Committee Hierarchy and Assignments in the U.S. Senate, 1789-1946

David T. Canon
University of Wisconsin

Charles Stewart III
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Prepared for delivery at the Norman Thomas Conference on Senate Exceptionalism, Vanderbilt University, October 21–23, 1999.

This research was made possible, in part, by NSF grant SES 93-10057 and the "Relational Database on Historical Congressional Statistics." Special thanks also go to Garrison Nelson who helped compile the Senate standing committee data set. Parts of this paper are drawn from Canon and Sweet (1998), and Canon and Stewart (1998).

Committee Hierarchy and Assignments in the U.S. Senate, 1789-1946

David T. Canon, University of Wisconsin
Charles Stewart III, MIT

Congressional scholars have offered explanations for patterns of committee assignments for a century. Lauros McConachie, writing in 1898, noted that committee assignments were handed out on the basis of sectional and state interests, ability, and partisan concerns. More recent works focus on member goals (Fenno 1973), distributive rationales based on gains from trades (Weingast and Marshall 1988), informational theories based on policy and collective goals (Krehbiel 1991), and partisan explanations for the composition of committees and their relationship to the rest of the institution (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991, Cox and McCubbins 1993, Aldrich 1995).

In this paper, we provide the first systematic glimpse of how the Senate committee system developed in its first century and a half, from the First Congress through the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. The evidence we analyze is drawn from our data set of all Senate committees assignments, standing and select. Ours is certainly not the first look at the Senate's institutional development (see Swift 1997), or even the first look at the development of its committee system (see Robinson 1954). However, our analysis is different from past research in its comprehensive sweep of history and reliance on data analysis rather than diaries, newspapers, and debates.

We have two general goals in this paper. First, we use the data we have gathered to sketch a portrait of the partisan and individual-level underpinnings of the committee system. At what point did parties begin to structure the committee system? At what point does a hierarchy of committee evolve in the Senate, based on the individual calculations of senators about how to further their career and policy goals? The second aim of this paper is to better understand the committee appointment patterns with an eye toward identifying the factors that influenced the distribution of power throughout the chamber.

Understanding who was appointed to Senate committees is important for many reasons. Generally, two decades of congressional scholarship have emphasized the agenda-setting power of committees in legislative action. Understanding how Senate committees were composed, assuming they were not constructed randomly, is the first step in beginning to understand how the formal institutions of the Senate may have influenced policy making throughout its history. Specifically, although the Senate is known for its informal rules of procedure, we also know that heat was periodically generated in senatorial politics in the nineteenth century over the institutional design of the Senate. Weingast (1998) has argued, for instance, that the "balance rule" was designed to institutionalize a deal between northern and southern interests over the handling of slavery. If so, was that deal continued at the committee level? Several historians have noted that John C. Calhoun set off a firestorm of protest when he insisted on asserting his prerogative as President of the Senate to appoint Senate committees, under the extant rules of the

day. Did Calhoun follow a different set of criteria in setting committee rosters than his predecessors? Did the rule concerning committee appointments that were instituted in response to Calhoun's move change those criteria yet again?

While it is important to establish these historical details, the greater payoff of this research is in testing various theories of legislative organization. This view of the historical study of the Senate puts us in the category of "history for hypothesis testing" (Aldrich 1997, 18). While valuing the other two approaches noted by Aldrich ("history as comparative politics" and "history as history"), we believe that general theories of legislatures can only be built with the broadest possible historical data. While care must be exercised in making generalizations across historical eras, the great institutional and behavioral variation presented by a 150-year sweep of history present wonderful opportunities for hypothesis testing. Consider, for example, the evolution of the committee assignment process: The current method of appointment is most consistent with the requirements of the distributive theory (self-selection by high demand preference outliers), the party list method is obviously most consistent with party-based theories, and the early methods of balloting by the floor would be most likely to produce committees that are close to the median floor voters, which is consistent with a "pivotal politics" view of committees (Krehbiel 1998). While a systematic test of these theories is beyond the scope of this paper, we will provide some suggestive evidence concerning informational and partisan theories. (See Canon and Sweet [1998] for a test of distributive theories.)

Our empirical analysis relies on a data set that we have constructed, building on the previous work by Garrison Nelson. We collected the data from the Senate *Journal*, supplemented by the various compilations of congressional debates that were published during these Congresses (*Annals of Congress, Congressional Globe, and Congressional Record*). For much of this exercise it was necessary to read page-by-page through the Senate *Journals*, since the indexing of the *Journals* and debates was often so poor and incomplete. The payoff to this strategy is evident in the number of select committees we were able to discover. Although Stubbs (1985) records only one select committee in the Senate before the Fourteenth Congress, we found 2,142. The data set attempts, as well as humanly possible, to record the comings and goings of all committee members, not only those appointed at the beginning of a Congress, but those appointed in the course of a Congress, as well. The result is the documentation of 30,804 standing and 11,834 select committee assignments during this period.

The remainder of our paper is organized as follows. In Section I we discuss the partisan basis for the Senate committee system and present some basic descriptive information about the partisan composition of committees from 1789 to 1946. In Section II we describe the hierarchy of Senate committee and the next section examine select and standing committee appointments. We conclude in Section IV with a discussion of the general implications of our research and suggestions for future research.

I. Political Parties and Committees

Party is the primary organizing principal of the modern Congress. When and how did this principle emerge? During the period covered by this paper, we know that certain signposts can guide our initial foray into this subject. First, the literature on party emergence suggests that by the Third Congress both chambers had divided into identifiable voting blocs that quickly transformed into electoral labels on the House side. The party caucus was active during the early part of this period as the device for presidential nomination, and members of the Senate were active in nominating caucuses, like House members.

Unlike the House, the vote for (surrogate) presiding officer in the Senate was not tantamount to chamber organization, and thus it is easy to imagine that partisanship largely eluded the organization of committees. Yet, such a view would be mistaken. Swift (1997, pp. 67–73) notes several ways in which partisanship infected early Senate behavior, on and off the floor. John Hoadley finds evidence of party voting in the Senate in the 1790s (1986, p. 84), Poole and Rosenthal find complete spatial separation between the Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans by the 7th Congress in the Senate (1997, p. 36), and Robinson reports that by the 29th Congress party lists were developed by the party leaders and presented to the Senate for ratification—even as the Senate rules still formally provided for balloting in the selection of committees (1954, p. 137). Behind the scenes negotiations within parties for committee slots were reported as early as 1806, as noted above, and were common by the 1830s (McConachie 1898, pp. 276–77).

At the same time, other factors may have undermined the operation of partisanship in the early Congress. The practice of choosing committee members by ballot clearly did not serve the interests of the majority party. Without a formal mechanism to coordinate the choice of committee slates during this period, it was impossible for parties to establish a grip on the committee system. McConachie notes the vagaries of the balloting mechanism:

> Through absence of concerted action, through a very free exercise of individual preferences, the committeeman standing second in number of votes would be elected by an aggregation of voters slightly, or it may be markedly, different from that which had conferred the chairmanship. So it would be concerned the remaining members of the committee. Thus, at the outset the ballot left larger latitude to a minority than did the House regulations . . . (1898, p. 273).

While complete records of committee balloting are not available, a few published documents and our own examination of some ballots at the National Archives reveals that while parties clearly structured voting, organized blocs of minority-party senators could cast their ballots for an agreed upon slate of candidates, overcoming the more broadly dispersed votes of the unorganized majority party. Balloting sometimes produced minority party chairs, and more often minority party members in the number two position, who were in line to become chair if it became open during the session.

