Congressional Agenda Control and the Decline of Bipartisan Cooperation

Laurel Harbridge
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science
Faculty Fellow, Institute for Policy Research
Northwestern University
l-harbridge@northwestern.edu

Although an increasingly large body of literature has examined rising party polarization in Congress, most of the empirical work has focused on ideological polarization between members. Less work has explicitly examined the resulting levels of bipartisan cooperation or the relationship between individual preferences and party strategy. This paper takes on both of these tasks, examining the joint roles of preferences and party strategy in the declining levels of bipartisanship in Congress. By breaking apart congressional behavior into cosponsorship coalitions and roll call votes, this paper suggests that although partisan behavior has increased substantially in roll call votes, the same is not true for bill cosponsorship coalitions. These divergent patterns can be reconciled by taking into consideration congressional agenda control and providing a theoretical perspective on party goals as they relate to partisanship and bipartisanship. As congressional parties sorted, partisan legislation became increasingly likely to face a roll call vote whereas bipartisan legislation became less likely to face a roll call vote.

Declining bipartisan cooperation in Congress may be considered one of the hallmark features of rising party polarization. As the two parties move further apart from one another and become more homogenous internally, bipartisan agreement appears less likely. However, most work on polarization has focused on individual voting patterns and preferences rather than on the amount and type of legislation that receives bipartisan or partisan support, or whether party strategy contributes to polarization. This paper turns from examining the rise of polarization in legislator ideologies to examining the joint roles of preferences and party strategy in the declining levels of bipartisanship in Congress. As noted in recent work, parties in Congress may disagree for strategic reasons in addition to ideological/preference based reasons (e.g., Lee 2009). This paper looks at multiple steps the legislative process in order to examine the prevalence of bipartisan cooperation, and to examine the role that that party strategy and agenda setting plays in the changing level of bipartisan cooperation over time.

Looking at House roll call votes as well as bill cosponsorship coalitions, this paper finds that although partisan behavior has increased substantially in roll call votes, the same is not true for bill cosponsorship coalitions. These divergent patterns can be reconciled by taking into consideration congressional agenda control and the selection of bills to receive roll call votes. By bringing an explicit focus to the congressional roll call agenda from a theoretical and empirical perspective, this paper examines how party control over the congressional agenda, and specifically the temporal changes in the selection of bills to receive roll call votes, affects the degree of bipartisan cooperation in the House of Representatives.

These results have a number of implications for understanding polarization in American politics, agenda control in congressional policy-making, and the importance of carefully considering the potential biases in roll call data. Literature on political parties has often debated

when and how parties are influential, particularly in weak party systems such as the United States (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Krehbiel 1993). The findings in this paper are similar to the findings by Cox and McCubbins (2005) and Theriault (2008), suggesting that party influence occurs through congressional agenda control. Rather than focusing on the ultimate degree of party unity on votes or the procedural tools of the majority, however, this paper focuses on the changing likelihood over time that bipartisan bills make it onto the agenda and receive roll call votes. From this perspective, changes in the construction of the agenda over time show an increasingly partisan strategy. Ultimately, observed polarization in Congress reflects both changes in preferences and changes in strategy. An exclusive focus on roll call votes to measure bipartisanship or party polarization may be misleading and can either under or over-estimate partisanship, depending on how the congressional agenda is structured. While it is clear that voting patterns have changed since the 1970s, consideration of the agenda and the selection of bills to face roll call votes must be taken into account, rather than taking voting patterns as exogenous.

This paper proceeds as follows. The next section presents a theoretical perspective on legislative behavior, partisanship, and party strategy; yielding hypotheses about the level of bipartisanship over time in voting and in bill cosponsorship coalitions. The third section presents empirical evidence of declining bipartisanship in House voting patterns. The fourth section breaks apart legislative behavior from the typical reliance on voting patterns, considering members' bill cosponsorship coalitions. The fifth section reconciles the divergent patterns of bipartisan cooperation in voting and bill cosponsorship by considering the strategic use of agenda control. The final section concludes.

Partisanship in Congress: Members, Parties, and Agenda Content

Half a century ago, political scientists yearned for distinctive, responsible parties (APSA 1950) but the resurgence of polarized parties since the 1970s has left few satisfied. Though there are some that continue to defend partisanship and polarization (e.g., Muirhead 2006), the more common refrain is that party polarization has come at the expense of an idealized era of bipartisanship (e.g. Eilperin 2006). As noted by Frances Lee (2009), however, the bulk of the literature on polarization equates party polarization with ideological polarization and as such, polarization and partisanship are used as synonyms. This paper breaks these concepts apart, focusing on partisanship and its companion, bipartisanship.

Above and beyond individual preferences, partisan outcomes reflect the relationship between members and their parties, and that the level of partisanship in voting is driven, in part, by the majority party's agenda. Although I am not the first scholar to suggest that the agenda is an important factor in party influence and polarization (e.g., Rohde 1991; Lee 2009; Roberts and Smith 2003; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Theriault 2008), there remains debate about the importance of the agenda in standard estimates of polarization (e.g., McCarty et al. 2006) and little work has systematically measured partisanship pre- and post-agenda control. Although many individual members may desire greater opportunities for bipartisan cooperation, I argue that party strategy and the resulting agenda have changed over time in ways that limit the options for individual members to pursue bipartisanship. That is, the content of the agenda strongly affects the level of partisanship and bipartisanship in voting by increasingly focusing the agenda on partisan issues rather than on bipartisan issues.[1] By focusing on two stages of the legislative

---

[1] In this discussion, I use the terms partisan issues and bipartisan issues to refer to legislation that has partisan versus bipartisan support from members at the cosponsorship stage. In contrast to work by Frances Lee (2009), it does not code legislation a priori as being ideological or non-ideological. Instead, the focus is on whether the actual piece of legislation finds initial support from one party or from both parties. The follow up question of why some issues are partisan and others are not may be explained, in part, by whether the content is ideologically based. Likewise, this paper does not explicitly address procedural tactics of the party (e.g., closed versus open rules) and the resulting

process – bill cosponsorship coalitions and roll call votes – I am able to assess the level of bipartisanship prior to agenda control, the formation of the agenda, and the level of bipartisanship post-agenda control.

Bipartisan cooperation in Congress is the result of individual preferences and party strategy. Individuals are driven by constituency/electoral interests but also by partisan interests, notably the desire to be in the majority party. The result of these joint incentives for individuals, and ultimately for the party as a whole, is the creation of a strategic agenda that has important implications for the degree of observed bipartisan cooperation. To explain the formation of the agenda at any point in time and, more importantly, to explain changes in the agenda over time, I focus on electoral and constituency factors combined with institutional constraints, including divided government and the size of the majority seat share. Each of these factors can be expected to affect the extent to which individual members will allow, and party leaders will pursue, a partisan agenda. Though part of the explanation for changes in the agenda over time is driven by constituency characteristics of members, which in turn are likely associated with members' preferences and the ideological make up of the two parties, I argue that the observed partisanship in Congress post-agenda control is something more than just ideological polarization. This 'something more' is party strategy and agenda formation.

Combining insights from literature on legislative behavior, parties and agenda control, I develop an argument and a set of hypotheses on bipartisan cooperation and the role of partisan agenda formation. Literature on the behavior of members of Congress emphasizes the electoral considerations of members (Mayhew 1974), suggesting that these reelection concerns prevent members from being out of step of step with the preferences of their constituents (Canes-Wrone

---

patterns. However, when the results of this paper are combined with work by Sean Theraiult (2008) on this topic, it further reinforces the idea of a changing party strategy over time.

et al. 2002). A large body of work has grown around the question of representation and whether members converge to the position of the district median – what would be perfect representation (e.g., Ansolabehere et al. 2001; Burden 2004). Despite findings that show that candidates rarely fully converge in their positions, scholars have maintained that the median voter is important and that members can be electorally punished if they stray too far from the districts' preferences (e.g. Canes-Wrone et al. 2002; Carson et al. 2010).

Applied to this project, we might think that the median voter is relatively moderate and would like bipartisanship rather that sheer partisanship from members. Aggregate voting patterns and electoral results support this contention (Canes-Wrone et al. 2002). Additional evidence that the public wants members who are less polarized, and who are more bipartisan, comes from survey work (e.g. Pew 2010; CBS 2009).[2] Similarly, Carson et al. (2010) find that potential candidates lose support when respondents are told the candidate is very partisan. However, preferences for partisanship are higher when respondents' party identification matches the party in power, and if the individuals are strong partisans (CBS 2009; Harbridge and Malhotra 2011). Combined, a representation oriented perspective suggests that members ought to engage in bipartisanship much of the time and only engage in partisanship if it aligns with the preferences of the district. Thus, cross-pressured members should have few incentives to engage in partisan behavior and, for other members, the incentives should depend on the degree of district sorting. That is, if preferences are electorally induced, we might expect member preferences and

---

[2] A May, 2010 poll by Pew found that "a substantial minority (42%) say they would be more likely to vote from a candidate who will make compromises with people they disagree with; only about half as many (22%) say they would be less likely to back a candidate willing to compromise" (Pew 2010). The CBS poll in July of 2009 asked, "Looking ahead, which comes closer to your view? The Democrats won a majority in Congress and should generally try to pass legislation that they think is right for the country, even if Republicans don't support it. The Democrats should generally try to pass legislation that receives bipartisan support from Republicans in Congress." 32% of respondents said the Democrats should pass their own legislation, 60% of respondents said the Democrats should pass legislation with bipartisan support, and 8% of respondents did not know, or did not answer.

behavior to reflect greater bipartisanship than partisanship.

