design uses state legislature caucus metrics from Shor and McCarty (2011), PAC limit and chamber majority data from Barber (2016), campaign finance sources from Bonica (2016), primary format data from McGhee et al. (2014), professionalism metrics from Squire (2007), and leadership agenda setting powers from Anzia and Jackman (2013).

Before describing each of these datasets in turn, it is important to first discuss why state legislatures are the ideal object for this analysis. At the federal level, candidates or incumbents for Congress as well as political action committees answer to the same FEC regulations and their corresponding limitations or lack thereof. Any changes to PAC contribution limits address the entire body, and hence provide few opportunities to exploit variation with regression analysis. Second, in regards to caucus heterogeneity, there are only two party-based caucuses. Each year provides a limited two data points at the caucus level, posing challenges for quantitative analysis, whether we are investigating PAC limits or primary format inclusion. Third, spending is essentially uninhibited in the current campaign finance environment. Until the Supreme Court membership changes—and therefore its consensus on what constitutes the First Amendment—it is highly unlikely meaningful PAC limits will transpire in the foreseeable future. To that end, without PAC spending caps, we cannot ascertain the effect of said limits on caucus cohesion. Fourth and finally, agenda setting via leadership calendaring powers is nearly absolute within Congress. If leadership does not have the votes for a particular bill or package of bills, it is highly unlikely the bill will make it to the floor. The oft-cited reason in the House is the Hastert Rule, an understanding that the

Speaker does not bring a bill forward to the floor if it does not have the support of the majority of their caucus. Beyond tradition and norms, leadership failing to pass a bill on the floor may create signals for both the majority and minority party that the majority leader does not have substantial control within the caucus. Coalition building or negotiations for future bills will be increasingly more difficult if the leader is perceived to be lacking followers.

Given these congressional leadership gatekeeping capabilities, ideology metrics based on roll call votes (such as DW-NOMINATE) "may appear more (or less) partisan than they would be under other agenda scenarios" (Harbridge 2015, 45). Any analysis of caucus heterogeneity would be affected by the ability of leadership to pull bills from the floor that lacked the votes for passage. From the opposite side, if leadership does not want a bill to come to the floor, the singular option for rank and file members to overcome leadership is through a discharge petition. Coincidentally the route that led to the passage of BCRA, discharge petitions require a majority of the entire House membership—likely requiring bipartisan votes, a less than common commodity in the modern era of Congress—and may expose signers to the wrath of leadership for future elections and bills. State legislatures, on the other hand, have greater variety in the extent of leadership agenda setting capabilities. Though the calendaring data is limited and lacks variation through the years, in 2010 there were 15 House chambers in which calendaring proceeded automatically without the opportunity for influence from the majority leader or a majority-appointed rules committee (Anzia and Jackman 2013). In this scenario, bills are simply placed on the calendar when they pass their respective committees of jurisdiction. In 23 House chambers, the majority leader set the calendar, more comparable to Congress, while in 9 others a majority-appointed rules committee set the calendar instead. Unfortunately, the agenda setting calendaring power data from

Anzia and Jackman (2013) is stagnant through the years it covers, and thus offers no variation for use in regression modeling. For this reason, I use the data in a limited scope by running regressions within each calendaring procedure group and exclude it as a control within the main models. Yet, calendaring powers overall does provide one explanation for why higher or lower PAC limits would open the door to outside influence upon rank and file members and counteract any agenda setting powers used by leadership for caucus management.

Relative to Congress and as alluded to, state legislatures provide considerably more variation for analyzing pro-party or anti-party policies. Although a strictly pro-party analysis would be ideal (i.e. analyzing the impact of increased party contribution limits on caucus roll call heterogeneity), it is worth considering that the average party contribution percentage to state legislature candidates from 1990 to 2014 was 7%. Parties simply do not represent a significant portion of candidates' total campaign receipts, and contribution limits relative to other organizations give parties and party leadership little opportunity to challenge much larger and more imposing forces. That said, PACs make up over a third of contributions on average and every state sets their own limits for PAC contributions to candidates. Table 1 lists those limits for two observation years, 1996 and 2012. The median limit is nearly $1,000 (2010 dollars), but between fifteen to twenty states allow unlimited PAC contributions to candidates depending on the year.

Table 1: PAC Limits Over a Two-Year Election Cycle, 1996 and 2012

1996	
Unlimited	Alabama, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington
Limited	$0-$1,000: Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Minnesota, Missouri, Wisconsin
	$1,001-$5,000: Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Washington, West Virginia
	$5,001-$10,000: Louisiana, Michigan, New York, Vermont
	$10,001-$15,000: Maine, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee
	$30,000-$35,000: Nebraska
2012	
Unlimited	Alabama, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Wyoming
Limited	$0-$1,000: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Wisconsin
	$1,001-$5,000: Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Washington, West Virginia
	$5,001-$10,000: Georgia, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Vermont
	$10,001-$15,000: California, Tennessee
	$15,001-$25,000: New Jersey, Ohio
	$60,000-$100,000: Illinois, Nebraska

Note: Compiled from Barber (2016) and accounting for inflation (2010 dollars).

PAC limits are constantly in flux for all states that have limits, providing a high level of variation. Some states, however, also change between limited and unlimited PAC contributions, while others remain stagnant. Table 2 lists the states by category.

Table 2: Limited and Unlimited PAC Contributions, 1993-2013

Unlimited to Limited	California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, New Mexico, Ohio, Washington
Multiple Changes	Missouri
Always Unlimited	Alabama, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Wyoming
Always Limited	Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin

Note: No state changed from having PAC limits to allowing unlimited PAC contributions. Compiled from Barber (2016).

Primary format changes, another form of pro- or anti-party reforms, are also constantly changing. Increasing primary inclusion, while potentially providing greater voter engagement, is prone to increase the ideological heterogeneity of a caucus as legislators and candidates moderate in order to appeal to Independent voters or voters of the opposite party. Table 3 lists the primary formats by state and years. For my purposes, I have delineated the usual six categories into two—open and closed primaries. In closed primaries, the general rule is only party members can vote (traditional closed primary) or only party members and Independent voters (semi-closed). For open primaries, anyone can vote in either party election on the day of the primary. Thus, the inclusion of non-party-aligned voters and ease of switching between party primaries has the potential to scramble party ideology within the legislature as candidates appeal to non-base voters.