We begin our look at party and the committee system by simply noting the mechanism through which committees were chosen during this period. While not a sufficient condition, a necessary condition for party control over committee assignments was that parties have some way of coordinating the assignment of members to committees. What were the rules? What was the practice?

Table 1 summarizes the practice of appointing standing committees from the 14th to the 37th Congresses.[1] The first column reports how committees were appointed each session. Committees were appointed in two ideal-typical ways, sometimes with mixtures of the two. *Balloting* involved the Senate voting on who would serve on the committee. A *resolution* appointed members to the committee, bypassing the necessity to ballot for each committee (with responsibility for composing the committee lists delegated to the president pro tem, the Vice President, or political parties, depending on the Congress). Various hybrids, which will be described in more detail below, were used between the 21st and 31st Congresses.

The early practice of balloting for committees positions became increasingly unacceptable. McConachie says, "With the growth of the Senate, and the increase in the number and the importance of committees, as well as with the adoption of the plan of organizing them all at the same time, the old, slow device proved irksomely tedious and time wasting" (1898, p. 277). It often took two or three days to complete the voting.

The first significant change came in 1823 (18th Congress) when the presiding officer was granted power to appoint committees. Three years later (in the second session of the 19th Congress), the Senate returned to balloting, but with separate votes for the chairs and other members of the committee. In many years only the most desirable committees were subjected to a ballot, with others appointed (per resolution) by either the president pro tempore or the vice president.

In the second session of the 29th Congress a critical change provided parties with much greater control over appointments. At the critical juncture, the Senate had been delaying the balloting process for days and frustration was building. Finally after the Senate had selected six committees, Senators Sevier and Speight proposed adopting the remaining 21 committees by unanimous consent from lists presented by the two parties (*Congressional Globe*, 29-1, p. 66). The same practice was followed in the next Congress as Democrats filled the first three spots on each committee and then gave the list to the Whigs who filled the last two. The only exception

---

[1]The appointment of select committees followed the same general rule as appointment of standing committees. Prior to the 14th Congress, the Senate rules called for the appointment of Senate select committees by ballot. The condition of the *Annals of Congress* and Senate *Journal* make it impossible to know what fraction of select committees were actually appointed by ballot and what fraction were in fact appointed by the presiding officer or suggested by a list provided by the motion-maker.

was the Naval and Military Committee that had been expanded and had five Democratic slots and two Whig positions (Robinson 1954, p. 130).

Over the next decade, various permutations of selection mechanisms were used, as in the 30th and 31st Congresses when Free Soiler, John P. Hale, objected to the unanimous consent of the party lists (because he was not included). He forced the Senate to select members of the Judiciary, Territories, and District of Columbia committees by ballot (those that were of special interest to the Free Soilers), and then the other committees were selected by resolution from the party lists (McConachie 1898, pp. 284–85). However, as of the 29th Congress, the parties had, for the most part, taken control of the assignment process.

With the formal and informal appointment practices sketched out, what were the partisan effects? To measure and describe partisan effects over time, we rely on three measures, as follows:

(1) *Relative ranking of majority and minority members.* Throughout this period, both in common practice and later codified in the rules, the rank-order of the committee rosters was important because it indicated who would serve as the committee's chair in the first-ranked member's absence. One measure of majority party dominance, therefore, is the proportion of committees in which all majority members are ranked above all minority members.

(2) *Majority party chairs.* Holding the chair of a committee during this period provided a two-pronged advantage to the majority party. Most obviously, the chair called committee meetings and generally led the legislative effort(s) of the committees. In addition, once committees began to be granted clerks, it was the chair who benefitted most immediately (Fox and Hammond 1977). Therefore, a second measure of majority party dominance is the fraction of chairs held by the majority party.

(3) *Committees with a majority from the majority party.* In addition to simply holding more seats throughout the committee system, holding partisan control over a committee is an important element in majority party control over the committee system—some would argue it is the defining element. Thus, the last measure of majority party dominance is the proportion of committees with a majority from the majority party.

In Figure 1 we have graphed out each of these measures, for standing and select committees. Each measure tells a slightly different story of majority party dominance. The first panel of Figure 1 shows that majority and minority party members were tightly interwoven on the committee lists until the 1850s. Until then, the majority rarely occupied all the top committee positions. In the 35th Congress, which coincides with the first formal appearance of the Republican Party in Congress (Martis 1989), this all changed. From then on, the resolution appointing committees typically listed all the majority party members first, then the minority. An

important amendment to this practice emerged over time, whereby the minority party was given control of certain minor committees.

The second panel in Figure 1 documents the dominance of the majority party among the committee chairs. During the period from the 19th to the 24th Congress, when balloting was common, standing committee chairs frequently came from the minority party. That practice became rare in the 1830s, lasting through the 1870s. However, as the standing committee began to blossom after Reconstruction, the frequency of minority party chairs again increased. The practice of appointing minority party members to the chairmanships of committees ended with the consolidation of the Senate committee system in the 67th Congress.

The final panel of Figure 1 shows that the number of standing committees with majority party majorities steadily increased from the 19th Congress until the 1860s. From Reconstruction through the turn of the twentieth century, the majority party dominated most, though not all, committees. This parallels other time trends in Figure 1, particularly panel (b), and also corresponds with anecdotal evidence provides by contemporary observers such as McConachie.

The remarks in the previous paragraphs concerned standing committees. If we look at the series for select committees in the first Congress and move our eye toward the 14th, we see that the standing committee series all pick up where the select committee series left off. This suggests that the transition from select to standing committees in the Fourteenth Congress was gradual in certain important partisan effects. However, moving forward, the select and standing committee series in all three panels diverge in one important respect: The minority party fared better, in general, among the select committees than among the standings. We could speculate why this is, though we have no definitive answers at this time. The standing committees were certainly more central to political success, and thus the majority party would have attended to maintaining their dominance among the standings, even at the expense of relinquishing control of the selects. At the same time, many of the select committees after the Fourteenth Congress were created to investigate various matters, within and outside the government. What this suggests is that the Senate actually facilitated, thought its select committee systems, a classic tool of the opposition. Why the majority would acquiesce to this strategy, though, is a puzzle.

A different view of partisan practices associated with standing and select committees is provided in Figure 2. Here, we have superimposed the time series showing the fraction of committees controlled by the majority party on top of another two sets of time series showing the fraction we would have *expected* under a null model in which committees were constituted

randomly with respect to partisanship.[2] The contrasting patterns of select and standing committee partisan domination are striking. Before the 14th Congress, when the Senate did not have a standing committee system, the majority party dominated a greater fraction of committees than one would expect using the null model of random partisan assignment. Once the standing committee system was established in the 14th Congress, the partisan domination of select committee ended as a general phenomenon. From that point forward the fraction of select committees dominated by the majority party averages out to be what one would expect if select committees were constructed randomly with respect to partisanship. For some stretches of time, such as Reconstruction and the 1920s, select committees *were* dominated by the majority party. However, there were many other times, such as the 1880s and 1890s, when *minority* party domination of select committees was equally likely. Across the entire sweep of history, domination by the majority and minority parties balanced out.

The partisan composition of the standing committees tells a different story. Until the 29th Congress, majority party dominance of standing committees mirrored what we would expect if party was *not* an explicit factor in making committee appointments. This changed significantly after the 29th Congress. From that point onward, there was only *one* Congress in which the fraction of committees controlled by the majority party was less than what one would predict from the null model, and in that Congress (the 53rd), the balance of power in the Senate was held by third party senators.