However, members are not driven solely by district preferences. Scholars have also focused on the benefits for members of working with one's party and developing a party brand, particularly if it helps a member's party gain or hold majority status. For instance, Lee (2009) suggests that the benefits of being in the majority create shared electoral and power goals for members, that lead to partisanship irrespective of ideological agreement. Similarly, recent work by Grynaviski (2010) highlights the positive electoral implications of creating a party brand based, in part, on the level of party unity in voting. "Whatever the virtues of bipartisanship, they muddle party images and make it more difficult for citizens to distinguish Democratic and Republican positions on the issues" (Groeling and Kernell 2000, 83). This idea is consistent with arguments for responsible parties (e.g., APSA 1950) and suggests that partisanship may prevail.

Ideas about the importance of party brands stem from work by Cox and McCubbins (1993, 2005). Beginning with the reelection goal, Cox and McCubbins argue that the "probability of reelection of the typical member of Congress depends not just on such individual characteristics as race, sex, voting record, and so forth, but also on the collective characteristics of the member's party" (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 109). These collective characteristics of the party create the party brand name. Thus, a member's reelection incentives hinge not only on their individual behavior but the behavior and reputation of their party as well, suggesting that crafting the party's agenda may be important. In particular, I argue that party agenda's have changed over time to highlight partisan issues rather than bipartisan issues.

Essential to the concept of the party brand are agenda control and the shared fates of party members (Cox and McCubbins 2005, 21-24). Though individual members may disagree with components of the party agenda and it would be reasonable to question why individual

members give party leaders the power to set the agenda in ways that force partisan votes, the benefits of a party brand and the shared fates of members for legislative success or failure may be seen as outweighing individual costs. Cox and McCubbins argue "that MCs recognize the collective reputations that tie them together; although much of their time is spent in pursuit of their own parochial electoral interests, they nonetheless support partisan institutions that both regulate the amount and mitigate the external electoral effects of self-serving behavior" (Cox and McCubbins 1993, 277). For instance, Jones (2010) finds that the vote share for members of the majority party is affected by public approval of Congress and that this effect increases with polarization, a pattern which may explain why members are willing to give agenda power to leaders to pursue a platform or vision of good public policy. However, since minority members do receive similar benefits (or punishments), the two parties lack incentives to work together. Rather, each has incentives to pursue distinct versions of policy.

By focusing on a partisan roll call agenda whenever possible, party leaders seeks to create a party brand and point out the differences between the parties. The party leadership is wary to put up issues for votes that create divisions within their own party. In contrast, the leadership often has incentives to place issues up for votes that are expected to divide the parties, with their party coming out on the winning side. This type of strategy has been highlighted in recent years. A Congressional Quarterly staff writer notes that:

> Republican leaders followed a model they adopted in 2000, in which they carefully orchestrated what came to a vote and managed intraparty conflict to minimize dissent on the floor. In both the House and the Senate, there were fewer total roll call votes than in 2000, but the percentage of total votes that were party unity votes were somewhat higher in 2004 than in 2000. That is a reflection of the Republican leaders' choreography (Poole 2004).

Political scientist Sarah Binder suggests that "The rules of the game are easy enough to manipulate by a majority party to foreclose opportunities to vote on alternatives that would

attract bipartisanship" (quoted in Poole 2004). Electoral strategies geared at motivating the base to turnout can further heighten the disincentive for bipartisan agenda. Adam Nagourney, a reporter for the *New York Times,* noted that when both sides are concerned with motivating their base, the agenda difference between the two is much more dramatic (Nagourney 2003).

This paper argues that at most points in time the party leadership would like to pursue a partisan agenda that highlights differences between the parties and creates a clear brand name. However, the ability of the party leadership to pursue this agenda varies over time. Since the leadership's resources and control over the agenda is dependent on rank-and-file members' cooperation, a partisan agenda is more likely when internal divisions are minimized and when between party divisions are maximized. Following the conditional party government argument (Rohde 1991), I argue that party strategy, particularly as it relates to developing a brand that is distinct from the opposing party, is tempered by the constituency characteristics of the party's members. If the majority party represents a wide range of districts and has a large number of cross-pressured members, partisan issues will be minimized on the agenda relative to those issues that have bipartisan support (since this likely equates to support across groups of members within the party). In contrast, if the majority party represents a more homogenous group of districts, the agenda will comprise of more partisan issues. In these instances, the party is less reliant on cross-pressured members.

This argument is similar to that made by Sean Theriault (2008) in his work integrating electoral and institutional explanations for polarization. However, in contrast to his argument that focuses on how the sorting of districts and the extremism of party activists facilitated increasing use of procedural tactics (e.g., closed rules) to structure the agenda in a partisan way, this paper focuses on the underlying selection of issues for the agenda and examines partisanship pre- and

post-agenda control. I agree that more cohesive party caucuses created the incentives and opportunities to vest greater power with the party leaders. However, this paper expands our considerations of how this power was used. This power was used both to structure and control procedural votes (Theriault 2008) and, as is the focus of this paper, to select which issues faced a roll call vote at all.

Overtime, the sorting out of the political parties has combined with agenda control to contribute to an increasingly partisan roll call agenda. The sorting of districts into more homogenous groups within party may result from redistricting and/or geographic sorting (see Theriault 2008). This sorting is particularly apparent in the South, where Republicans replaced conservative Democrats, but the trend is not restricted to only Southern districts. Sorting of the two parties, even without having the Democrats move left or the Republicans move right, creates opportunities for partisan legislation. As overlap declines, there is an increase in the number of status quo points for which an alternative exists that receives the support of the majority party median and the floor median, but does not receive the support from the minority party median. That is, there is an increase in the number of issues that meet Cox and McCubbins' (2005) criteria for being placed on the agenda (support of the majority of the majority party) but that will result in party unity rather than a bipartisan vote. The result of sorting is that the degree of partisanship (and the lack of bipartisanship) will be magnified in roll call votes relative to its prevalence in cosponsorship coalitions.

At the same time however, the majority party must be cognizant of the need to produce of record of legislative success (Cox and McCubbins 2005, 21). Bipartisan legislation has a better chance at becoming law, and major legislation with bipartisan support is often more enduring over the long-term (e.g. Mayhew 1991). Thus, the desires of the party leadership to push

programmatic, partisan legislation will be tempered by internal divisions as well as other institutional factors that would limit the success of partisan legislation, including divided government and small majority seat shares.

I test this argument by breaking apart legislative behavior into voting patterns and bill cosponsorship patterns. Using cosponsorship patterns as a pre-party influence, pre-agenda stage, I examine both the prevalence of bipartisanship in Congress at this stage relative to voting as well as the selection of bills to reach roll call votes over time. If partisanship in voting merely reflects ideological differences, we would expect to see the level of partisanship in voting be similar to the level of partisanship in bill cosponsorship coalitions. In contrast, if the formation of the agenda privileges bipartisan legislation at times and partisan legislation at other times, bipartisanship in voting may not mirror bipartisanship in cosponsorship coalitions. From this perspective, I present two primary hypotheses. The first deals with expectations for the trends in bipartisan cooperation over time, looking at roll call votes (post-agenda) and bill cosponsorship coalitions (pre-agenda). [3] The second hypothesis focuses on agenda formation and when the agenda will have a greater proportion of bipartisan legislation.

> H1: Over time changes in bipartisan cooperation will be larger in roll call voting than in bill cosponsorship coalitions.

> H2: The divergence in patterns of bipartisanship between bill cosponsorship coalitions and roll call votes can be explained by changes in party strategy over time as they relate to the selection of more partisan bills for roll call votes.

>> H2a: Changes in the agenda setting process can be explained by the level of

---

[3] Although only $1/5^{th}$ of quorum is necessary to receive a roll call vote (once a bill is placed on the agenda for a vote), the argument of this paper suggests that even though individual members may want a roll call vote on a particular bill, the incentives of developing a party brand, combined with the leaders control over which bills will receive a vote of any kind, still limit the opportunities for votes on bipartisan legislation.

sorting between the party of representatives and the partisanship of the district.

H2b: The partisanship of the agenda will be constrained by institutional features

such as the divided government and the size of the majority seat share.