Table 3: Primary System by State, 1992-2012

Primary Type		States
Closed	Closed	Arizona (1992-1998), California (1992-1996), Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho Republicans (2012), Kansas Republicans (2004-2012), Kentucky, Louisiana (2008-2010), Maryland Democrats, Maryland Republicans (1992-1998; 2002-2012), Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina Democrats (1992-1994), Oklahoma, Oregon Democrats (1992-1996; 2002-2012), Oregon Republicans (1994-2012), Pennsylvania, South Dakota Democrats (1992-2008), South Dakota Republicans, Utah (1992), West Virginia Democrats (1992-2006)
	Semi-Closed	Alaska Democrats (2002), Alaska Republicans (1992-1994; 2000-2012), Arizona (2000-2012), California (2002-2010), Colorado (1992-2012), Idaho Democrats (2012), Kansas Democrats (1992-2012), Kansas Republicans (1992-2002), Maine, Maryland Republicans (2000), Massachusetts, Nebraska (1992-2012), New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina Democrats (1996-2012), North Carolina Republicans (1992-2012), Oregon Democrats (1998-2000), Oregon Republicans (1992), Rhode Island, South Dakota Democrats (2010-2012), West Virginia Democrats (2008-2012), West Virginia Republicans (1992-2012)
Open	Semi-Open	Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah (1996-2012), Virginia, Wyoming
	Open	Hawaii, Idaho (1992-2010), Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, Utah (1994), Vermont, Washington (2004-2006), Wisconsin
	Partisan Blanket	Alaska Democrats (1992-2000; 2004-2012), Alaska Republicans (1996-1998), California (1998-2000), Washington (1992-2002)
	Nonpartisan Blanket (Top Two)	California (2012), Louisiana (1992-2006; 2012), Washington (2008-2012)

Note: Six states had primary systems that differed by party. These dates and formats were compiled according to McGhee et al. (2014) and cross-checked with Rogowski and Langella (2015).

From an analysis standpoint, exploiting the effect of these ever-changing primary formats or PAC limits on the heterogeneity of state legislatures provides an ideal platform to decipher how strongly outside influence affects caucus coalition building within American legislatures. Given the limitations of measuring party contributions on

caucuses, this design instead measures anti-party reforms (those that embolden outside interests and voters), serving as an antithesis to—and gleaning lessons for—a pro-party approach (i.e. uncapping donations for individual, corporate, or union donors to parties and for parties to candidates to countervail these non-party forces). While I must note individual contributions also make up nearly a third of candidates' sources and may occasionally have an effect (between ten and fifteen states have unlimited individual contributions at any given time), they are excluded from this paper. Their generally limited magnitude at the donor-to-candidate level correspondingly limits the salience of a donor's policy preferences with the candidate, limiting the ability of such donations to both fragment and ossify the caucus ideology at large. PACs, on the other hand, often reflect larger industrial or cultural interests, and thus would likely have a stronger effect on members and their caucus.

The remainder of this section will discuss the metrics used in the analysis, the regression itself, and theory and hypothesis on how PAC or primary intrusion may affect caucus cohesion. All chamber-related data, including caucus heterogeneity—the standard deviation of the roll call ideology metric for legislators from each party—comes from Shor and McCarty (2011). The Shor-McCarty metric, like DW-NOMINATE created by Poole and Rosenthal (1985), uses ideal point estimates based on roll call votes compiled from the early to mid-1990s until present. A legislator would hold a more liberal score if they vote more often with liberals or vice versa for conservatives. To make the scores comparable across states and to Congress, Shor and McCarty use NPAT (National Political Awareness Test, now the Political Courage Test, which is a voluntary state and federal candidate survey on self-reported ideological positions) with a least-squares regression to estimate a common space Shor-McCarty score. They act with the assumption that the "legislator uses the same ideal point when answering surveys as he

or she does when she votes on roll calls" (Shor and McCarty 2011, 532). As they describe, NPAT response rates have declined from a majority in the 1990s to a third today. To fill in the gap, Shor and McCarty estimate non-respondents' scores using the relative comparability between respondents' NPAT scores and their roll call ideal point estimates, again under the assumption that NPAT respondents are consistent between how they report how they will vote and how they actually vote. The survey itself covers "foreign policy, national security, international affairs, social issues, fiscal policy, environmentalism, criminal justice, and many more" with yes or nor answers comparable to roll call votes, while the "vast majority of the questions asked of state legislators are identical across states" and also asked of federal candidates (Shor and McCarty 2011, 532–33). The end result is a metric for state legislator ideology that bridges across states and to Congress. Additionally, Shor and McCarty compile aggregate data of the chambers and party caucuses within them including median ideology, average polarization between any two legislators, and the standard deviation of the Shor-McCarty metric within the party caucuses. This standard deviation is a measure of the ideological spread or heterogeneity and describes how closely the caucus votes together on roll call votes. This metric is the dependent variable of my analysis.

For PAC limits, I use the replication data from Barber (2016). The data for years 1990 through 2002 was compiled from FEC biannual reports. Years 2003 to 2009 were sourced via Westlaw's state constitution and statute database, whereas contribution limits for 2010 to 2012, the final election year of my analysis, were derived from the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL). Barber sets the limits for the two-year cycle. Because I have caucus data to the individual year (even part-time legislatures conduct a shorter, fiscal session in off-years), I simply divide his two-year, cycle-specific limits to correspond to a single calendar year. The data also includes a chamber majority

variable (which party controls the chamber) that I use for an additional control. Barber (2016) regresses the Shor-McCarty individual legislator metric on limit changes for individual and PAC donors to illustrate the polarizing, ideological nature of individual donors and the moderating, access-seeking nature of PAC donors. In this paper, I instead use the aggregate Shor-McCarty data to analyze caucus cohesion, within the frame of anti- and pro-party reforms. Similar to Barber (2016), I also separate the legislatures into high- and low-limit states (from a median of the entire data, a PAC limit of ~$1,000 per year) and re-run the models within those groups. This technique provides an opportunity to see states that are more comparable to Congress (high-limit states), while still preserving state and time fixed effects of the larger regression that includes all states combined. Nine states move in or out of the high-limit group depending on the year.[46]

For contribution data discussed more extensively in the results, I use Bonica's Database on Ideology, Money in Politics, and Elections (DIME). DIME uses FEC contribution record data from 130 million contributions over more than thirty years to provide an ideological metric (CFscore) for every candidate, whether for federal, state, or local office (Bonica 2016). Whereas the main results focuses entirely on roll call voting via the Shor-McCarty aggregate ideology metric, DIME specifies the dollar amount of campaign contributions from various sources—individual donors, the party committee, or PACs—giving me an opportunity to observe how limits affect campaign finance and to explain the results more fully.