---

[2]We developed the null model borrowing from Stewart et al, 1995. Assume that in the appointment of a single committee, the Senate picks *n* members from the Senate, the fraction of ? of which belongs to the majority party. If members are drawn independently, then the number of members who come from the Speaker's party across all committees follows the binomial distribution: $f(x) = \binom{n}{x} q^x (1-q)^{n-x}$, x = 0, 1, 2, …, n where $\binom{n}{x} = \frac{n!}{x!(n-x)!}$.

For instance, if the committee has three members (*n* = 3) and the majority party consists of 60% of the Senate (? = .60), then the expected fraction of the time the majority would pick no one from its party is 6.4%; it would pick one member 28.8% of the time, two members 43.2% of the time, and all three members of the majority party 21.6% of the time. Thus, three-member committees should have a majority from the chamber majority party 65.8% (= 43.2% + 21.6%) of the time.

Note that *f(x)* is a function of committee size, *n*. Holding ? constant, a committee majority from the chamber majority will occur more often as the size of the committee grows. For instance, a nine-member committee would have a chamber-majority 73.3% of the time simply by random selection.

To simulate random selection, we considered each committee appointed in each Congress. Taking the size of the chamber majority and the number of members on that committee as fixed, we calculated the fraction of time such a select committee should have a majority chosen from the chamber majority. We then averaged all these values across all committees in a Congress to produce the null model predictions graphed in the figure.

To be clear, the standing committee system before the 1946 Legislative Reorganization Act was never dominated by the majority party to the degree it is now—it was rare for the majority party to control *every* committee—nor to the degree the majority party controls a Westminster-style parliament. Still, the practice in the Senate for the past century and a half has been for the majority party to enjoy the spoils of *standing* committee assignments disproportionately more than the minority party.

In this section we have used some crude measures of party dominance of committee assignments to document the rise and persistence of disproportionate majority party influence in the making of Senate committee assignments, especially in the standing committees. Thus, we must develop finer measures of important characteristics of the committee system before we can draw any firmer conclusions about the nature of partisan domination of the committee system. In the next section we develop a measure of an important characteristic of the committee system, its value hierarchy.

II. Committee Hierarchies in the Early Senate

A recurrent theme among modern students of Congress is the hierarchical nature of the committee systems in both chambers (Matthews 1960; Bullock and Sprague 1969; Bullock 1973, 1985; Munger 1988; Munger and Torrent 1993; Endersby and McCurdy 1996; Stewart and Groseclose 1998; Groseclose and Stewart 1999). The simplest explanation for why this hierarchy exists is functional—some committees handle business that is "more important" than other committees' business, that "must pass" in a timely fashion, or "protects the constitutional prerogatives" of Congress. If so, then the chambers will jealously guard memberships on these committees, requiring new members to have served an apprenticeship on less important committees.

It is possible to complement this functional explanation with an explanation that derives from the individual policy, electoral, and career motivations of members of Congress. For instance, if Fenno (1973) is right and committee dynamics are fundamentally driven by the policy, election, and power goals of members, then a hierarchy of "desirable" and "undesirable" committees should emerge, as well. If members tend to gravitate to electorally-oriented committees early in their careers, then perforce these committees will be viewed on the whole as less desirable than policy or power committees, as we witness more members transferring off of them than transferring on. Among the policy-oriented, committees with broader jurisdictions will dominate those with narrow jurisdictions; committees with fiscal responsibilities will dominate authorizing committees.

Finally, if a committee is responsible for producing public goods—either for the society or for the institution itself—then it would serve the collective interest of the chamber to endow that committee with features designed to heighten its desirability (Krehbiel 1991). Those features—like the ability to bring in the committee's bills under restrictive rules, larger staffs, a

brighter limelight—will in turn inspire members of Congress to abandon committees that are not so well endowed in favor of service among the select few.

Regardless of one's theoretical tastes, it is easy to spin out explanations for why a legislature's committee system should contain important pyramidal features. It is harder to predict, *a priori*, which committees will lie at the bottom or top of the pyramid at any given historical moment. Just as difficult—if not more—is the task of the legislature itself as it figures out how to endow its committee system with a hierarchical structure that is both stable and serves the collective interests of all legislators.

The purpose of this section is to explore transfer patterns among Senate standing committees from the 1810s to the 1940s, with the goal of understanding when the hierarchical structure of the committee system emerged and what that structure looked like. We examine this subject for more than our intrinsic interest in the matter. After estimating the nature of the hierarchical structure of the Senate committee system at various points in time, we will then use this information to examine the patterns of committee assignments with that hierarchy.

While some evidence of committee hierarchies has been found among the House committees in the late nineteenth century (Stewart 1992; 1995), no research has been done on the Senate for any period before 1946. There are many reasons to believe we would not find much evidence of a standing committee hierarchy for the time period we are covering here. The relatively large number of committees per senator immediately makes a hierarchy less likely, in simple mechanical terms. By the 66th Congress there were 75 committees representing 757 committee assignments on which the Senate's 96 members could serve—representing a ratio of nearly 8 committee assignments per senator. The death of a single senator could set off a scramble for assignments involving virtually all senators.

McConachie describes a system around the turn of the century with a great deal of churning, but no specific patterns guiding movement among committees:

> Once upon a committee, a Senator has rarely, if ever, been removed against his will. Trading of places, and changes upon the expressed desire of individuals, have been common enough. Every two years the influx of new Senators is sufficiently large to warrant a reorganization. Fifteen Republicans awaited assignments in 1895. The committee list seemed somewhat shot-torn, even enfiladed, after the campaign; and the first duty was to recruit its ranks (McConachie, 1898, 324).

Such conditions make a committee hierarchy difficult to maintain, but they were not the biggest obstacles facing the Senate. Probably the biggest obstacle to the development of a committee hierarchy was the relatively collegial style of senatorial life. Specific to the committee system, centralized mechanisms to allocate committee assignments only emerged over time, and at a slower pace than in the House. Before the Civil War, the sporadic use of balloting to make committee assignments surely undermined the desires of many senators to engender in the system

a sense of permanence and stability. We recognize now that the current hierarchy of congressional committees is rooted in the property rights that representatives and senators hold in their committee assignments. With balloting, no mechanism could intervene to protect the investment that a senator had made in committee service from one Congress to the next.

Once balloting gave way to party-initiated lists, it is difficult to know whether the resulting assignment process was more or less conducive to the development of a stable committee hierarchy. On the one hand, the Senate abandoned balloting at about the same time that the House entered a period of organizational chaos at the start of each Congress (see Stewart 1999). Allocating committee positions in the antebellum Senate was contentious, to be sure, but it was much less conflict-ridden than in the House, providing an opportunity for a hierarchy to emerge more quickly in the Senate. On the other hand, the identity of party leaders and the leadership structure was much more fluid in the Senate than in the House—a fluidity that continued in comparison through into the twentieth century. With a more fluid collection of individuals responsible for making committee assignments in the Senate than in the House, it is quite possible that it was more difficult for the Senate to develop a hierarchical committee structure than the House.

With these caveats properly noted, we utilized the "Grosewart method" to estimate the hierarchical structure of the Senate committee system for the pre-1946 period (Stewart and Groseclose 1998; Groseclose and Stewart 1999). Central to this method is an assumption that there are property rights in committee seats. In this context a "property right" in a committee seat means that once a seat is occupied by a senator, he cannot be evicted from it against his will. In those rare cases where eviction is mandated (like when party control of the Senate changes), something akin to eminent domain proceedings take place, where due compensation is provided for involuntary takings. It is in the antebellum era when this assumption is the most clearly problematic.