Declining Bipartisanship in Roll Call Votes

Although voting patterns in Congress are the last step in my argument (post agenda control), they are the most common measure of bipartisanship and partisanship in Congress. Given their centrality to the conventional wisdom of increasing partisanship, I begin with a presentation of the empirical patterns of roll call votes in Congress. This section summarizes the decline in bipartisanship, drawing on the voting patterns of members.[4]

Although most discussions of polarization and partisanship in Congress focus on individual behavior (e.g., NOMINATE, Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), party unity scores), this project focuses on legislation, and the amount of legislation that receives bipartisan versus partisan support. Congressional Quarterly (CQ) defines party unity votes as roll call "votes that split the parties, a majority of voting Democrats opposing a majority of voting Republicans" ("CQ Fact Sheet Bipartisan Voting" 1970, 1139). Since the discussion of cosponsorship coalitions will focus on the frequency of bipartisan behavior, it is useful to consider the flip side of party unity votes, or what CQ classifies as bipartisan votes. Bipartisan votes are "roll-call votes on which a majority of voting Democrats and a majority of voting Republicans agreed" ("CQ Fact Sheet Bipartisan Voting" 1970).[5] The CQ Bipartisan Measure (see Figure 1) for the House of Representatives shows a fairly steady decline in bipartisanship from the 1973 to 1995 with some recovery of bipartisanship beginning in the 105th Congress

---

[4] The analysis focuses on the period from 1973 to 2004. This choice was driven by the adoption of modern roll call voting procedures, and the use of cosponsorship in the House being restricted prior to the late-1960s.

[5] Note that bipartisan votes exclude unanimous votes.

(post-1996), but declining again after 2001.[6] This pattern holds both for all House roll call votes and for final passage votes on House bills.

Since the CQ measure of bipartisanship looks at what majorities of the two parties are doing, it may miss additional and important variation. In particular, the CQ measure misses the extent of skew within voting (i.e., is it 90% of one party against 90% of the other party or 52% of one party against 52% of the other) and, more importantly, whether the skew has changed over time. To parse out this element in the analysis of bipartisanship, I calculate a 'Difference in Party Support Score' for each vote, focusing on the Yea votes.[7] For each vote, I calculate the percent of voting Democrats voting Yea and subtract the percent of voting Republicans voting Yea. The resulting score ranges from -100 to 100, where -100 indicates a vote on which no Democrats voted Yea and all of the Republicans voted Yea and 100 indicates a vote on which all Democrats voted Yea and no Republicans voted Yea. The midpoint of 0 indicates bills where the same percentage of Democrats and Republicans voted Yea. Thus, the ends of scale reflect the greatest partisanship and the middle represents the greatest bipartisanship, assessed as where voting divisions are the same within each party.

Plotting the density of the scale by Congress for Yea votes when all House roll calls are included highlights the decline in bipartisanship and increase in partisanship (Figure 2).[8] The trend over time has been an increase in density at the two poles of the distribution at the expense

---

[6] A number of scholars have noted that procedural votes have become increasingly partisan. To check whether the relationship between polarization and bipartisanship holds when procedural votes are excluded, I draw on data compiled by David Rohde (2004) for House roll call voting. Looking only at final passage votes and only those on House bills (rather than resolutions or amendments), I find that the percentage of roll call votes that are bipartisan (using the CQ definition) declined from approximately 80 percent in 1973 to 40 percent by 1994. Although there was an increase in bipartisanship under the Republicans, the overall trend of the series has been a strong decline in bipartisanship consistent with the aggregate roll call results.

[7] The analysis focuses on Yea votes since they are most similar to cosponsorship coalitions in indicating support for a piece of legislation.

[8] This plot omits unanimous and near unanimous (90% in favor) votes, as is done in NOMINATE calculations as well.

of the middle, or of the most bipartisan bills.[9] In sum, bipartisan cooperation on roll call voting shows significant declines across the last three decades, particularly from the 1970s through the mid-1990s. This decline in bipartisanship is consistent with the conventional story of the rise in elite polarization. As expected, roll call votes illustrate declining bipartisanship and increasing partisanship as both a percentage of votes, and as the size of coalitions of from the two parties that vote against each other.

Persistent Bipartisanship in Cosponsorship Coalitions

On its own, declining bipartisanship in roll call votes could be consistent with a number of theoretical explanations, including the conventional wisdom that increased partisanship is driven by ideological polarization. In order to argue that increased partisanship is driven by something more than ideological polarization, this section takes a step back in the legislative process explores bipartisanship in bill cosponsorship. The next section looks for evidence of changes in agenda composition.

Although roll call votes are the standard measure of legislative behavior, and often for good reason, it is important to remember that roll call votes are not a random sample of legislation (e.g., Carrubba et al. 2008). Therefore, this paper considers bill cosponsorship coalitions as a second, pre-agenda, measure of bipartisan cooperation in Congress. Of course these are not the only two forms of bipartisan cooperation that can occur in Congress. Bipartisanship may also be observed in the processes used in the House (i.e., the use of closed versus open rules or the composition of conference committees), or even in the rhetoric of members' speeches. Nonetheless, roll call votes and bill cosponsorship coalitions are two areas that provide a unique opportunity to both systematically examine decisions by all members of

---

[9] Restricting the analysis to final passage votes on House bills also shows a decline in bipartisanship, though patterns are skewed toward the majority party (see online appendix for comparable figure).

Congress and to examine the influence of congressional agenda control. [10] As noted by Kessler

and Krehbiel (1996), cosponsorship is less likely to be subject to agenda control and is one of the

most independent activities of members. Like roll call votes, however, bill cosponsorship

coalitions allow all members the opportunity to take a position and side with a coalition of other

members. By looking at bill cosponsorship coalitions, I am able to assess bipartisanship absent

the strategic considerations of which bills face roll call votes, and examine the pre-agenda setting

behavior of members. The key assumption with this measure is that cosponsorship is essentially

a preference-driven behavior.

Bill sponsorship has long been understood as an effective and relatively easy way for

members of Congress to become involved in the policy process, and has increasingly become a

way for scholars to measure legislative behavior (e.g., Aleman et al. 2009; Crisp et al. 2004;

Fowler 2006). Cosponsoring legislation carries a number of possible benefits, both within

Congress and among constituents. As such, cosponsorship has become a frequent activity in both

the House and Senate in recent decades. Since it was first allowed in the House in 1967,

cosponsorship has largely replaced the use of duplicate bills (Thomas and Grofman 1993),

suggesting that members view cosponsorship in much the same way as they do sponsorship

because they can make the same claims back in their constituencies. There are a number of

reasons to believe that cosponsorship coalitions are a useful stage in the legislative process to

assess bipartisanship. First, cosponsorship signals the political benefits of a bill (Koger 2003,

---

[10] It is important to remember that not all legislation that receives a vote receives a roll call vote. The percent of enacted laws to receive a voice vote rather than a roll call vote has varied over time (Clinton and Lapinski 2008), and may be related to whether legislation has bipartisan support, as well as other issue characteristics (Lynch and Madonna 2008). Unfortunately, little research has systematically examined voice votes so this work, like others, focuses on whether legislation faces a roll call vote and defines the agenda as such. Future work ought to examine the joint roles of the roll call and voice vote agendas. Nonetheless, the underlying argument of the paper holds both for the selection of bills to receive a vote, and, once selected for a vote, the decision for a bill to receive a roll call vote.

227). Second, what a member cosponsors, and with whom they cosponsor, allows members to send messages to their constituents. "Cosponsoring helps clarify your message. That way people know where you are... and that trickles down to constituents" (quoted in Koger 2003, 232).

Though there have been debates about why members cosponsor, the assumption in this paper is that members cosponsor legislation that they genuinely favor (similar to a preference or matching argument). However, since members only cosponsor a fraction of the entire number of bills that they might favor, the selection of which bills to cosponsor (among those bills that they like) is assumed to reflect concerns for signaling (either to constituents or internally to Congress) or reciprocity among members.

Though perhaps thought to be less visible than votes, members' patterns of bill cosponsorship are transmitted to constituents through member websites, newspaper endorsements during elections, among other means. Members discuss their patterns of bill cosponsorship when filling out questionnaires for newspaper endorsements, often highlighting their bipartisan nature (e.g. Manzullo 2010; Foster 2010). Newspaper editorials then often discuss the centrist, independent, or bipartisan features of members. For instance, in their endorsement of Democratic incumbent Ron Klein, the editorial team at the *Palm Beach Post* noted that, "Rep. Klein has participated in bipartisan legislation to improve veterans' health care benefits" ("Endorsement: Klein for U.S. House District 22" 2010).

To measure bipartisan cosponsorship, I utilize cosponsor data collected by James Fowler (2006) that provides a matrix of all bills and cosponsors in a given Congress. I use this raw data to create bill level measures of bipartisanship for all House bills.[11] Before focusing on bipartisan

---

[11] I use only House bills throughout the analysis, omitting resolutions and amendments. Although all House bills are included in the analysis, omitting commemorative legislation, which coding is available for through 2002, does not

cosponsorship, it is important to understand the trends in more general cosponsorship patterns.

On the whole, the use of cosponsorship has increased in the House since the 93rd Congress (see

online appendix for summary statistics). Whereas only one-quarter of House bills were

cosponsored in the 93rd Congress, since the 99th Congress, more than half of all bills have been

cosponsored. The median number of cosponsors on a House bill has also risen over time. Among

bills that are cosponsored, the median number of cosponsors has nearly doubled in the period of

analysis, from six in the 93rd Congress to eleven in the 105th through 108th Congresses. However,

members are selective in their cosponsorship. No more than six percent of all cosponsored bills

have more than a hundred cosponsors.