For controls for professionalism, I use Squire (2007), a metric that takes more into account than whether the legislature is full or part-time, while also providing a continual spectrum rather than a binary variable. Professionalism may be an important

[46] Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, Vermont, and Washington

indicator for caucus cohesiveness in addition to changing PAC limits, considering full-time legislators would meet as a caucus more often than those in part-time legislatures, and whose experience may enable them to be less swayed by organized interests. Moreover, its inclusion improves the comparability to Congress, a professional legislature. The first Squire metric is for 1979 with updates in 1986, 1996, 2003, and 2015. The relevant years for this analysis that correspond to Shor-McCarty caucus data are 1986, 1996, and 2003. The metric is calculated using legislator salary, staffing resources, and time demands of the office—all three equally weighted. Salary is set via the base pay or, for some states, daily or weekly per diems when the legislature is in session. Time demands are calculated as the number of legislative calendar days in a year multiplied by five-sevenths or five days of legislative work per week. Finally, staffing resources are compiled from NCSL using total staff when the legislature is in session. Staffing resources explain the irregular Squire index dates, nearly corresponding exactly to the years NCSL dispatched surveys on staff resources—1979, 1988, 1996, and 2003. The Squire metric itself is calculated by dividing each state's score by the same for Congress in that year (averaged between both the House and the Senate) to yield a professionalism percentage relative to Congress. All three parts are then added together and averaged.

Leadership agenda setting powers, as referenced earlier, come from Anzia and Jackman (2013). Like other data sources, they consult NCSL survey data gathered from questionnaires sent to state legislature parliamentary officers. The survey, covering years 1995 to 2004, "asks a detailed set of questions about the rules and procedures that guide the legislative process" (Anzia and Jackman 2013, 214). They supplement this data with their own direct survey on calendaring procedures, committee member and chair placement, and recent changes to rules and procedure. Their paper particularly pertains

to majority roll rates (how often bills pass the floor without the support of the majority of the majority party) using limited data for 1999-2000, and thus offers no variation on calendaring, the variable of interest. Nevertheless, their data provides a context for comparing state legislatures to Congress.

Finally, for the primary format data I use McGhee et al. (2014) and cross-validate with Rogowski and Langella (2015). To build the dataset, McGhee et al. (2014) consulted state election websites and election code, and—if there were discrepancies—contacted Secretary of State election office staff and state party committees. I make one minor adjustment to their dataset by consulting Alaska's Secretary of State website, electoral code, and ballots to trace party-based differences regarding primary format as well as a specific balloting process unique to Alaska. The resulting variable provides an understanding of the level of outside involvement possible in the selection of party candidates, and again, like PAC limits, represents an independent variable that can be used to analyze caucus cohesion in state legislatures.

Both models, for PAC limits or primary format, are difference-in-differences regressions, which regress caucus heterogeneity on the variation in PAC limits or primary format inclusivity, while utilizing state and time fixed effects to contain the effect to the independent variable of interest (i.e. changing limits or more inclusive primaries).

The regression for PAC limits is as follows:

$$y_{ts} = \alpha + \delta_t + \phi_s + \beta_1 \text{PAC UNLIMITED}_{ts} + (\beta_2 \text{PAC LIMITED} \times \ln(\text{LIMIT AMOUNT}))_{ts} + \varepsilon_{ts}$$

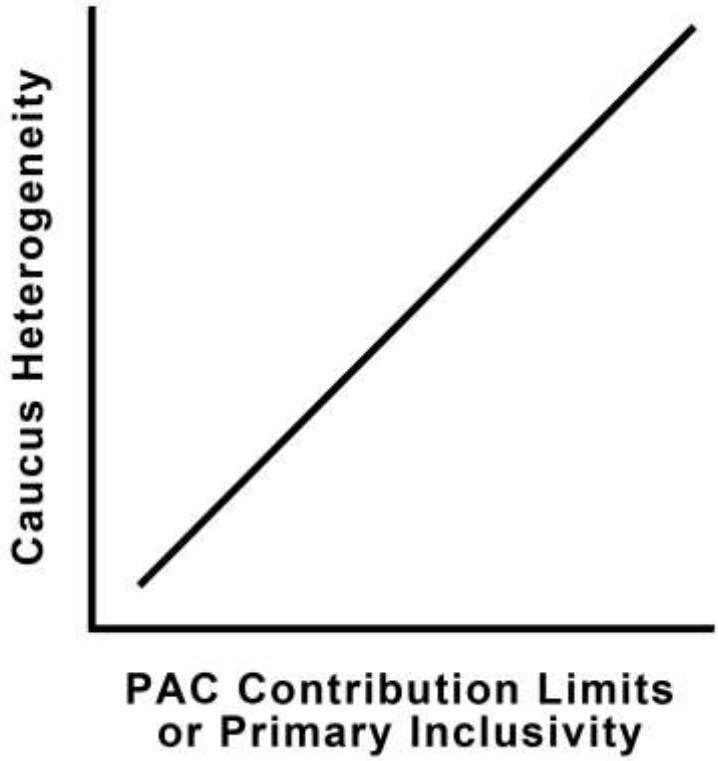
The regression for primary format is below:

$$y_{ts} = \alpha + \delta_t + \phi_s + \beta_3 \text{OPEN}_{ts} + \varepsilon_{ts}$$