The Grosewart method differs from other attempts to estimate the pyramidal structure of the committee system through the use of transfer information. It uses an explicit choice theoretic model of the transfer process to motivate statistical estimation of the relative average value of serving on each committee. The coefficients produced by this technique can be interpreted substantively and have cardinal properties. In addition, because the method is imbedded in an explicit statistical model, we can compute standard errors of the coefficients and apply standard statistical tests.

The details of the Grosewart method are provided in Stewart and Groseclose (1998) and Groseclose and Stewart (1999). For the purpose of this paper, we need to underscore one important feature of that method: the coefficients that are estimated have cardinal properties. In other words, we can give natural meaning to a coefficient of zero,[3] we know what a one-unit

[3]In interpreting the Grosewart coefficients, it is important to keep in mind that the choice theoretic model starts with a senator's committee portfolio in Congress *t* and then examines

change in a coefficient means, and we can sum up coefficients to estimate the value of an individual senator's "committee portfolio." This last feature will be critical for the next section, where we use these coefficients to explain the relative value of committee *portfolios* held by individual senators, rather than doing the more traditional analysis of predicting appointment to individual committees, one committee at a time.

We performed this analysis after dividing the whole time period into three shorter eras: (a) the 14th–48th Congress, (b) the 49th–66th Congress, and © the 67th–79th Congress. This periodization breaks the analysis at the most important formal changes in the Senate committee system before the 1946 Legislative Reorganization Act (LRA). When the Senate established its standing committee system in the 14th Congress (1816), the rules provided for the appointment of committees *by session.* For most of its early history the Senate in fact took advantage of this provision, turning over an average of about 25% of its committee assignments between sessions before the Civil War and 15% afterwards (Canon and Stewart 1998, p. 23, Figure 5). In other words, committee turnover was about as frequent *within* Congresses as it currently is *between* Congresses. Because a committee seat acquired under a session-by-session appointment rule may be valued differently than a seat acquired under a Congress-by-Congress appointment rule, we choose to make the first major break in the analysis between the 48th and 49th Congresses, when the Senate adopted its current rule of appointing committees for an entire Congress.

Another important formal change in the committee system occurred after the 49th Congress. At the start of the 67th Congress, the Senate abolished 41 of its 75 committees, weeding out ones that had become inactive and which had existed primarily for the purpose of

---

additions to and subtractions from that senator's collection of committee assignments during the inter-session (or inter-Congress) period, which then produces his committee portfolio in Congress *t*+1. Under an assumption that the new portfolio *as a whole* will be more valued by that senator than the old portfolio *as a whole,* we can then interpret the coefficients.

Now consider a random senator, *S,* who has a committee portfolio at time *t* that we will write P_t^S. If one of those committees in P_t^S has a Grosewart value of exactly zero, that means he is exactly indifferent between keeping or dropping that assignment at time *t*+1. Likewise, if the committee with a Grosewart value of exactly zero is *not* in P_t^S, the senator would be exactly indifferent between adding it to his collection of committee assignments at time *t*+1 or not.

If a committee has a *negative* Grosewart value, Stewart and Groseclose term that committee a *burden committee.* In this example, if P_t^S contains a burden committee, then the value of *S*'s portfolio at time *t*+1 will increase if he is allowed to drop the burden committee.

On the whole, then, senators are more likely to endure "uncompensated" transfers off of committees with negative Grosewart values than committees with positive Grosewart values. Likewise, senators are more likely simply to acquire a single new assignment on committees with positive Grosewart values (foregoing no other assignments) than committees with negative coefficients.

granting senior senators a clerk. This consolidation also may have resulted in a different appointment dynamic which shifted the relative value of committee service. Thus we also break our analysis between the 66th and 67th Congresses. Finally, we end our analysis with the 79th Congress, which was the last Congress before 1946 LRA took effect.

We report the results of this estimation in Table 2. The earliest period is one in which the committee hierarchy—to the degree it existed—was still fairly flat and under-developed. The most highly-ranked committees still have relatively small coefficients, suggesting a lack of consensus among senators about what constituted attractive and unattractive committees. (Alternately, the lack of very large coefficients among the top-ranked committees may be a reflection of the inability of senators to protect their positions on attractive committees, in a period when assignments were often made by ballot.) Moving across the table, we see the hierarchical structure of the committee system elongate and consolidate after Reconstruction and into the twentieth century. The signs of this consolidation are (a) the rising absolute value of the coefficients at both ends of the hierarchy and (b) the increased precision of the estimates, which is indicated by the relative size of the standard errors.

Looking a little more closely at the coefficients, we also see that the collection of attractive committees eventually expanded out beyond the core constitutional responsibilities of the Senate. In the earliest period, the clearly attractive committees were those that handled foreign relations, the army, and commercial development.[4] In the middle period, quite a few committees are added to the collection of clearly attractive committees. They include obvious "power" committees like Appropriations, Foreign Relations, and Finance, but also include a few of the auditing committees (Expenditures of Public Money, Expenditures in the Justice Department, and Expenditures in the War Department) and a variety of committees that were involved in guiding America's imperialistic exploits of this period—in Cuba, Panama, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. In the final period the collection of top committees likewise includes obvious "power" committees along with some that were associated with western development (such as Irrigation and Reclamation and Public Lands).

The analysis in Table 2 suggests a fairly well-developed committee hierarchy after 1885, with a much weaker one before. The weakness of the hierarchy before 1885 may be either substantive or methodological. Substantively, the estimated weakness may simply be picking up the true state of affairs: the early committee system may not have been especially hierarchical, and thus any attempt to wrestle it into an hierarchical form will be met with only limited success. Methodologically, we may be running afoul the problem of pooling together periods in Senate history which should be analyzed separately, due to changes in political (or other) circumstances associated with committee appointments. For instance, the demise of balloting after the 29th Congress may have allowed a previously fluid hierarchy to solidify. If so, we might observe an especially weak hierarchy before the 29th Congress, but a firmer one afterwards. Or, the Civil

---

[4]Here, we are defining "clearly attractive" committees to be those with positive coefficients that are statistically significant at the 10% level.

War party realignment may have had organizational ramifications for the Senate in the same way that the House was affected (see Stewart 1999). If so, then the pre-war hierarchy might be quite different from the post-war hierarchy.

To addresses these possible problems, we further subdivided the pre-1885 time period. First, to test whether the hierarchy changed as a consequence of the demise of balloting, we broke the pre-1885 period at the 29th Congress. Second, to examine whether he Civil War may have affected the hierarchy, we further broke the analysis at the 37th Congress. These results are reported in Table 3.

Breaking up the pre-1885 period into smaller subperiods does not yield dramatically different results than when we examine the period as a whole. But, the results are subtly different, and help to identify more precisely how the Senate committee hierarchy eventually emerged.

Some general patterns we saw in Table 2 persist into Table 3. In general, the hierarchy appears to be more elongated and consolidated in the later periods than in the earlier ones. In the earliest period, when committee balloting was common, the hierarchy was especially compressed. The only committees with value coefficients even approaching statistical significance are two burden committees— Engrossed Bills and Commerce and Manufactures. In the post-balloting period (30th–48th Congress), the hierarchy is a bit more elongated and the actual ranking of committees mirrors fairly well the ranking for the next time period, the 49th–66th Congress. (The rank-order correlation between the ranking of committees in the 30th–48th Congress period and the 49th–66th Congress period is .52.)

Regardless of how we slice it, the further back in time we go, the weaker the hierarchy we observe. However, once balloting ceased, a hierarchical structure slowly emerged. The hierarchy was elongated (as measured by the range of the committee value coefficients) and consolidated (as measured by the overall goodness of fit of the statistical models to the data). In addition, the hierarchies were relatively persistent from period-to-period, with room for evolution. This is illustrated in Table 4, where we have reported the inter-period rank-order correlation of the estimated value of committees. Except for the transition from the era of committee balloting to the period immediately before the Civil War, the inter-period correlation of the committee orderings is fairly high.