Since cosponsorship has not been analyzed as extensively as roll call votes, there are no

standard measures of partisan or bipartisan cosponsorship. Therefore, this paper considers a

number of possible specifications. One possibility is a dichotomous measure of bipartisanship

where bills are bipartisan if they are above the lower bound of bipartisanship on the scale and are

partisan otherwise. I begin by defining bills as bipartisan if at least twenty percent of the

cosponsors are from the party other than the party of the original sponsor (see Figure 3).[12] When

change the results. The measures of bipartisanship with and without commemorative legislation are correlated at
0.98.

[12] Additional definitions of bipartisanship, including different percentages of cosponsors from the opposing party
(20%, 30%, and 40%) have also been used for comparison. In all cases the pattern over time is similar with the
primary difference being a shift in the intercept. A potential concern about the analysis presented above is that those
bills classified as bipartisan may not be that different from those bills that are classified as partisan, particularly
since the inferences are often made from a small number of cosponsors. To verify that those bills classified as
bipartisan are distinct from those bills classified as partisan in the analysis, I focus just on those bills that receive a
roll call vote and examine the probability that each type of bill – partisan and bipartisan by cosponsorship – receives
a bipartisan roll call vote. That is, of all bipartisan (or partisan) cosponsored bills that face a roll call vote, what
proportion end up having a bipartisan roll call vote (as defined by the CQ measure)? Using data from the Policy
Agendas Project, Rohde's dataset of House roll call votes, and my bipartisan bill cosponsorship measures indicates
that between 25% and 50% of bills with bipartisan cosponsors that reach roll call votes result in a bipartisan vote.
The average for 1973 through 2000 (the last year in which all three data sources are available) is just about 33%. In
contrast, between 5% and 20% (with an average of 15%) of bills with partisan cosponsors that reach roll call votes
result in a bipartisan vote. Although it is not impossible for partisan cosponsored bills to result in a bipartisan roll
call vote, it is rare. In all years, bills with bipartisan cosponsorship coalitions are more likely to result in a bipartisan
roll call vote than bills with partisan cosponsorship coalitions. This suggests that the cosponsorship measures are

all House bills are considered, the proportion of bills that are bipartisan increases over time, largely due to the overall increase in cosponsorship. When the analysis is restricted to only cosponsored bills, I find that although there has been some movement and a slightly downward trend in bipartisanship over time, the magnitude of the change is surprisingly small. Over the entire period of the 93rd to 108th Congresses, the range of bipartisan cosponsorship is between 47% and 61%. The low point of 47% occurs in 1975, 1993, and 2004, which does not fit with patterns of bipartisanship by standard roll call accounts. Though the interpretations of the exact percent of bipartisan votes and bipartisan cosponsorship coalitions are not comparable, given the differences in definitions and cut-points, the key insight is the disparate pattern over time across the two measures.[13]

As done in the analysis of voting, I also create a difference in party support score for each bill. Since cosponsorship occurs only on the positive side, this is similar to looking at the Yea votes. For each cosponsored bill, I subtract the percent of Republican cosponsors from the percent of Democratic cosponsors. Like the roll call-based measure, the resulting the scale ranges from -100 to 100, where the endpoints reflect bills with all Republican cosponsors and all Democratic cosponsors, respectively.

Looking at the density of the difference in party support scale for each House of Representatives from the 93rd to the 108th Congress indicates that bipartisanship persists. As seen in Figure 4, although the distribution of cosponsor coalitions is bimodal in the sense that there are a large number of both Democratic and Republican partisan bills, the middle (i.e., the most

---

capturing important variation, and that the importance of this variation extends to voting patterns of the chamber as a whole.

[13] Using a continuous measure of the percent of cosponsors from the party opposite the party of the sponsor, reiterates the persistence of bipartisanship across time. This measure is similar to the party support score except that it directly accounts for the party of the bill's sponsor. Across the period of analysis, the mean percentage of bipartisan cosponsors fluctuates around 30%, indicating that, on average, one third of a bill's cosponsors are from the party opposite the party of the original bill sponsor.

bipartisan bills) has not vanished over time. The primary change in the distribution of bills is that it has become less lopsided toward the Democratic side, particularly once the Republicans gained majority status. Whereas partisan bills used to be predominantly Democratic, there is a relative parity of Democratic and Republican partisan bills in more recent Congresses and a growth in moderately bipartisan bills on the Republican side. More on point for this analysis, however, is the finding that the center of distribution persists across time. If there is a decline in bipartisanship, we should have seen the density of both tails grow at the expense of the center, creating a greater U-shaped pattern over time.

Regressing these various measures of bipartisanship on time reiterates the decline of bipartisanship on roll call votes but a greater persistence of bipartisanship on bill cosponsorship.[14] Beginning with the CQ measure of all roll call votes, the estimated coefficient on time is -0.45 ($p < 0.05$). The magnitude of the effect increases when only final passage votes are included, to -0.85 ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, for the 20% definition of bipartisan bill cosponsorship, the estimated coefficient on time is -0.25 ($p < 0.01$). Similar patterns are found when bipartisanship is measured using the difference in party support scales. In this case, we expect the direction of the coefficient to be positive since lower absolute values of the scale reflect greater bipartisanship. Defining bipartisanship as the mean of the absolute value of the party scale, we get an estimated coefficient on time of 1.16 ($p < 0.001$) when looking at yea roll call votes (coefficient of 1.11, $p < 0.001$ for final passage votes), but a coefficient of -0.02 ($p = 0.72$) when looking at bill cosponsorship coalitions. Thus, regardless of the technique for estimating bipartisanship, bipartisan cooperation shows a greater decline over time in roll call votes than in bill cosponsorship coalitions. These results offer support for my first hypothesis,

---

[14] Full model specifications available in the online appendix. Time is measured as the number of years since 1973.

that declining bipartisanship in roll call votes magnifies the declining bipartisanship in bill cosponsorship coalitions.

Agenda Control and the Decline of Bipartisanship

Thus far, the data have provided the following empirical patterns – bipartisanship has declined substantially when roll call votes are examined but bipartisanship has declined relatively little on bill cosponsorship coalitions. How can we reconcile these divergent patterns? One explanation is that party leaders have increasingly pursued a partisan agenda as a result of changes in the electoral/constituency environment that allow leaders to prioritize partisan legislation, but with constraints from the need to achieve a record of legislative success. These institutional constraints can be from divided government or the size of the majority seat share. I begin by examining changes in the agenda, looking at the likelihood that bills with bipartisan cosponsors reach a roll call vote, and then examine whether the changes in agenda composition can be explained by electoral and institutional variables. Data on whether a bill received a roll call vote was calculated by combining the bill cosponsorship data with the Policy Agendas Project roll call data, merging on bill ID, and also by using Rohde's (2004) roll call data.

The first step in arguing that agenda control magnifies the degree of partisanship in Congress is to look at whether the likelihood that legislation with bipartisan cosponsors receives a roll call vote fluctuates over time. In order to explore how the incidence of bipartisanship changes when considering the cosponsorship stage versus the roll call vote stage of the legislative process, Figure 5 looks at the percentage of cosponsored bills that are bipartisan under the 20 percent definition for all House bills, for bills that reach roll call votes, and for bills that reach roll call votes *and* are classified as important. Two definitions of important legislation are used. The first uses Congressional Quarterly Almanac (CQ), collected by the Policy Agendas

Project, and the second is original data that was collected matching up Mayhew's important legislation and George Edward's list of important failures with the appropriate bill numbers.[15] In each case, the graph plots the percent of bills in each category that are bipartisan in their cosponsorship coalitions. The lines are smoothed using a loess procedure for ease of interpretation. Here, higher percentages reflect greater bipartisanship. Comparing all cosponsored bills with bills that reach roll call votes, there is a greater decline in bipartisanship in those bills that face roll call votes than there is in overall bipartisan cosponsorship of legislation. Beginning in the mid-1990s, however, there is a resurgence in bipartisanship in bills that reach roll calls, consistent with earlier plots of bipartisan votes. The same pattern is seen when looking only at important bills (CQ) and even more apparent when considering major passages and failures. Combined, these findings suggest that the decline in bipartisanship evident in roll call voting may be driven by the choice of which bills receive roll call votes.

A second approach to distinguishing how agenda control may influence the measurement of bipartisanship is to look at the conditional probability of reaching a specific stage in the policy making process given that a bill is either partisan or bipartisan in its cosponsorship coalition. Using the 20% definition of bipartisan legislation, I analyze the conditional probability of reaching a roll call vote given that a bill is bipartisan (or partisan).[16] As shown in Table 1, bipartisan bills have a greater probability of reaching a roll call vote than partisan bills. However, I find different patterns over time in the conditional probability of reaching a roll call vote. Whereas the conditional probability of a partisan bill reaching a roll call vote slightly increases

---

[15] An updated list of Mayhew's important legislative enactments and George Edward's major legislative failures was graciously provided to the author by XXXX (removed for review process). The bill numbers of the specific piece of legislation, as well as duplicate bills and other similar proposals, was coded using CQ Almanac, the Thomas search engine from the Library of Congress, and relevant newspaper articles on the legislation if necessary.
[16] This analysis includes all cosponsored bills rather than just 'important' bills.

over time (from 0.01 to 0.04), the conditional probability of a bipartisan bill reaching a roll call vote generally declines from the early 1970s, when it was 0.07, to the mid-1990s, when it was 0.03. The conditional probability that a bipartisan bill reaches a roll call vote increases only after the Republican takeover in the 104th Congress. This suggests that legislation with bipartisan support early in the legislative process (as evidenced by its cosponsorship coalition) was increasingly prevented from reaching a roll call vote from the early 1970s through the mid-1990s.