For both regressions, y reflects the Republican or Democratic caucus Shor-McCarty standard deviation for each state legislature lower chamber corresponding to the election in time *t*, subscripts t and s reference years and states; d_t describes time fixed effects with 1993 as the reference category; f_s describes state fixed effects; b_1 in the top regression is the coefficient on a binary variable for if a state allows unlimited PAC contributions; b_2 is the coefficient on the interaction variable for if a state has limits multiplied times a natural log of the actual limit; b_3 in the lower regression is the coefficient on a dummy variable for if a state has an open primary with the closed primary acting as the reference category; and finally error terms and a constant. The Shor-McCarty standard deviation reflects, for example, a 2003 legislature in the wake of a 2002 election with its own corresponding regulations regarding primary type or PAC contributions. I cluster standard errors at the state level given both primary format and PAC limits or lack thereof are derived from the state. The natural log interaction variable is employed, both in Barber (2016) and here, to create a normal distribution from skewed limit data (i.e. some states' limits are magnitudes larger than other states' as Table 1 illustrates). Within the model, b_1 estimates the average effect for the subsample of states that allow unlimited PAC contributions, while b_2 simultaneously measures the relationship between the limit amount and the outcome in the subsample of states with limits. State fixed effects ensure that these coefficients are estimated based on within-state variation in limits. For interpretive purposes, the log form of the limit also enables one to ascertain the effect of a percentage increase in the limit rather predicting the effect of nominal value increases or decreases. And finally, as Barber notes, "as contribution limits grow, we have reason to believe that the effect of marginal changes to the limit decreases" (2016, 302).

The theory, as elucidated throughout and thus far, assumes that as PAC limits increase within a state—including a shift to unlimited PAC contributions—or if party primaries become more inclusive to non-party members, caucus heterogeneity will increase as measured by the standard deviation of Shor-McCarty scores for each party in each state. Figure 1 illustrates the hypothetical trend line.

Figure 1: Debasing the party—contribution limits and party primary inclusivity on heterogeneity measures.



Given this, the testable hypotheses are:

H_1: Increasing PAC contribution limits and/or allowing unlimited PAC contributions will increase caucus heterogeneity.

H_2: More inclusive primaries will increase caucus heterogeneity.

The next section presents the results followed by a discussion then conclusion.

5 Results

The results are separated below for PAC contribution and primary inclusion models, followed by a discussion.

5.1 PAC Contributions

Before discussing the results directly, I first list the summary statistics in Table 4 to provide a frame of reference for caucus heterogeneity. From 1993 to 2013, Democratic caucuses had slightly higher ideological range, as measured via their roll call voting heterogeneity mean and median of 0.32 relative to 0.27 for Republicans, which is perhaps unsurprising given the existence of conservative-leaning Democratic legislators that remained in the South into the 2000s. Interestingly, Republican caucuses in high-limit states—separated according to the median PAC limit in line with Barber (2016)—exhibit tighter voting cohesion than those in low-limit states. Yet, Democrats remain more or less the same regardless of the state being a high- or low-limit PAC state. The standard deviation of caucus heterogeneity (in other words, the standard deviation of the standard deviation) is the key metric in the table, allowing us to compare the effects of uninhibited or increasing PAC spending on caucus cohesion relative to normal heterogeneity. For both Democrats and Republicans, that figure is 0.11.

Table 4: Summary Statistics for Lower Chamber Shor-McCarty Aggregate Data on Caucus Heterogeneity, 1993-2013

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Democratic Caucus	0.32	0.32	0.11
Republican Caucus	0.27	0.27	0.11
Democratic Caucus Low-Limit States	0.30	0.31	0.10
Republican Caucus Low-Limit States	0.30	0.30	0.12
Democratic Caucus High-Limit States	0.32	0.33	0.12
Republican Caucus High-Limit States	0.26	0.26	0.10

Table 5 lists the results in full. The first two models (first two columns) are all states together. The second two are confined to strictly low-limit states, excluding the

binary variable for unlimited PAC spending which is zero in states with limits. The final two models are for high-limit states, with the continuous natural log interaction variable tied to increasing PAC limits and the binary variable for unlimited PAC spending. The results are not statistically significant for all states together or for only low-limit states, yet there is a quite large and statistically significant result for high-limit states. I explain why we may be observing these divergent effects between models with all states, only low-limit states, and only high-limit states in the discussion sub-section. I find this result substantial considering high-limit states are more comparable to Congress from a campaign finance perspective, thus giving us a clear view of how PAC spending is affecting coalition building in Congress.

The inclusion of unlimited PAC contributions within a state legislature increases the caucus heterogeneity by nearly four standard deviations for Democrats (or about three and a half standard deviations using only high-limit state summary statistics) and nearly three standard deviations for Republicans (and about the same using only high-limit state summary statistics). Interpreting the limit increases is slightly more complicated since it is an interaction effect between PAC limits existing (coded zero if unlimited and one if limited) and a natural log of the numerical limit, but it is worth noting the trend is positive and increasing PAC limits increases heterogeneity for both party caucuses within high-limit states. For example, the predicted respective heterogeneity values for Democratic and Republican caucuses in a high-limit state with a $3,000 limit (near the median limit of high-limit states) are 0.32 and 0.26, while 0.35 and 0.29 in a high-limit state with a $6,000 limit, an increase of about a third of the standard deviation for both parties.[47]

[47] Any percentage increase can be calculated with ($b_2 \times \ln(1+\text{percent increase})$)

Coincidentally, there is little to no relationship between heterogeneity and polarization between the parties, as measured by the difference of party medians. Models regressing difference of medians on either party's standard deviation yields statistically insignificant results, but again the question of interest is coalition management and caucus cohesiveness rather than polarization as a whole.

The results are robust to controls for majority party status and professionalism using the Squire index, included in Table 6. In other words, increasing professionalism or the party being in the minority or majority does not change the effect of PAC spending on caucus cohesion. Moreover, the results hold in Table 7 when I narrow the models down to strictly high-limit states with completely automatic calendaring as well as high-limit states in which the majority leader sets the calendar (the latter being more comparable to Congress from a legislative procedure and calendaring perspective). We would expect this to be the case for automatic calendaring states, given the procedure provides a larger window for outside PACs to influence the process. Yet, the results also holding for majority leader calendaring states suggest anti-party policies do indeed have the effect of weakening party-based coalition building in Congress, providing some justification pro-party policies would have the opposite effect. The results do not, however, hold for states in which calendaring is conducted by a majority-appointed rules committee. This suggests singular leadership empowerment is an important component of coalition building and caucus cohesion, and that increasing PAC limits or allowing unlimited PAC spending has a particularly adverse effect on caucus voting cohesion in a wide range of procedural settings.