At this point in our discussion, we can revisit briefly a point noted in the previous section—the tendency of the majority party to let the minority control a small set of committees each Congress. Anecdotal evidence suggests that these were "minor" committees. With the estimated committee values that we have derived using the Grosewart method, we can test more systematically whether, within the context of each era, the minority was given control of unimportant committees.

We do this in a straightforward fashion. For each major period in which we estimated Grosewart values for the committees, we went back and conducted a probit analysis, in which we

predicted whether each committee was controlled by the majority party, as a function of its committee value. We expected that Grosewart values would be a strong predictor of whether the majority party held a majority of the seats on that committee.

The analysis is reported in Table 5. In every period but the last (67th–79th Congress), our expectations are clearly borne out. The results are the weakest in the last period, but keep in mind this is the period when the majority enjoyed the highest rate of committee control, and therefore there is less to explain to begin with.

The coefficients reported in Tables 2 and 3 will be used in the next section to calculate overall committee portfolio values for each senator in each Congress. The logic and statistical justification behind this is presented in Stewart and Groseclose (1998). These portfolios will serve as the basis for our analysis of standing committee assignments in the Senate. Comparable tests are not feasible for select committees because of their more ephemeral nature. Therefore our analysis of select committee assignment will be based on the relative number of assignment received by each senators.

Thus even though it would seem that several factors should have inhibited the development of a hierarchically-structured standing committee system in the Senate, a budding hierarchy did develop before the Civil War, becoming stronger and stable over time. The principal problem we have in examining the details of this hierarchy is that with over 80 committees to rank it is impossible to know whether the statistical technique we employed to estimate the structure of this hierarchy actually got it right. It is reassuring that once the hierarchy firmed up after the 29th Congress, committees such as Finance, Foreign Relations, and Appropriations rose to the top. We have to trust the technique a little more than we would normally like in order to conclude that the Committee on Canadian Relations was about as valued a committee assignment as the Committee on Agriculture from the 49th to the 66th Congress. The larger validity of the estimates we generated in this section can be judged through the results that emerge when we take the next step, and use the estimated hierarchy to analyze other behavior related to the committee system. That is precisely what we do in the next section, as we turn our attention to studying who got the good assignments and who got the dregs.

III. Senate Committee Assignments, 1789–1946

While the Senate is typically characterized as an individualistic, personality-driven institution, 19th century observers described a committee assignment process that while certainly not formulaic, exhibited certain patterns. McConachie describes a process that would sound familiar to the Committee on Committees of a century later:

> Seniority usually makes the assignment of chairmainships easy, but the other positions must be filled after lively competition among self-avowed candidates. New members clamor for speedy assignment, and the chairmen of the committees that pass upon Executive nominations cannot brook delay. Sometimes the

> Committee on Committees summon the discontented to a hearing. Again, its members go upon the floor to consult the other Senators as to their desires, and to reconcile them, if possible, to its proposed appointments (McConachie 1898, 342–43).

While the modern Senate is willing to "brook delay" of presidential appointments, the process of accommodating member requests rings as true today as it did at the turn of the previous century. Sen. Robert Byrd provides an example of campaigning for committee assignments at the turn of the century in his history of the Senate. In describing a Senate that was tightly controlled by Nelson Aldrich and William Allison, Byrd recounts the experience of Albert Beveridge who had been labeled the "genus mugwump." "Frantic that, if the impression was not corrected, he would not receive favorable committee assignments, Beveridge began a campaign to polish his tarnished image and win Allison's favor." This campaign included detailed descriptions of Beveridge's qualifications and his assurances of "personal loyalty and subservience" (Byrd 1988, vol. 1, 365).

Fifty years earlier, the committee assignment process was already a complex process with identifiable general patterns. Senator James Bayard described the assignment process of the mid-19th century in the following fashion:

> There are too many considerations which must necessarily enter into the organization of committees, even in one's own party, to make it possible to reduce them to strict and tangible rules. Personal considerations enter into it; the duration of service enters into it. Since the Senate has been organized, they have always looked to the importance of securing that degree of knowledge which is possessed by those who have remained permanently in the body, and occupied positions in it; and they have never displaced members from important positions as long as they remained in the Senate, unless there was some reason for doing so. That consideration must control the organization of committees, and it necessarily had its bearing in the construction of the committees as now presented to the Senate (*Congressional Globe* 35-1, 40, cited in Robinson 1954, 137).

This quote indicates that property rights to committee assignments were evident long before the electoral incentive may have prompted members to claim their piece of committee turf (Katz and Sala 1996). The quote from Sen. Bayard also implies an informational motivation in making committee assignments "since the Senate has been organized."

In this section we are interested in understanding who got the best committee assignments in the early Senate, since it provides a lens into observing the distribution of Senate power in each era. A review of the history and literature just surveyed, plus the analysis in the previous section, suggests that committee assignments were made based on a combination of personal, institutional, and partisan considerations.

Variables

We use two dependent variables to gauge the quality of a senator's committee assignments in each Congress. Because the standing committee system did not begin until the 14th Congress, we concentrate entirely on select committee membership up to then. From the 1st to the 14th Congress, the dependent variable we will analyze is the number of select committees each senator served on, by Congress.[5] Because the number of select committees appointed varied each Congress, we further transformed the raw numbers into a percentile ranking. Each Congress, the senator with the fewest assignments is assigned a value of zero and the senator with the most assignments is assigned a value of one. All the remaining senators were normalized within this zero-one interval.

The second measure of the relative value of a senator's committee assignments is the value of each individual senator's "committee portfolio." This measure is the sum of the estimated values of the committees a senator served on in a given Congress, based on the committee hierarchy values described above. For the period prior to the 49th Congress, when committees were appointed by the session, we calculated the committee portfolio value of each senator for each session, and then averaged across all the sessions of a Congress.

The independent variables tap into a mix of institutional, individual, and partisan factors to explain the number and quality of committee appointments. The independent variables included in the standing and select committee analysis differ slightly, owing to the fact that the two analyses cover different time periods.[6]

Institutional factors—state and section

The "Great Compromise" left an indelible mark on the design of the Senate. Not only did it provide for equal representation of states in the Senate, but its design created expectations that senators themselves would also be treated equally in the chamber. McConachie claimed this expectation still held more than a century later when it came to dividing committee assignments, asserting that "the important and unimportant positions are almost evenly distributed, whether Maine be compared with Texas, or Nevada with New York" [1898, 269-70].

Needless to say, a strong committee system challenged the simplest notions of state equality even more directly than in the House. As a practical matter, it was impossible to provide equal representation of states on committees. A few committees were in fact constituted with a senator from each state, such as the select committee on Salaries for the President and Vice President, which was appointed in the first Congress. Still, most of the early select and standing

---

[5]We analyze only those senators who served for at least 3/4 of a Congress.

[6]Some of these differences may also be explained by the fact that the two sets of analyses were conducted 1,130 miles apart.

committees had three or five members. When Senate standing committees were established in 1816, observers noted that other considerations such as the previous experience and abilities of the senator (Adams 1874, Vol. 1, 329), sectionalism (McConachie 1898, 267), and party (Adams 1874, Vol. 1, 384-85) were more important than state equality in determining committee rosters.