The next step is to examine the causes of the observed changes in agenda composition.[17] As mentioned above, one factor that may explain changes in the composition of the roll call agenda is the sorting out of congressional parties, particularly in the South. Defining unsorted districts as those in which the *normal presidential vote*[18] is less than 50% for the party of the House member in the district, let us consider the percent of unsorted districts as a predictor of whether partisan or bipartisan legislation reaches a roll call vote. Since the baseline probability of a bill reaching a roll call vote is very small, we will restrict the analysis to those bills that were cosponsored and classified as important by Congressional Quarterly Almanac (CQ). The analysis is run at the bill-level where the dependent variable is whether a bill received a roll call vote. The independent variables are *bipartisan cosponsorship*, defined as 1 for bills where at least 20% of the cosponsors are from the party opposite the party of the sponsor; and the *percent of unsorted district*s, measured as the percent of districts in each Congress where the normal presidential vote is less than 50%, and an interaction between the two variables. Table 2 (Model 1) presents

---

[17] Note that the analysis presented in this paper is only able to test correlation, even though the argument is focused on causation.

[18] The *Normal Presidential Vote* is measured as the mean two party presidential vote in the previous two elections by the party of the Representative (Canes-Wrone et al. 2002).[18] For instance, if the member is a Republican I use the mean Republican presidential vote in the last two presidential elections and if the member is a Democrat I use the mean Democratic presidential vote in the last two presidential elections.[18] The presidential vote has been found to be an excellent proxy of district-level partisanship (Levendusky et al. 2008).

the results. Since the percent of unsorted districts varies only by Congress, standard errors are clustered by Congress. Whereas the probability of receiving a roll call vote increases for bipartisan legislation as the percent of unsorted districts increases, the probability decreases for partisan legislation.

The final element of the argument suggests that the ability of party leaders to pursue a partisan agenda will be constrained by the need to achieve a record of legislative success. Two of these constraints may be divided government and the size of the majority seat share. Table 2 (Model 2) examines the effects of *unsorted districts*, *divided government*, and the *size of the majority seat share*, each interacted with whether a bill has bipartisan or partisan cosponsors. As with the previous model, I use the 20% threshold for bipartisan cosponsors and restrict the analysis to cosponsored bills that were deemed significant by CQ, and standard errors are clustered by Congress. In order to assess the effects of the model, Figure 6 presents the predicted probability of reaching a roll call vote for bills with bipartisan cosponsors and bills with partisan cosponsors, allowing one of the key variables to vary while holding the others at their mean or median.

First, consider the effect of changing the percent of unsorted districts. As the percent of unsorted districts increases from 18% to 50% (the range of the data), the predicted probability of a bill with bipartisan cosponsors receiving a roll call vote increases from 0.32 to 0.54. Across the same range, the predicted probability that a bill with partisan cosponsors receives a roll call vote declines from 0.57 to 0.38. This indicates that the degree of electoral sorting is significantly related to the type of legislation that moves from bill introduction to roll call vote. The next two plots examine the constraints from institutional features. In contrast to my expectation, divided government has no significant effect on whether partisan or bipartisan legislation moves toward

a roll call vote. However, the size of the majority seat share is significantly related with the probability of a roll call vote, with the effects in the expected direction. As the majority seat share increases, the probability that bills with partisan cosponsors will reach a roll call vote increases while the probability that bills with bipartisan cosponsors will reach a roll call vote decreases.

If the analysis is run on all cosponsored bills, rather than just those that are classified as significant, the effects each variable on bipartisan versus partisan legislation reaching a vote are quite similar, with three exceptions. First, the range of probabilities for reaching a roll call vote drops from the 0.4 to 0.6 range to the 0.02 to 0.06 range. Second, bipartisan legislation has a greater probability of reaching a roll call vote in both unified and divided government. And third, the effects of both unsorted districts and majority seat share are larger for bills with partisan cosponsors than for bipartisan cosponsors, though the later loses statistical significance. The full model and a graph of the predicted probabilities using all cosponsored bills are included in the online appendix.

In sum, regardless of whether we consider all cosponsored bills or only important cosponsored bills, agenda formation appears to be an important factor in the divergence of bipartisanship in cosponsorship and roll call votes. As hypothesized, the relative prevalence of partisan and bipartisan legislation on the agenda can be explained, at least in part, by electoral/constituency pressures and institutional constraints. Bipartisan legislation is more likely to find a place on the agenda when districts are not sorted, and when institutional features like a small majority seat share limit the opportunities for a successful partisan agenda.

Conclusions

This research finds that although bipartisan cooperation has declined in patterns of roll

call votes, the same is not true for members' use of bill cosponsorship coalitions. Rather, bipartisanship persists in bill cosponsorship coalitions, the stage where legislators are the most independent. While bipartisan bills may not outnumber partisan bills, bipartisanship in cosponsorship coalitions is nearly as common today as it was in the early 1970s. This divergence between roll call voting and bill cosponsorship coalitions can be explained, in part, by changes in the selection of bills to face roll call votes. The findings presented in this paper suggest that sorting and overlap of party members is one possible explanation for changes in agenda strategy. Subsequent work should examine multiple causes, explore why bipartisan legislation faced a brief resurgence in voting in the late 1990s, and examine whether the changes in the agenda reflect changes in the distribution of issues on the agenda or a prioritization of partisan legislation within each issue.

Understanding the extent of declining bipartisanship in Congress has important implications for understanding representation. While some scholars have contended that the public has polarized (e.g. Abramowitz and Saunders 2008), most work suggests that the public has polarized little (Fiorina et al. 2004; DiMaggio et al. 1996) even as it has sorted (Levendusky 2009). The result of these assessments, when combined with evidence that the voting patterns of members show greater partisanship, is as assumption that representation and responsiveness has declined. However, the insights from this paper regarding the growing difference between bipartisanship in bill cosponsorship coalitions and roll call votes suggests that although responsiveness may be declining on roll call votes, it may be increasing (or at least holding steady) on bill cosponsorship coalitions.

Although partisan behavior has always been a feature of Congress, the main finding of this work is that the relative frequency of partisan relative to bipartisan behavior has not

dramatically changed in bill cosponsorship. While the decline of bipartisanship, and of weakened representation, in roll call voting is certainly important both for its normative implications and for the understanding of legislative behavior, including bill cosponsorship coalitions cautions us against an all-or-nothing account of bipartisan cooperation. When considering bill cosponsorship patterns, it is possible that Congress has remained representative of, and relatively responsive to, the more moderate public. Subsequent work should examine more broadly how members transmit information about their legislative behavior to constituents, and whether bipartisan cosponsorship can make up for a partisan voting record.

This paper offers a number of contributions to our understanding of polarization and partisanship, and adds to the growing literature that cautions against using aggregate roll call data as the basis of all legislative behavior measures (e.g. Roberts 2007; Clinton 2007; Carrubba et al. 2008). With respect to academic work on preferences, polarization, and party power, this research points out the importance of looking beyond roll call votes to explore these relationships. As noted throughout the literature asking "Do parties matter?" looking only at voting patterns presents numerous problems for identifying party effects. This project looks beyond voting to consider one element of party effects; that of partisan agenda setting. Beyond the discussion of legislative organization and legislative behavior, my findings add to the growing literature on polarization and party strength. Like Theriault (2008), I find that the appearance of growing partisan cohesion and polarization reflects how political parties utilize the congressional agenda. Rather than focusing on the rise of procedural polarization, however, this paper expands the analysis of the agenda to which bills are selected for roll call votes. Like Cox and McCubbins (2005) and Roberts and Smith (2003), I find that the party's ability to select issues for roll call votes has important consequences. In this case, the probability that legislation

with bipartisan support faces a roll call vote has varied over time. In effect, the political parties are contributing to the level of party polarization that is observed by the public by selecting which bills face roll call votes.

References

Abramowitz, Alan I., and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. "Is Polarization a Myth?" *Journal of Politics* 70 (2):542-55.

Aleman, Eduardo, Ernesto Calvo, Mark P. Jones, and Noah Kaplan. 2009. "Comparing Cosponsorship with Roll-Call Ideal Points." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* XXXIV (1):87-116.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, and Charles III Stewart. 2001. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (1):136-59.

APSA. 1950. "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties." *American Political Science Review* 44 (3).

Burden, Barry C. 2004. "Candidate Positioning in US Congressional Elections." *British Journal of Political Science* 34:211-27.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *American Political Science Review* 96 (1):127-40.

Carrubba, Clifford, Matthew Gabel, and Simon Hug. 2008. "Legislative Voting Behavior, Seen and Unseen: A Theory of Roll Call Vote Selection." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* XXXII (4):543-72.

Carson, Jamie L., Gregory Koger, Matthew J. Lebo, and Everett Young. 2010. "The Electoral Costs of Party Loyalty in Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (3):598-616.