Table 5: Outside Spending and Caucus Heterogeneity, 1993-2013

Dependent Variable: Party Caucus Shor-McCarty Ideology Standard Deviation Panel Unit: State Legislature Lower Chamber						
Variables	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats Low-Limit States	Republicans Low-Limit States	Democrats High-Limit States	Republicans High-Limit States
Unlimited PAC	0.0688 (0.0670)	-0.0490 (0.0596)	—	—	0.409** (0.138)	0.303* (0.116)
Limited PAC × ln(PAC Limit)	0.0117 (0.00825)	-0.00296 (0.00756)	-0.00791 (0.0281)	0.0165 (0.0469)	0.0493** (0.0154)	0.0367** (0.0128)
Constant	0.266*** (0.0724)	0.301*** (0.0610)	0.489* (0.167)	0.133 (0.278)	-0.0743 (0.130)	-0.0275 (0.112)
State/Time Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.84	0.79	0.80	0.79	0.87	0.81
N	801	801	202	202	599	599

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

Table 6: Robustness Checks for Professionalism and Majority Control in High-Limit State Legislatures

Dependent Variable: Party Caucus Shor-McCarty Ideology Standard Deviation Panel Unit: State Legislature Lower Chamber						
Variables	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans
Unlimited PAC	0.428** (0.140)	0.286* (0.112)	0.390** (0.130)	0.278** (0.0910)	0.404** (0.131)	0.263** (0.0893)
Limited PAC × ln(PAC Limit)	0.0501** (0.0154)	0.0359** (0.0123)	0.0481** (0.0151)	0.0338** (0.0107)	0.0484** (0.0149)	0.0334** (0.0103)
Squire Professionalism Index	0.471** (0.160)	-0.427* (0.207)	—	—	0.453** (0.161)	-0.459* (0.207)
Majority Party	—	—	-0.00368 (0.00599)	-0.00792 (0.00486)	-0.00408 (0.00633)	-0.00833 (0.00438)
Constant	-0.171 (0.134)	0.0599 (0.119)	-0.0577 (0.123)	0.00662 (0.0908)	-0.147 (0.125)	0.0974 (0.103)
State/Time Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.87	0.82	0.88	0.83	0.89	0.83
N	599	599	565	565	565	565

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

Table 7: PACs and Caucus Cohesion in High-Limit State Legislatures by Calendaring Powers

Dependent Variable: Party Caucus Shor-McCarty Ideology Standard Deviation Panel Unit: State Legislature Lower Chamber						
Calendaring	Majority Leader		Majority Controlled Rules Committee		Automatic	
Variables	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans	Democrats	Republicans
Unlimited PAC	0.726* (0.306)	0.677** (0.203)	0.0799 (0.0780)	0.0101 (0.171)	0.436*** (0.104)	0.427* (0.180)
Limited PAC × ln(PAC Limit)	0.0751* (0.0292)	0.0736** (0.0212)	0.0119 (0.0114)	0.00312 (0.0211)	0.0568*** (0.0127)	0.0497* (0.0204)
Constant	-0.399 (0.278)	-0.305 (0.191)	0.371*** (0.0504)	0.191 (0.150)	-0.0816 (0.0999)	-0.106 (0.172)
State/Time Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.88	0.86	0.91	0.71	0.86	0.78
N	247	247	114	114	235	235

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.

5.2 Open Primaries

For the primary models, I again list the summary statistics in Table 6, with one additional year, 2014, included to correspond with data availability on primary format from McGhee et al. (2014). PAC contribution limit data from Barber (2016) ends with the 2012 election and 2013 legislative sessions.

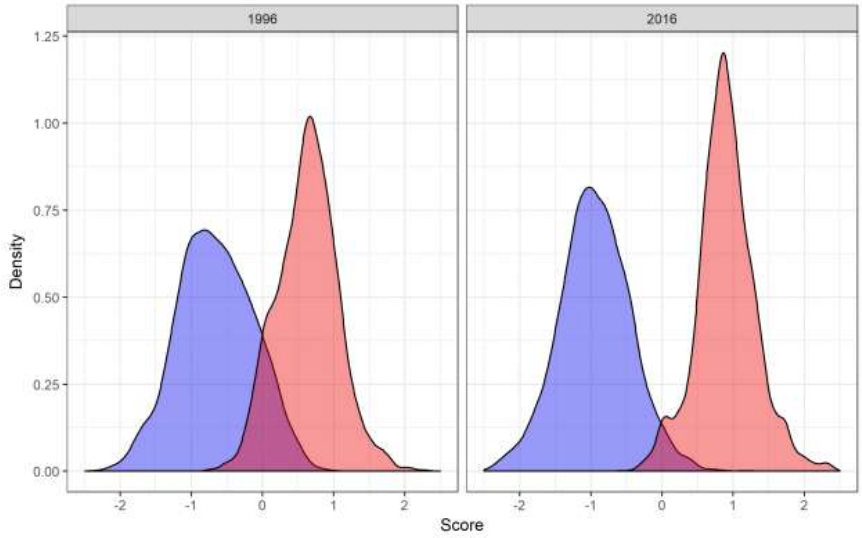
Table 8: Lower Chamber Shor-McCarty
Aggregate Heterogeneity, 1993-2014

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Democratic Caucus	0.31	0.32	0.11
Republican Caucus	0.27	0.27	0.11

After coding the six primary formats into two binary categories—open and closed—and again set so the 2003 legislative session for example would correspond to the 2002 primary election format, I observe statistically significant results for Democrats, but not for Republicans. More inclusive primaries (i.e. open, semi-open, and both partisan and nonpartisan blanket primaries) increase caucus heterogeneity by nearly half of the standard deviation for Democrats relative to those in closed and semi-closed primary state legislatures. The results also hold when including controls for professionalism via the Squire index or for majority party control.

I suspect this party divergence from primary inclusivity stems from trends occurring within the parties during the observed time period, expanded on in the discussion. From the mid-1990s to the mid-2010s, Republican state legislators—in aggregate—were moving rightward and their ideological distribution was narrowing, while Democratic legislators stayed in roughly the same place, as seen in this graphic.

Figure 2: Ideological distribution, 1996 and 2016. From Shor and McCarty (2017).



Moreover, recalling the results from my papers on the top two primary, I have statistically stronger results in general from Democratic legislators in Congress (as in they are more likely to respond to more inclusive primaries by voting more moderate). In other words, Republicans legislators are insulated from centrist primary voters in ways that are not occurring for Democrats. I link this effect to party spending relative to other sources of contributions during the campaigns, which will be discussed in full in the succeeding discussion sub-section.