Closely related to the question of state equality was that of sectional equity, particularly before the Civil War. Weingast (1998) is the most recent to note that the equal representation of states led to the "balance rule" between slave and free states, which was designed to block efforts in the House by the more populous north to restrict slavery.

While state equality never dictated committee assignments, disgruntled senators often relied on the principle to complain about committee assignments. In one bitter debate on the issue in the 1850s, Senator Hannibal Allen, a Republican from Maine, objected to the partisan, sectional, and state-based biases of the Democratic assignment, "We do not seek responsibility but as representatives of equal States, we have obligations imposed upon us from which we cannot and ought not to shrink. As the representatives of equal States, we are entitled to an equal representation in the organization of this body, and are under obligation to our constituencies to discharge, so far as we may be able, the duties that are incumbent upon us" (*Congressional Globe* 35-1, 39). He went on to note that slave states had majorities on 13 of the 22 committees, and 3 of the free states' majorities were on the trivial committees (Enrolled Bills, Engrossed Bills, and Audit and Control the Contingent Expenses of the Senate), thus the committee system was undermining one of the Founding principles of the Senate.

If the constitutional principle of state equality persisted into the committee organization of the Senate, we should observe no relationship between measures of state size or "importance" and the participation of a senator in the committee system. We test for the equality of appointments with respect to state size with the number of House members from the senator's state in any particular Congress in the select committee model. For the standing committee analysis we measure state size as the percentage of the nation's population that is in a given state. Likewise, the operation of the balance rule causes us to predict that neither region was favored in committee assignments before the Civil War (captured by a dummy variable for slave states before the Civil War). However, post-War animosities may have resulted in southern senators being penalized (we specify a dummy variable for southern states after the Civil War).[7]

Individual Background and Qualifications

In addition to distributing committee seats according to notions of geographic equity, we assume that personal characteristics were a major determinant of who received the best committee assignments. The personal characteristics of senators have certainly entered into qualitative

[7]The "South" dummy variable is coded as the eleven states of the Confederacy, while "slave states" also include Missouri, Delaware, Maryland, and Kentucky, states which allowed slaves, but did not secede from the Union.

discussions of committee assignments in the historical Senate. We seek quantitative evidence of the same effects.

Noble Cunningham argued that "lack of talent" could explain the limited number of select committee assignments for some members when there was substantial variation in the distribution of assignments among senators. He cites an article in the *United States Gazette*, that "found a 'great dearth of talents' in the House of Representatives, but observed that 'the Senate is very respectable in point of talents. The Rhode Island and New Jersey senators are miserable creatures,' he wrote, 'but there is a large portion of talent in that body.'" (Cunningham 1978, 248). Neither of the senators from Rhode Island received any assignments in the 9th Congress and the New Jersey senators were toward the bottom of the list. He also notes that those who had the greatest levels of House experience tended to have the most assignments in the Senate, a hypothesis that we systematically examine below (1978, 249).

Byrd extends Cunningham's assessment to the next period of committee assignments, arguing that during the period of balloting for committee assignments, personal factors such as expertise and reliability played a central role:

> The reappearance of certain senators on certain types of committees seems logical when we consider that the Senate as a whole elected members of each committee. We may assume that individual senators developed personal reputations for interest and expertise in particular areas that would lead their colleagues to include them on any committee considering a related subject. Other senators developed sufficient political prominence and reliability to encourage the members of the majority party to place them on committees where they would be the most effective (Byrd, 1988, vol. 2, 211).

While it is difficult to adequately measure personal differences among senators, we will suggest several individual-level characteristics that tap some senators' skills and backgrounds, and which were likely taken into account when assignments were made. The first set of factors pertain to *previous legislative experience*. The most obvious of these factors is Senate seniority. As reflected in several of the quotes in this paper already, length of service was not an automatic guarantee of good committee assignments, but long-serving senators did tend to acquire better assignments, for a variety of obvious reasons.

The career trajectory of many senators from the House to the "upper chamber" also suggests another factor that may have been weighed when assignments were made. In particular, *former members of the House* may also have been privileged in committee assignments because of their highly relevant legislative experience. Therefore, we chose three measures of prior House service to measure this previous legislative experience—a dummy variable simply indicating whether a senator had previously served in the House, a counter variable recording the *number* of Congresses a senator had previously served in the House, and finally a measure of a senator's previous involvement in the House committee system.

This last measure was a little involved and requires some explanation. We constructed a measure of House committee service that was modeled on the measure of Senate committee service we use as a dependent variable. For a given House, we rank-ordered all members according to the number of committees they served on, select and standing committee separately. Then, we assigned percentile scores based on these rankings. Finally, we took the average value of this score, calculated across House service, as our measure of House committee participation. It turns out that the select- and standing- committee versions of this measure are highly correlated, so we averaged the two measures together to produce a final measure of House committee experience. We have not yet constructed this House committee experience variable for all of the congresses, so for the standing committee analysis we include a variable indicating the number of years of House experience, prior to service in the Senate (the variable ranges from 0-32).

As with previous House service, *level of education* was likely a cue to the "quality" of senators, particularly rookies. At a time when very few Americans had much formal education to speak of, even most senators lacked education past adolescence. Senators with a college degree must have had much to offer. Therefore, we measure education with a dummy variable, indicating whether the senator had attended college.

Congress specializes in writing laws; *lawyers* specialize in applying and advocating in the context of the law. Particularly during this period, when Senate staff members—or "clerks"—were virtually unheard of, lawyers had valuable skills for the drafting of legislation. Therefore we expect that being an attorney not only would be a signal to other senators that a rookie may be a more valuable to the chamber on account of his chosen profession, but that having a legal background would continue to advantage these senators well into their senatorial career. We measure legal occupation with a dummy variable.

Partisanship and ideology

Although the Senate was to be the "saucer to cool the tea" of American politics, many commentators have noted that the Senate early on was infected with a high degree of partisanship. Did members of the majority party receive more assignments than the minority? All of the analysis in the previous section suggests they did, at least on average. In the select committee models, we measure majority party status with a dummy variable.[8] For the standing committee analysis, however, we adopted a slightly different measurement strategy for partisanship. Given the relatively generous treatment of the minority party in receiving committee assignments throughout the 19th century (with the Civil War exception noted above), one might expect no systematic differences between the majority and minority parties in the quality of their portfolios.

---

[8]We used Martis (1988) as our authority on party membership, with one exception. Martis assigns members of the 18th Congress to factions according to whom they supported in the presidential election of 1824. By Martis's accounting, only 35% of the Senate belonged to the "majority party" in the 18th Congress. Therefore, we have adopted the more conventional Federalist-Republican distinction for this Congress.

However, there is one exception to that expectation: majority parties with small margins cannot afford to be quite as generous and therefore will give themselves disproportionate bonuses in the party ratios on the prestige committees. This tendency is captured in a dummy variable that is coded as one if the majority party has between 50% and 55% of the seats.

The median voter theorem suggests that moderate legislators should be able to command more institutional resources than extremists, because they are so often pivotal. Did they during this period? We used the absolute value of the Poole-Rosenthal D-NOMINATE scores to measure ideological extremism (Poole and Rosenthal 1997). Given the evolution of party control of standing committees in the 19th century, we have a more nuanced measure of ideology for the standing committee models. For the early period of balloting, the floor had more control over the assignment process than parties. Therefore, we expect that members who were more ideologically extreme, with respect to the median senator, will not receive as attractive portfolios as more centrist senators. This variable is simply the distance between the senator's D-NOMINATE score and the median NOMINATE score for the chamber in that Congress. We specify a similar variable to capture the impact of parties on the assignment process; here our expectation is that deviations from the party median will be punished with less attractive committee assignments. We expect that the chamber distance variable will be significant in early congresses, but not the party variable and that the opposite should hold after the mid-part of the 19th century when parties took control of the assignment process.