CBS. 2011. *iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research*. University of

Connecticut February 2009 [cited April 29 2011]. Available from

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html

Clinton, Joshua D. 2007. "Lawmaking and Roll Calls." *Journal of Politics* 69 (2):355-467.

Clinton, Joshua D., and John Lapinski. 2008. "Laws and Roll Calls in the U.S. Congress, 1891-

1994." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* XXXIII (4):511-42.

Cox, Gary, and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan*. Berkeley: University of

California Press.

———. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of

Representatives*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

"CQ Fact Sheet Bipartisan Voting." 1970. In *CQ Almanac*. Washington D.C.: Congressional

Quarterly Inc.

Crisp, Brian F., Kristin Kanthak, and Jenny Leijonhufvud. 2004. "The Reputations Legislators

Build: With Whom Should Representatives Collaborate?" *American Political Science

Review* 98 (4):703-16.

DiMaggio, Paul, John Evans, and Bethany Bryson. 1996. "Have American's Social Attitudes

Become More Polarized?" *American Journal of Sociology* 102 (3):690-75.

Eilperin, Juliet. 2006. *Fight Club Politics: How Partisanship is Poisoning the House of

Representatives*. Edited by P. Berkowitz and T. Lindberg. Lanham: Rowman and

Littlefield.

"Endorsement: Klein for U.S. House District 22." 2010. *Palm Beach Post*, October 8, 2010.

Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel Abrams, and Jeremy Pope. 2004. *Culture War? The Myth of a

Polarized America*. New York: Pearson Longman.

Foster, Bill. 2010. "Editorial Board Questionnaires." In *Chicago Tribune*. Chicago.

Fowler, James. 2006. "Connecting the Congress: A Study of Cosponsorship Networks." *Political Analysis* 14 (4):456-87.

Groeling, Tim, and Samuel Kernell. 2000. "Congress, the President, and Party Competition via Network News." In *Polarized Politics: Congress and the President in a Partisan Era*, ed. J. R. Bond and R. Fleisher. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Grynaviski, Jeffrey D. 2010. *Partisan Bonds*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Harbridge, Laurel, and Neil Malhotra. 2011. "Electoral Incentives and Partisan Conflict in Congress: Evidence from Survey Experiments." *American Journal of Political Science* 55 (3):1-17.

Jones, David R. 2010. "Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 54 (2):323-37.

Kessler, Daniel, and Keith Krehbiel. 1996. "Dynamics of Cosponsorship." *American Political Science Review* 90 (3):555-66.

Koger, Gregory. 2003. "Position Taking and Cosponsorship in the U.S. House." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 28 (2):225-46.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23:235-66.

Lee, Frances E. 2009. *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levendusky, Matthew. 2009. *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levendusky, Matthew S., Jeremy C. Pope, and Simon D. Jackman. 2008. "Measuring District-Level Partisanship with Implications for the Analysis of U.S. Elections." *The Journal of Politics* 70 (3):736-53.

Lynch, Michael S., and Anthony J. Madonna. 2008. Viva Voce: Implications from the Disappearing Voice Vote, 1807-1990. Paper read at Annual Meetings of the Midwest Political Science Association, at Chicago, IL.

Manzullo, Donald. 2010. "Editorial Board Questionnaires." In *Chicago Tribune*. Chicago.

Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

———. 1991. *Divided We Govern*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

Muirhead, Russell. 2006. "A Defense of Party Spirit." *Perspectives on Politics* 4 (4):713-27.

Nagourney, Adam. 2003. "Political Parties Shift Emphasis to Core Voters." *The New York Times*, September 1, 2003, 1.

Pew. 2010. *Willingness to Compromise a Plus in Midterms*. The Pew Research Center for People and the Press 2010 [cited May 24 2010]. Available from http://people-press.org/report/617/.

Poole, Isaiah J. 2004. "Party Unity Vote Study: Votes Echo Electoral Themes." In *CQ Weekly Online*.

Roberts, Jason M. 2007. "The Statistical Analysis of Roll-Call Data: A Cautionary Tale." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* XXXII (3):341-60.

Roberts, Jason, and Steven Smith. 2003. "Procedural Contexts, Party Strategy, and Conditional

    Voting in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1971-2000." *American Journal of Political*

    Science 47 (2):305-17.

Rohde, David W. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Post-Reform House*. Chicago: University of

    Chicago Press.

———. 2004. "Roll Call Data for the United States House of Representatives, 1953-2004." East

    Lansing, MI: Compiled by the Political Institutions and Public Choice Program,

    Michigan State University.

Theriault, Sean M. 2008. *Party Polarization in Congress*. New York: Cambridge University

    Press.

Thomas, Scott , and Bernard Grofman. 1993. "The Effects of Congressional Rules About Bill

    Cosponsorship on Duplicate Bills: Changing Incentives for Credit Claiming." *Public*

    Choice 75:93-8.

Table 1: Conditional Probability of Reaching a Roll Call Given Being a Partisan/Bipartisan (20% Definition) Bill

Congress	Roll Call | Partisan	Roll Call | Bipartisan
93	0.01	0.06
94	0.02	0.07
95	0.02	0.06
96	0.04	0.07
97	0.02	0.05
98	0.05	0.06
99	0.03	0.04
100	0.03	0.05
101	0.03	0.03
102	0.03	0.03
103	0.03	0.03
104	0.04	0.05
105	0.04	0.06
106	0.03	0.08
107	0.03	0.07
108	0.03	0.07

Source: Calculated by author from cosponsorship matrices provided by James Fowler and roll call data provided by Rohde (2004) and the Policy Agenda Project (data were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant number SBR 9320922, and were distributed through the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington. Neither NSF nor the original collectors bear responsibility for the analysis reported here.).

**Table 2: Probability of a Roll Call Vote (CQ Significant Legislation, 1973-2004)**

	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	-0.00452	-2.14
	(0.55)	(2.44)
Bipartisan Cosponsorship	-0.85**	2.51^
	(0.31)	(1.43)
Percent Unsorted Districts	-0.00449	-0.0244
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Bipartisan x Percent Unsorted	0.0225**	0.0523***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Divided Government	—	0.00785
		(0.40)
Majority Seat Share	—	4.79
		(4.58)
Bipartisan x Divided Government	—	-0.116
		(0.17)
Bipartisan x Majority Seat Share	—	-7.31*
		(2.94)
N	3313	3313
Log Likelihood	-2274	-2271

Standard errors in parentheses.

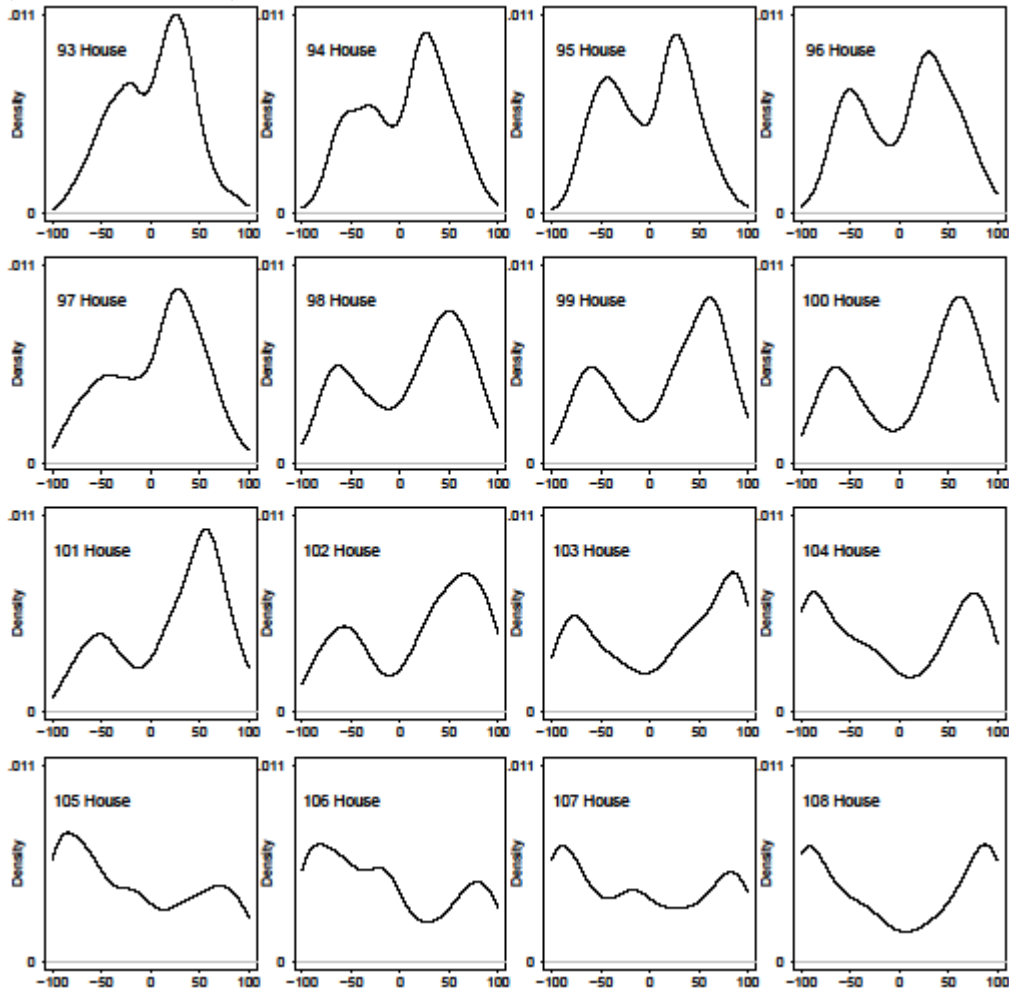^$p < 0.1$, *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

Source: Calculated by author from cosponsorship matrices provided by James Fowler and roll call data provided by Rohde (2004) and the Policy Agenda Project (data were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant number SBR 9320922, and were distributed through the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington. Neither NSF nor the original collectors bear responsibility for the analysis reported here.). Dependent variable is whether a bill received a roll call vote. Standard errors clustered by Congress.