Table 9: Primary Inclusion and Caucus Heterogeneity, 1993-2014

Dependent Variable: Party Caucus Shor-McCarty Ideology Standard Deviation Panel Unit: State Legislature Lower Chamber		
Variables	Democrats	Republicans
Open Primaries	0.0406*** (0.0112)	-0.00567 (0.0147)
Constant	0.325*** (0.0283)	0.256*** (0.0218)
State/Time Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
R^2	0.83	0.75
N	902	902

Parentheses denote standard error. ***=p<0.001, **=p<0.01, *=p<0.05.
Note: The reference category is the closed/semi-closed primaries.

5.3 Discussion

As noted, we observe higher caucus heterogeneity with unlimited PAC contributions or increasing PAC limits within high-PAC-limit states, but not within low-limit states. This effect is partially linked to parity between limits for PACs and other sources of funding in the two types of states. In low-PAC-limit states, the limits for individuals and PACs are much more comparable. The median limit in these states for individuals is $335 versus $357 for PACs (all 2010 dollars). For high-limit states, the median individual limit is $3,856 versus $7,458 for PACs. The magnitude difference is nearly two fold, while nearly 1:1 in low-limit states.

Looking beyond Barber (2016) contribution limits and to specific contribution amounts within the Bonica (2016) DIME data of individual state legislators, the average percentage of contributions from PACs was 32% versus 30% from individual contributors and 7% from party committees for the period I cover. Starting from the baseline that party contributions are always underrepresented relative to PAC and individual contributions, there are interesting patterns in the giving once we delve into distinctions between high- and low-limit PAC states, open versus closed primaries, and between Democrats and Republicans that altogether provide an explanation for the party-divergent results. That is, why is it that in both the primary format model and PAC contribution model Democrats were the party whose voting coalition heterogeneity was more likely to be broadened by inclusive practices?

From the Bonica (2016) data, candidates in low-PAC-limit states get about 5% to 8% more of their contributions from individual donors on average relative to candidates in high-PAC-limit states respectively for Republicans (from 25% in high-limit to 30% in low-limit) and Democrats (from 24% in high-limit to 32% in low-limit). Comparing median candidates among the two types of state, low-PAC-limit state candidates receive

1% and 5% more from individual contributors, respectively for Republican (from 21% to 22%) and Democrats (from 19% to 24%).

When comparing contribution percentages coming from PACs in high- and low-PAC-limit states, Democrats in high-limit states receive on average *20% more* of their contributions from PACs than those in low-limit states (from 34% to 54%), and the median candidates are *30% apart* (from 25% to 55%). Republicans in high-limit states receive 10% more of their contributions from PACs relative to their low-limit cohort on average (from 40% to 50%), and 14% more when comparing medians (from 37% to 51%). A fixed effects regression controlling for time and state corroborates these results, illustrating that Democrats in high-limit states receive 8% more from PACs on average whereas Republicans receive 5% more on average, both relative to their co-partisans in low-limit states. The Democratic value is statistically significant while the Republican value is not, again suggesting the effects of running in a high-PAC-limit state are greater for Democratic candidates than for Republicans. Though less stark than the summary statistics, the results do argue candidates receive more funds from political action committees when they reside in higher limit states.

The imbalance between high- and low-PAC-limit states is less pronounced when comparing the percentage of contributions from party committees. Democrats receive about 1.5% more on average from the party in high-limit states relative to low-limit states (from 4% to 5.5%), but the median candidate contribution percentages for both hover around zero. For Republicans, those in high-PAC-limit states receive about 3% more from the party (increasing from 5% to 8%). Yet again, the median contribution percentage from the party is a miniscule 1% for both.

Taken all together, for candidates in high-PAC-limit states, not only is the limit clearly higher in these states, but the percentage of contributions coming from PACs

rises relative to all other giving. The increase in PAC giving between high- and low-limit states is highly pronounced for Democrats, as a fixed effects regression illustrates, while less so for Republicans. Individual giving is slightly higher as a percentage for Democrats in low-PAC-limit states relative to their high-limit cohort and corresponding to Republican values, albeit both high- and low-limit states for both parties have fairly comparable numbers. Party contributions are still miniscule, but slightly higher for Republicans. The larger, statistically significant jump in PAC giving for Democrats provides a clear reason for why Democratic heterogeneity is more affected by changing PAC limits.

Interestingly, we can observe this party differential in the regression results. When I expand the primary model to include controls for individual contribution limits along with PAC limits, the coefficient for individual contributions is statistically significant for Democrats in high-PAC-limit states (increases in individual contribution limits affects caucus heterogeneity at nearly the same magnitude as PAC increases), but not statistically significant for Republicans. That is, within high-PAC-limit states, higher caps for Democratic individual contributors increases heterogeneity as much as higher PAC caps. These two types of donors fight for the ideological soul of the party in a field lined by ideological individual contributors on one end and access-seeking PACs on the other end per the central thesis of Barber (2016). Increased individual contributors are not having the same effect for Republicans; their effect is partially offset or muted by increased party spending and PAC ideological priorities that already more closely align with the ideology of business-friendly, low-regulation Republican individual contributors in ways that we would not see within the Democratic Party.

We can detect similar patterns in giving within the primary format models where we observe more open primaries affect Democratic caucus heterogeneity, while primary

format has no effect for Republican caucus heterogeneity. This divergent effect can best be explained in how contribution sources change between closed and open primary states for each party. Both parties experience a decrease in individual contributions in open primary states relative to closed, decreasing a net of -6% from 29% down to 23% on average for Democrats (and 24% down to 18% when comparing median candidates in both types of primaries) and a net of -4% from 29% to 25% on average for Republicans (and 24% down to 20% comparing medians).

Yet, interestingly, candidates in open primary states fill that void of individual giving relative to closed primary states in different ways, an effect that explains why Democrats are experiencing more heterogeneous voting records in open primaries. The PAC contribution percent for Democrats in open primaries increases by 8% relative to closed primary Democrats, from 44% to 52% (and +11% from 43% to 54% when comparing median candidates). The differential is not as sharp for Republicans. They instead see an increase of only 2%, from 45% to 47% (and a median +5% increase from 45% to 50%). For party contributions, Republicans shore up their candidates more effectively in open primary states relative to closed and compared to Democrats. They increase the party percentage by 1% from 7% to 8% on average (and 0.5% to 1.5% comparing medians). Democrats on the other hand keep party spending constant at 5% on average between open and closed primaries and essentially zero when comparing median candidates. Fixed effects regressions are less helpful in corroborating these summary statistics, all yielding statistically insignificant patterns.