Select committee assignments

Table 6 reports the results of the regressions we ran to test these hypotheses for the select committees assignments in the 1st-14th Congresses. The first column reports the analysis using all senators in our data set. Significant factors influencing the number of select committee assignments was size of state, membership in the majority party, length of prior service in the House, senate seniority, and a college education. Some effects are either very weak not even close to statistical significance, including representing southern state, being an ideological extremist, prior House committee service, and being a lawyer.

One of the most interesting set of results concerns the over-representation of larger states and the "fair" representation of southern senators. This pattern is the opposite of the pattern that held in the House, where small state representatives served on more committees and the South received more appointments than northern members (see Stewart et al 1995, p. 40). What makes this puzzling is that the Senate was the chamber designed to equalize state power, and was the chamber in which the "balance rule" applied in keeping the North and South balanced. Yet, at least as far as select committee appointments are concerned, large state senators assumed greater control over policy making.

We suspected some of these effects would vary by party, and so we re-estimated the regression, separating the sample into majority and minority party members. The results are reported in columns (2) and (3) of Table 6. The most interesting difference is in how prior House

service was treated among the two sets of senators. Among members of the majority party, having served in the House for many Congresses and having served on many committees during that time increased service on Senate select committees substantially. For members of the minority party, the effect was exactly the opposite! Minority party members with significant House committee service were kept off of Senate select committees to a significant degree.

Whether measured through the simple dummy variable in the first regression or the separate analysis in these final regressions, the strongest finding appears to be a differential treatment of the minority party. This is most simply measured in the last regression reported in Table 6, which is a fixed effects regression, with a separate dummy variable included for *each* senator who served during this period (159 in all). Because the fixed effects dummy variables soak up all the variance from the variables that apply to constant individual attributes, the only variables that remain are those that vary across the career of senators—in this case, the size of the state they represented, their seniority, and whether thy are were in the majority or minority. On average, members of the minority were in the lower half in terms of number of select committees served on, majority members were in the upper half.

Standing committees

The results for the standing committee analysis are reported in Tables 7 and 8.[9] In the early Congresses (14-48), the model performs surprisingly well, given the lack of hierarchy in the structure of Senate committees in this period and the high degree of uncertainty in our measure of committee portfolio. All of the variables were significant and in the expected direction, with the exception of the dummy variable for farmers, the party distance variable (which was expected to have no effect), and the dummy variable for southern states after the Civil War.

The most unexpected finding, which persists through the other periods and actually becomes stronger over time, is the variable for the relative population of each state. Contrary to McConachie's assertion that Maine and Texas were treated the same, large states clearly received better committee assignments. The effects in the early period were quite small. A two-standard deviation shift from the mean of .0295, for example comparing a senator from New Hampshire to a senator from North Carolina in the 14th Congress, yields a shift of .065 in a senator's portfolio. Putting this in more meaningful terms, this difference in state size would move a member who had a portfolio of median value to one that is in the 57th percentile. This relatively small effect becomes quite large in later congresses. In the 49th-66th Congresses when the effect of state size is the largest, a two-standard deviation shift in state size (say, for example comparing Georgia to Pennsylvania in the 63rd Congress), would produce a portfolio shift of 1.91. This would move a

[9]We included year dummies to control for over-time effects due to the pooled cross-sectional time series design of our data. The results were very robust; after the dummies were included, the coefficients for the variables of interest were very stable (changing, on average, by no more than a few percent). We also did some preliminary tests for unit effects, but did not detect any serious heteroskedasticity.

senator from a median portfolio to one that was just above the 70th percentile, holding all else constant, a truly significant shift.

The individual characteristics of senators, such as lawyer, farmer, House service, college, and freshman status, are all significant in the model that covers the 14th-48th Congresses but the effects are relatively small. For example, a freshman who otherwise would have had a portfolio of median value, would be moved down to the 40th percentile; lawyers would have a comparable boost in the positive direction. A college degree helped a member improve the quality of his committee assignments to a somewhat smaller degree (improving a portfolio from the median to the 54.5th percentile), while ten years of previous House service would have boosted a senator's median portfolio into the 62nd percentile.

Institutional variables also have a significant impact. A senator with two terms of experience would have a portfolio that was in the 72nd percentile compared to the median portfolio he would have had as a rookie. The ideological position of senators with respect to the chamber median and party median also had the expected effect on the quality of portfolio. The party variable had no impact and a shift of two standard deviations from the chamber median would reduce the value of a senator's portfolio by about five percentiles. Parties that had relatively tight majorities also took a greater share of the good committees for their members.

The fit of the model improves and more of the variables are significant for the later subperiod, after the 30th Congress when parties exerted more control (when compared to the model that includes the balloting period of the 14th-29th Congresses). However, the stronger statistical relationships in the later period could be accounted for by the improved quality of our measures. This almost certainly accounts for the fact that the dummy variables for the lawyer and freshmen variables were not significant for the 14th-29th Congresses, when we would expect such personal variables to matter more. One odd finding for the 14th-29th Congresses, for which we have no immediate explanation, is that the dummy variable for farmer was highly significant during a period in which the Agriculture Committee was one of the least desired committees.

Table 8 shows the models for the 49th-79th Congresses, with two subperiods for the pre- and post-committee realignment of the 67th Congress. Most of the variables remain significant and in the expected direction and the overall fit of the various models is quite a bit better than the models in Table 7. The most important results in terms of testing theories of congressional organization is that the party distance variable is significant in the later period and the chamber distance variable actually has the wrong sign (and is significant for the 49th-79th Congresses). Thus, partisan theories of congressional organization receive some support in this period, although the substantive effects are fairly small. A two-standard deviation shift from the party median NOMINATE score would yield a committee portfolio in the 41.6th percentile, rather than the median, all else constant.

The institutional variables have a substantial impact in this period. A senator starting his or her third term would have a portfolio in the 88th percentile, compared to the median portfolio

he or she would have as a rookie. A few differences across the subperiods are that southern states received worse committee assignments than non-southern states in the 67th-79th Congresses, but were not treated differently in the 49th-66th Congresses. The reverse was true for parties with slim majorities: they gave themselves better assignments in the earlier subperiod, but not the later.

Overall, the data in these two tables demonstrates that the quality of committee assignments in the Senate had very identifiable patterns, from the very first sessions in which standing committees emerged. There patterns strengthen over time with the role of parties and the significance of state size becoming increasingly important.

IV. Discussion and Conclusion

Conventional wisdom about the differences between the U.S. House and Senate have led most observers of the American Congress to skip lightly over the formal organization of the Senate, especially the committee system, when they have analyzed its role in policy making. The Senate role in representing the states rather than "the people" presumably gives senators a wider perspective from which to judge policy and less of an interest in attending to details. If policy details are worked out in committees, who needs them in the Senate? The smaller size and more personal nature of the Senate compared to the House reinforces this general perspective on policy making. The relatively flat social hierarchy that has flourished in the Senate, which has caused many to liken it to "a club," suggests that senatorial policy making is more collegial and less formal than in the larger, impersonal House. If policy making in the Senate is personal and collegial, who needs committees to get in the way?

Modern observers of congressional lawmaking have largely confirmed the stylized portrait painted above. Committees are less important in the Senate and senators attend to fewer legislative details than Representatives. The great clashes in the Senate are between larger-than-life personalities who have acquired an interest in an issue for whatever reason moves them, and who may have not formal ownership of an issue through committee membership. The great policy clashes in the House are often between individuals who have acquired an interest because of their formal positions, such as committee chairmen, ranking members, and party leaders.