Figure 1: CQ Roll Call Bipartisanship Measures (House of Representatives, 1973-2004)
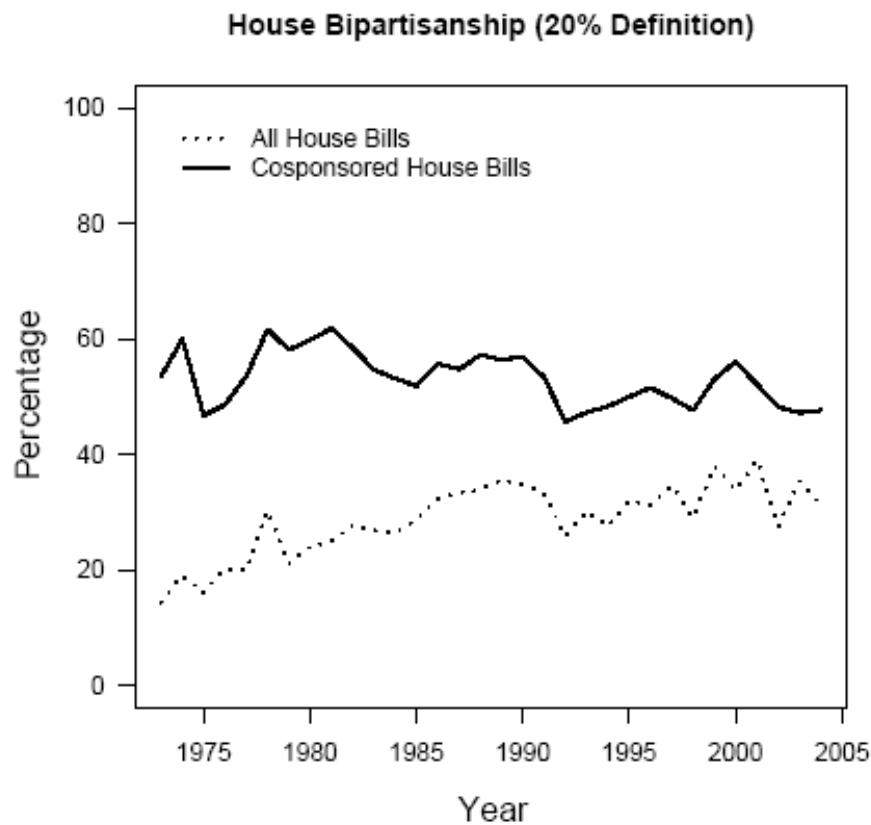

CQ Bipartisanship
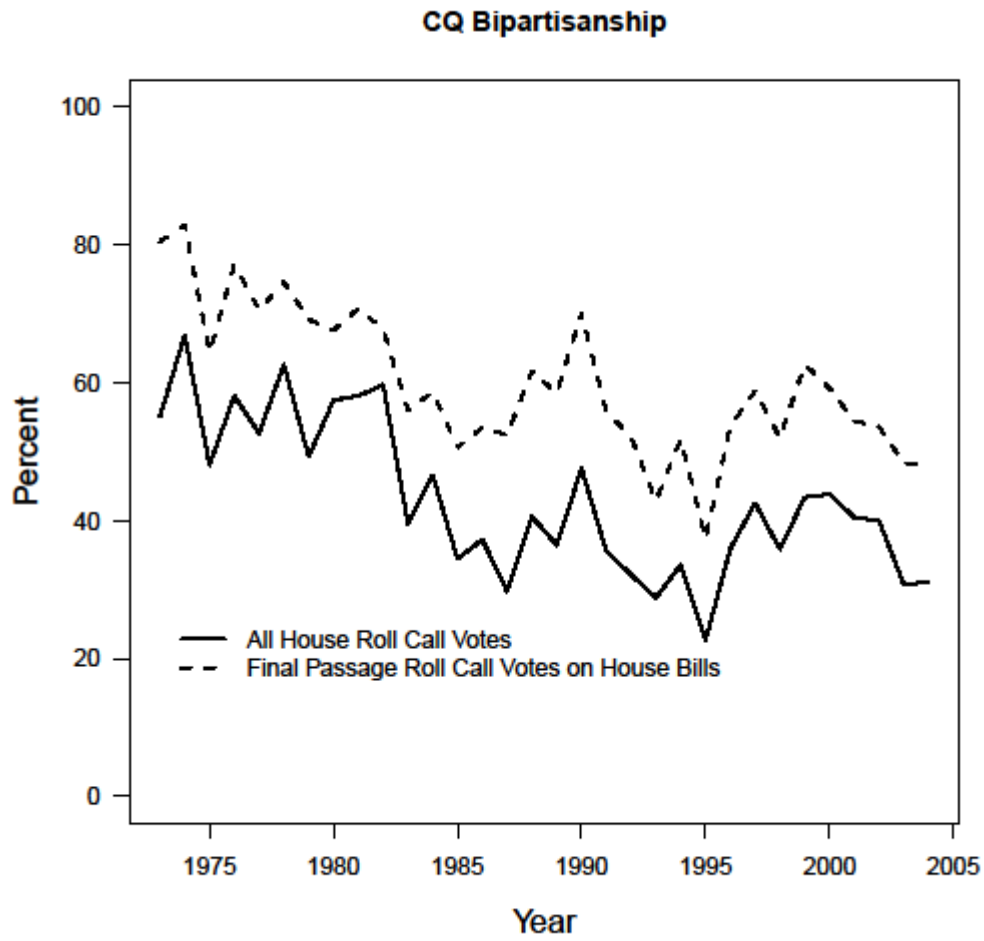
Source: Congressional Quarterly Almanac. Regressing the percent of all bipartisan roll call votes on time produces a coefficient of -0.45 (p < 0.05). When only final passage roll call votes are included this increases to -0.85 (p < 0.001).

Figure 2: Difference in Percent of Party Voting Yea (% of Democrats - % of Republicans) (All House Votes)
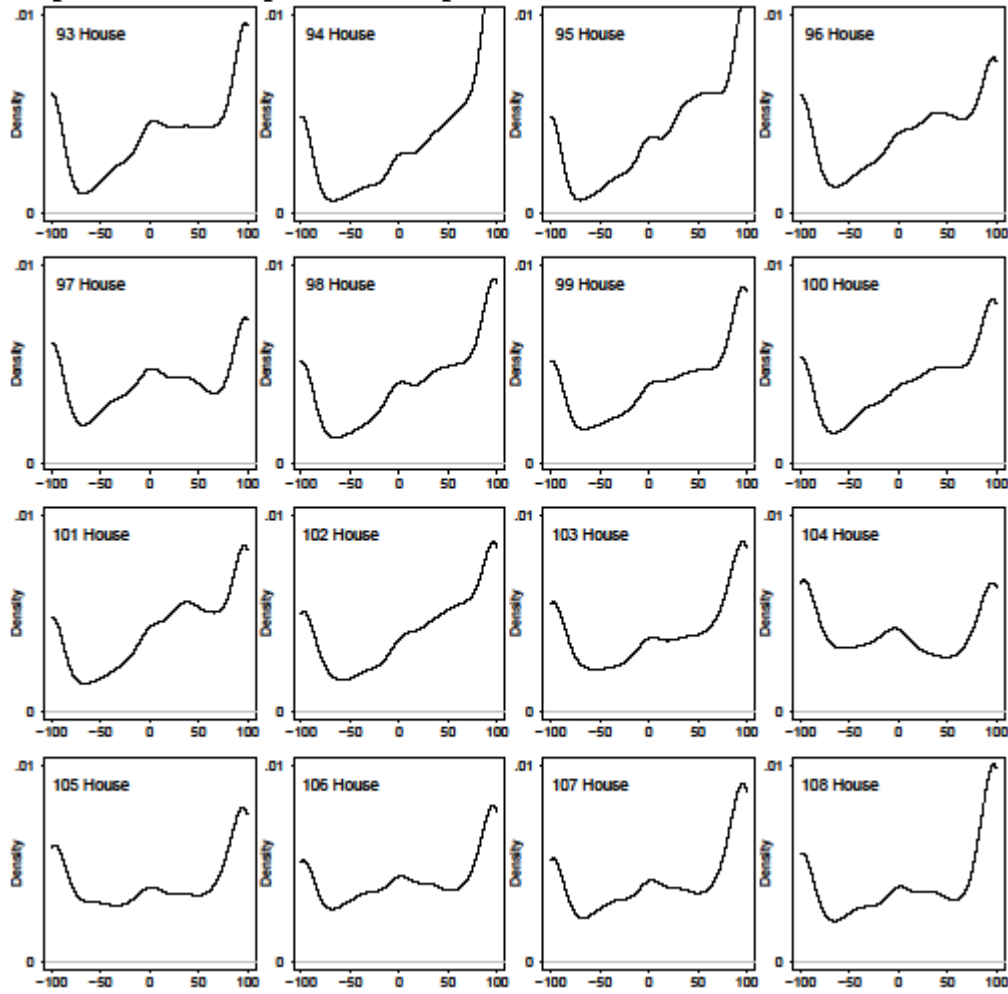

Source: Calculated by the author from Rohde (2004) data. Regressing the mean of the absolute value of the party difference score on time produces a coefficient of 1.16 (p < 0.01). When only final passage roll call votes are included this coefficient is 1.11 (p < 0.001).