That is, to fill the void of individual giving in open primary versus closed primary states, Democratic candidates are receiving more PAC contributions by mean and median with near constant party contributions, whereas Republicans are receiving more party contributions to counteract slightly higher PAC receipts. In sheer number

values, Democrats are receiving a larger contribution percentage from PACs and a smaller percentage from the party, relative to Republicans. To control their caucus voting heterogeneity, Republicans, intentionally or not, are protecting caucus cohesion by warding off PAC interference that open primaries beget while increasing party spending to keep candidates and would-be legislators in line. Campaign finance in this regard is protecting caucus cohesion in spite of broader voter and candidate inclusion that open primaries introduce.

6 Conclusion

This paper explores one of the key issues defining Congress in the modern era: fragmentation in the wake of high polarization. Leadership, in either the Senate or House, lacks the disciplinary power over their members that they once held with that power now shifting to outside political action committees and their formidable war chests. From a coalition building perspective, this creates immense principal-agent problems where one of the key actors carries narrow and intense interests and yet lacks an official seat at the table. Meanwhile, more inclusive primaries have brought new voters into the primary election fold, increasing democratic participation but potentially at the expense of ideological cohesion within the party.

I hypothesized that anti-party reforms such as increasing PAC contribution limits to candidates, enabling unlimited PAC giving, or allowing non-party voters to participate in a party primary would create more diffuse voting patterns within party caucuses as leadership lose leverage over their membership or the ideological distinctions between the parties become more fluid. Regressing state legislature caucus roll call voting data on variation with PAC contribution limits and primary election formats, I find that more inclusive primaries or higher PAC spending limits do indeed affect caucus heterogeneity. Unlimited PAC contributions increases caucus heterogeneity by three and a half to four standard deviations. At the same time, doubling a limit increases the ideological spread within the caucus by about a third of the standard deviation. Additionally, more inclusive primaries result in about a half of the standard deviation increase in caucus heterogeneity for Democrats, while having no statistically significant effect for Republicans. I propose this divergent effect stems from contribution patterns within the parties. Republicans experienced a narrowing of ideology within the last twenty years, and shore up their candidates more effectively with party contributions. Moreover, Democratic candidates'

share of contributions from PACs rises sharply as limits increase or as primaries become more open in ways unseen for Republicans. Interestingly, the results hold after adding controls in both models—PAC limits and primary format—for majority party control and professionalism.

This paper adds an important component to the pro-party versus anti-party debate occurring within the literature. My results suggest—based on our use of state legislatures as the laboratories of democracy—that the best way to strengthen leadership's hand as they manage their coalition is by limiting outside interference. While making no judgements on the quality of the broth, this article illustrates the effects of having too many cooks in the kitchen. Regrettably, until the membership of the Supreme Court, House, and Senate changes considerably, it is unlikely new limits will be placed on PAC giving. Indeed, Senator Feingold himself views the Supreme Court as crucial, saying:

> Corporate interests saw the success of small dollar donations in 2008 as a threat, and worked with the Republicans to shift the court's opinion on corporate campaign activity. While I don't think a constitutional amendment is the most wise or viable way to solve this, the court must return in its decisions to the corrupting influence such contributions have on the political process.

Thus, one route may entail uncapping party giving, returning parties to a place of strength that they once held before McCain-Feingold. This of course has its detractors, notably Senator Feingold, who worries that such a move could very well increase unity among the caucuses, but at the service of Wall Street and large financial operations. On that topic he said, "The party arm was the perpetrator of this soft money abuse, a conduit for inappropriate fundraising. The party facilitated this system and does not seem to be answer to stopping the corrupting influence of large contributions." Thus, moving donations through the party may only marginalize those who challenge the system within their caucuses, unless further limitations are simultaneously placed on political action

committees. We can all agree, nonetheless, that the current state of affairs marginalizes parties at the expense of their funders.

> Written nearly thirty years ago but still prescient, Peters writes:
>
> > Now, and for the foreseeable future, the American political system will be marked by weak national parties and autonomous members of Congress…Modern speakers will be forced to operate in an inchoate environment. The House is a more fluid body today than at any time since the Civil War…A stable majority coalition (within or across party lines) would enable a speaker to govern, but such a coalition will not often occur. Since the preconditions of governance are unlikely to exist, speakers will be forced to lead rather than to command (1990, 295).

To bring about stable coalitions, we must empower leadership to command.

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Concluding Remarks

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This project first began as a master's thesis with one simple goal: to understand if the top two primary election reform was a means to depolarize Congress after my experience working in the congressional office of a moderate member elected by way of the top two. The literature had previously examined primary election formats, but no authors had focused specifically on the top two as a format distinct from the partisan blanket primary. The final difference-in-differences regression results do affirm my initial expectations and show that the top two primary can have minor effects on moderating members of Congress. And yet, the literature suggests that the public's yearning for a silver bullet to the unique political era of entrenched polarization is in essence very much entrenched and a single solution fix is baseless.

This idea that a myriad of causes and tectonic shifts created the polarization of today—as well as my interest in creating a regression discontinuity design within this dissertation—led me to the second project investigating how losses or wins in the previous election cycle affect nominations this cycle, in time *t+1*. Downs median voter theorem suggests the parties should seek the elusive median swing voter in each district, resulting in two political parties of the same ideology. Of course, it never happens in practice. I investigated this phenomenon quantitatively in an update to the methodology of previous papers with new metrics for candidate ideology and a focus on primary election voters rather than those in the general election. Overall, I found that parties do

not respond to losses or wins when nominating their candidates—they instead retain a stable ideological record throughout while riding the ebbs and flows of election cycle waves—and moderation amongst candidates is unlikely to pay dividends given the information miser nature of voters.

To abut the findings in the top two primary and median voter theorem chapters, I went to Washington, D.C. to speak to those in the arena. Over six weeks, I conducted twenty-three interviews with elites—from both parties, from campaigns and official offices, from think tanks and Congress, from leadership and rank and file, from elected officials and staff members. Most officials were formerly in the congressional roles of interest and thus more willing to provide frank answers about how they viewed the current era of Congress. What they told me was an opportunity to integrate disparate views between the literature, theory, and my findings, and laid the groundwork for the final chapter and my concluding thoughts on prescriptive steps for Congress.