Figure 3: Bipartisan Cosponsorship (At least 20% of Cosponsors from Party Opposite the Party of Sponsor, House of Representatives, 1973-2004)


House Bipartisanship (20% Definition)

Source: Calculated by author from cosponsorship matrices provided by James Fowler. Regressing the percent of cosponsored bills that are bipartisan on time produces a coefficient of -0.25 ($p < 0.01$). As a comparison, if the measure of bipartisanship is the mean of the percent of cosponsors opposite the party of the bill sponsor, the coefficient on time is -0.17 ($p < 0.001$).

Figure 4: Difference in Party Support in Cosponsorship Coalitions (% Democratic Cosponsors - % Republican Cosponsors)
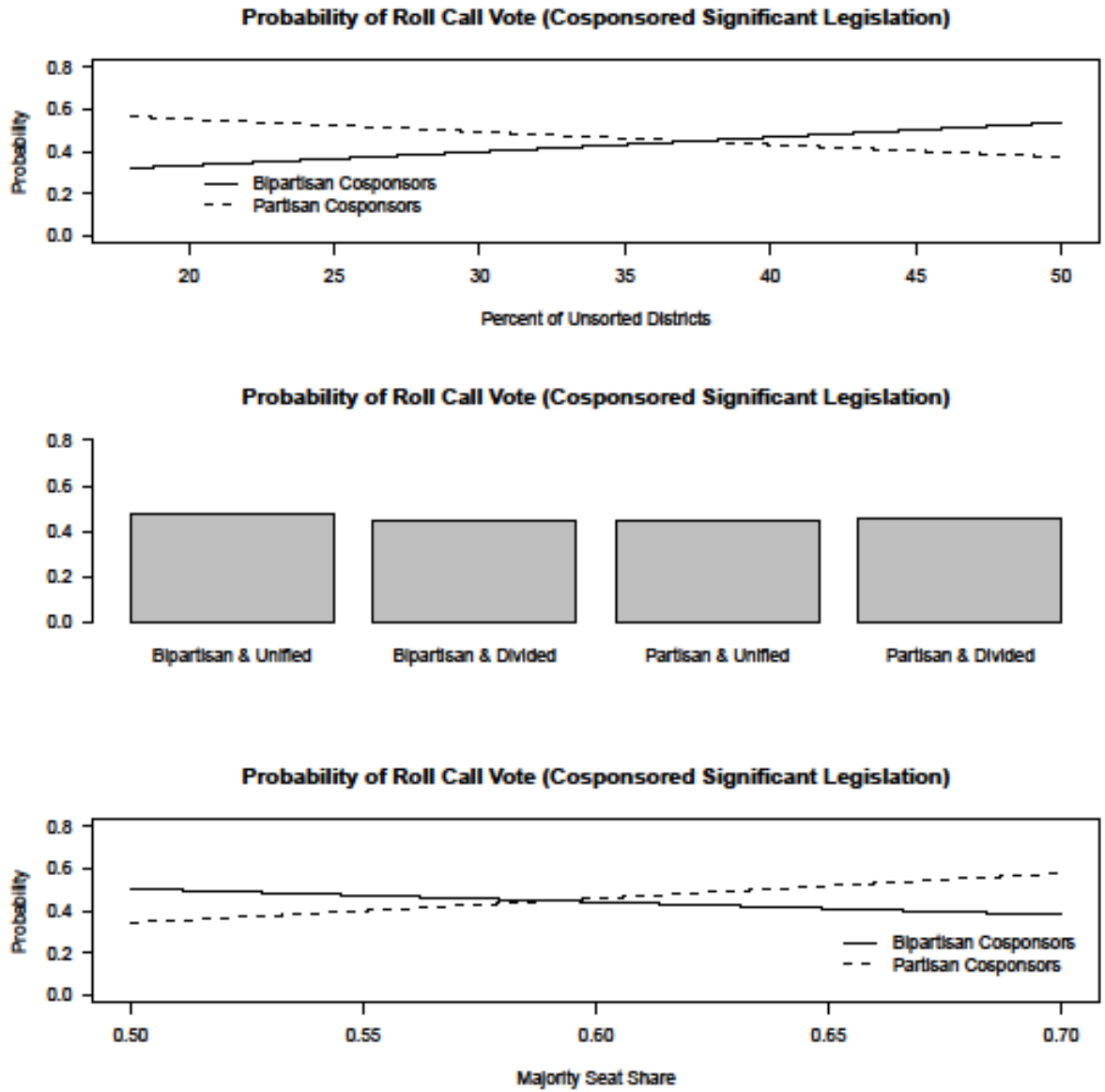

Source: Calculated by author from cosponsorship matrices provided by James Fowler. Regressing the mean of the absolute value of the party scale on time produces a coefficient of -0.02 (p – 0.72).

Figure 5: Bipartisan Cosponsorship by Stage of Policy Making (Percentage of Cosponsored Bills That Are Bipartisan by 20% Definition, Smoothed)
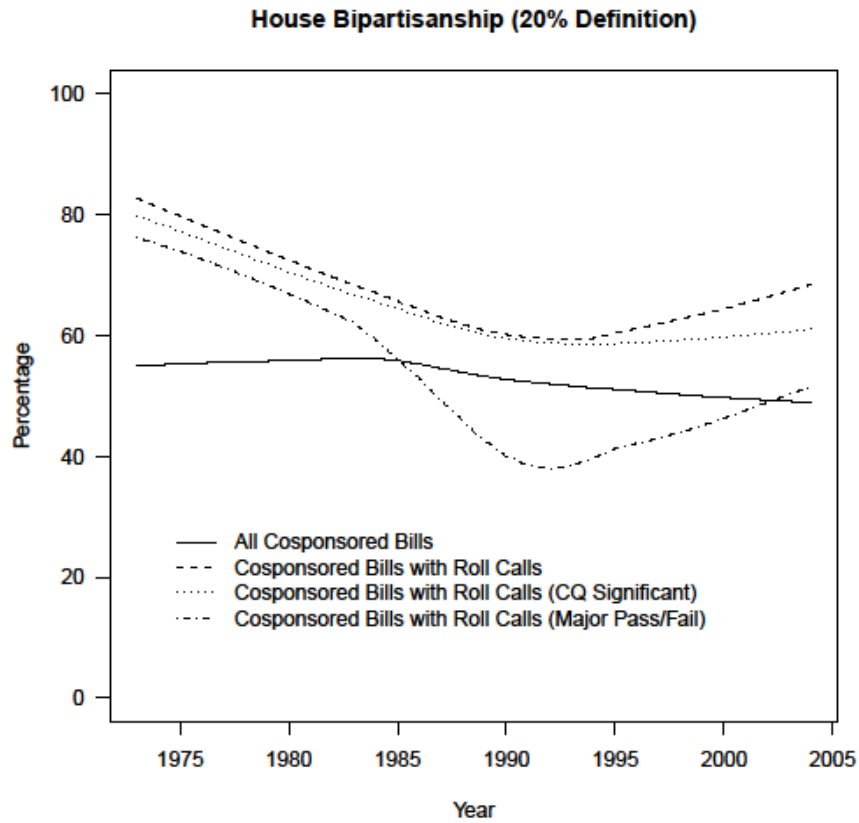
Source: Calculated by author from cosponsorship matrices provided by James Fowler and roll call data provided by Rohde (2004) and the Policy Agenda Project (data were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant number SBR 9320922, and were distributed through the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington. Neither NSF nor the original collectors bear responsibility for the analysis reported here.).

Figure 6: Predicted Probability of a Roll Call Vote (from Table 2, Model 2)

Probability of Roll Call Vote (Cosponsored Significant Legislation)

Probability of Roll Call Vote (Cosponsored Significant Legislation)

Probability of Roll Call Vote (Cosponsored Significant Legislation)

Source: Calculated by author from cosponsorship matrices provided by James Fowler and roll call data provided by Rohde (2004) and the Policy Agenda Project (data were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant number SBR 9320922, and were distributed through the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington. Neither NSF nor the original collectors bear responsibility for the analysis reported here.).