The large theme, relevant to both chapters, is that we are in an era of high fragmentation and high polarization. While Americans were sorting along ideological and geographical lines into two distinct camps, members of Congress were ceding more power to leadership and less to the process-oriented fiefdoms once ruled over by committee chairs. With an increasingly parliamentary form of roll call voting, this system would likely have succeeded in reconciling the divisions that separate branches of governance already pose and created stable voting coalitions capable of addressing public policy challenges. Nevertheless, two reforms vastly destabilized party leadership's influence in this fight: the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) of 2002 more commonly known as McCain-Feingold and *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*. While I was hesitant to walk away from this dissertation wholeheartedly blaming political action committees for gridlock in our nation's capital,

my conversations with former leaders in the House did in fact suggest that while they—and more specifically the Speaker—had consolidated power in the late 1970s to the 2000s, the trend since 2002 until today has pushed power outside the official bodies of Congress and to campaign finance wings independent of the parties. Meanwhile, the broader systemic shifts in where the Republican or Democratic voter lives or votes as well as what they believe and where they receive their news created a Congress that changes hands more often, necessitating large-scale branding operations, opposition messaging votes, and the impetus to "make hay while the sun shines." What has resulted is a constant campaign drenched in a deluge of money from outside interests with leadership lacking the financial resources to challenge those challenging them.

Throughout this project, gerrymandering reform has retained its allure as the single solution to gridlock and polarization. While I am hopeful *Gill v. Whitford* creates a reasonable standard of partisan intent for House redistricting that is in defiance of one-person, one-vote and the right of association, it is imperative to note educational and geographical trends are partially to blame for urban districts that vote 80% Democratic. Meanwhile, the district boundaries of the equally polarized Senate have not changed since its inception. That said, there is some credence to an implicit packing-and-cracking bargain between the GOP and some wings of the Democratic Party to saturate safe districts under the guise of the Voting Rights Act, which has had the effect of protecting some incumbents, further bleaching suburban districts, and rewarding the Republican Party with a few more seats than they would have otherwise. Yet, the myth of gerrymandering creating safe seats for the majority party is largely misguided and misunderstands that the entire point of legislative politics is to control the chamber, not individual seats.

Therefore, the overarching takeaway I have gathered from this dissertation—via the quantitative and qualitative data—is that we cannot nor should we attempt to stop the larger trends that have created the polarization of today. We must instead strengthen party leadership and invest in our parties, the private yet public cornerstones of our democracies. In our first-past-the-post system, Duverger's Law tells us we will always only have two parties. Even if a Bundestagesque multi-member, proportional representation system comes to light or the ranked choice system recently approved by Maine voters expands nationally, it will not enable coalition building if leadership continue to lose to outside interests wielding heavier guns. Parties in the United States will always be presented with choices—in leadership, in ideology, in direction—and that fight for their soul will be decisive in the options given to voters. In both elections and policy, I find it imperative that we strengthen the parties' ability in their mission and create pro-party reforms such as uncapping donations between individuals and parties and parties and candidates or partially removing the linkage between political campaigns and fundraising by limiting campaign durations, creating spending limits, or providing some public financing of elections. Nevertheless, until the membership of Congress and the Supreme Court changes drastically, we will continue to have more of the same.

Interview List

1. Rep. Vic Fazio (D-CA-03/04, 1979-1999), DCCC Chair 1991-1995, Chair of House Democratic Caucus 1995-1999
2. Rep. Martin Frost (D-TX-24, 1979-2005), DCCC Chair 1995-1999, Chair of House Democratic Caucus 1999-2003
3. Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA-11, 1995-2008), NRCC Chair 1999-2003, Chair of House Oversight and Government Reform Committee 2003-2007, Ranking Member of House Oversight and Government Reform Committee 2007-2008
4. Rep. Tom Reynolds (R-NY-26/27, 1999-2009), NRCC Chair 2003-2007
5. Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK-04, 2003-present), NRCC Chair 2007-2009, former Chair of Oklahoma Republican Party, former Executive Director of NRCC, former Chief of Staff of the RNC
6. Rep. Lynn Westmoreland (R-GA-03/08, 2005-2017), NRCC Deputy Chair 2013-2017, NRCC Recruitment Chair 2009-2011
7. Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR, 2003-2015)
8. Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI, 1993-2011)
9. Rep. John Tierney (D-MA-06, 1997-2015)
10. Rep. Tom Coleman (R-MO-06, 1976-1993)
11. Bob Holste, NRCC Incumbent Retention Senior Political Staff 2002 and 2004 cycles, Chief of Staff for Rep. Phil English 1995-2007 (R-PA-03/21, 1995-2009)
12. Robert Jones, NRCC West Regional Political Director 2013-2015, NRCC Patriot Program Deputy Director 2011-2013
13. Pete Kirkham, NRCC Executive Director 2007-2009
14. Josh Sulier, DCCC Western Candidate Fundraising Director 2015-2017, Finance Director for Ami Bera for Congress 2012 (D-CA-07)
15. Sean Murphy, Chief of Staff for Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK-04, 2003-present)
16. Alfonso Sanchez, Campaign Manager for Gloria Negrete McLeod for Congress 2012 (D-CA-35, 2013-2015), and later Chief of Staff
17. Tim Kovis, Campaign Manager for Dan Newhouse for Congress 2014 (R-WA-04, 2015-present)
18. Keith Davies, Campaign Manager for Tim Bishop for Congress 2014 (D-NY-01, 2003-2015)
19. Mark Ciavola, Campaign Manager for Joe Heck for Congress 2012 and 2014 (R-NV-03, 2011-2017), 2010 primary RNC Victory Fund Coordinator then Joe Heck 2010 general election Volunteer Coordinator
20. Shannon Fuller, Finance Director and later District Director for Eric Swalwell for Congress 2012 (D-CA-15, 2013-present)
21. Michael Barone, Resident Fellow at American Enterprise Institute (AEI)
22. Michael Thorning, Senior Policy Analyst at the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC)
23. Norm Ornstein, Resident Scholar at American Enterprise Institute (AEI)
24. Drew Spencer Penrose, Legal Director, FairVote

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