This is, of course, a cartoon comparison of the two Houses of Congress, but is one that frames a common view of the institution. One thing this cartoon portrait clashes with, however, is a parallel portrait of the Senate as being virtually alone among the world's upper chambers in its policy making prowess. The historical evidence we have presented in this paper helps to flesh out an understanding of why the Senate developed an independent political base and institutional capacity, so that the topic of "senatorial exceptionalism" is taken seriously.

As written, the Constitution avoided making the U.S. Senate the handmaiden of an aristocratic class, or even of the executive branch. However, the Constitution also imbued the House with greater popular political legitimacy and a strategic advantage over the nation's purse

strings. Thus, while not dominated by an upper class or the executive, there was a real possibility that the Senate would be dominated by the House, much like Commons dominates Lords. From what we have seen, there was no guarantee that the Senate would match the House one-on-one in institutional capacity. However, through a combination of good fortune and institutional persistent, the Senate developed a committee system that not only paralleled the House's in its capacity, but periodically led the way in institutional development.

One way the Senate led the way in the development of congressional committees was in getting to standing committees first. Of course, the House was slowly adding a standing committee here and there during the first quarter century of the Republic, while the Senate creaked along appointing a select committee at a time for all lawmaking except adjudicating claims. Still, in the 1810s when the legislative environment became rapidly more complex due to the war against England, it was the Senate that acted before the House in deciding that standing committees would be the norm, not the exception. And, it was the Senate that first made standing committee service universal, not the House.

In the research reported in this paper, we see that the Senate did lag behind the House in the development of its committee system in one important fashion—rather than give to the presiding officer the right to make committee assignments, the Senate relied on the democratic balloting method for about 30 years. While this probably defused many of the tensions that existed in the House over the composition of committees, it also hindered the ability of party majorities to firmly take the reins of power once the legislative session began. And perhaps even more significantly, the balloting apparatus made it impossible for senators to protect the human capital they developed through committee service.

When balloting finally was abandoned in the 1840s, the way was open for three important institutional developments. First, parties could assume a greater role in guiding the work output of committees, through the coordination of committee appointments. With the rise of party-initiated resolutions, there was now a framework for working out details such as party ratios on each committee, and thus a framework for ensuring that the majority party controlled the votes on the most important committees. Second, with a mechanism in place that could guard committee seats for the most diligent and useful committee members, there was now hope that senators might stay put on committees long enough to develop expertise within their committees' jurisdictions. Finally, with an explicit mechanism in place for coordinating the placement of senators on committees, it was now possible to use the committee system itself for more than just writing laws. The committee system could also become a legislative proving ground for new senators entering the chamber.

In other words, the groundwork was laid in the antebellum Senate for a type of committee careerism that has frequently been the subject of attention from students of the House. Even if committee careerism was not as deep or enduring in the Senate as it was in the House, the important point is that the groundwork was laid in the upper chamber of the American Congress for an endogenously-developed policy making apparatus. With such an apparatus, the Senate was

able to avoid total domination by the well-endowed lower chamber. If senatorial exceptionalism is grounded in its policy making independence, and if that independence is grounded in its committee system, then the independence of the committee system is grounded in a series of institutional developments in the twenty years before the Civil War.

Most of this paper has not been about the antebellum committee system, of course, but rather about the operation of the committee system across 150 years. Two empirical points stand out in that analysis. First, party dominated committee assignments for a great deal of this history, not only in terms of controlling and chairing most committees but also by rewarding senators who were closer to the party median with higher quality committee portfolios than those who strayed from the party median. This is an important observation in a chamber that is supposedly guided by principles of collegiality and clubiness. Second, state equality has been thoroughly violated in the composition of Senate committees from the beginning, which is an important observation about a chamber whose *raison d'etre* is state equality.

The United States Senate is an exceptional institution in the firmament of parliamentary upper bodies. It did not have to develop in such a way. It could have languished, like most other upper chambers. The reason for its ascendance are not doubt complex, but there is no doubt that the modern Senate's political importance is rooted in a series of decisions and developments, now over a century in the past, that allowed the Senate to grow its own expertise rather than rely on others for it.

Citations

Adams, John Quincy. 1969 (originally published in 1874). *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams.* Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press..

Aldrich, John H. 1997. "Does Historical Political Research Pose any Special Methodological Concerns?" *The Political Methodologist* 8:1, 17-21.

Aldrich, John H. 1997. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Party Politics in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bullock, Charles S., III. 1973. "Committee transfers in the United States House of Representatives." *Journal of Politics* 35: 85–120.

_____. 1985. "U.S. Senate committee assignments: Preferences, motivations, and success." *American Journal of Political Science* 29: 789–808.

Bullock, Charles S., III and John Sprague. 1969. "A research note on the committee reassignments of southern Democratic congressmen." *Journal of Politics* 31: 493–512.

Byrd, Robert C. 1988. *The Senate 1789-1989: Addresses on the History of the United States Senate*, Volume 2. Edited by Wendy Wolf, Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Canon, David T. and Martin Sweet. 1998. "Informational and Demand-Side Theories of Congressional Committees: Evidence from the Senate, 1789-1993." Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 3-6, 1998, Boston, Massachusetts.

Canon, David T. and Charles Stewart III. 1998. "The Development of the Senate Committee System, 1789–1879." Paper prepared for delivery at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 3–6, 1998, Boston, Massachusetts.

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

Cunningham, Noble E., Jr. 1978. *The Process of Government Under Jefferson.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Endersby, James W. and Karen M. McCurdy. 1996. Committee assignments in the U.S. Senate. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 21(2): 219–233.

Fenno, Richard F. 1973. *Congressmen in Committees.* Boston: Little-Brown.

Fox, Harrison W. and Susan W. Hammond. 1977. *Congressional Staffs: The Invisible Force in Lawmaking.* New York: Free Press.

Groseclose, Timothy and Charles Stewart III. 1999. "The Value of Committee Seats in the United States Senate, 1947–91." *American Journal of Political Science* 43(3): 963–73.

Hoadley, John F. 1986. *Origins of American Political Parties: 1789-1803*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.

Katz, Jonathan N. and Brian R. Sala. 1996. "Careerism, Committee Assignments, and the Electoral Connection." *American Political Science Review* 90(1): 21–33.

Kiewiet, D. Roderick and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1991. *The Logic of Delegation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

_____. 1998. *Pivotal Politics.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Martis, Kenneth. 1989. *The Historical Atlas of Political Parties in the United States Congress, 1789–1989.* New York: Macmillan.

McConachie, Lauros G. 1898 (reprinted 1973). *Congressional Committees: A Study of the Origins and Development of our National and Local Legislative Methods*. New York: Burt Franklin Reprints.

Matthews, Donald R. 1960. *U.S. Senators and Their World.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Munger, Michael C. 1988. Allocation of desirable committee assignments. *American Journal of Political Science* 32:317–44.

Munger, Michael C. and Gary M. Torrent. 1993. Committee power and value in the U.S. Senate: Implications for policy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 3:46–65.

Poole, Keith and Howard Rosenthal. 1997. *Congress: The Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Robinson, George Lee. 1954. "The Development of the Senate Committee System." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University.

Stewart, Charles III. 1992. "Committee hierarchies in the modernizing House, 1875–1947." *American Journal of Political Science,* 36: 835–56.

_____. 1995. "Structure and stability in House committee assignments, 1789–1947." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois.

_____. 1999. "The Inefficient Secret: Organizing for Business in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–1961." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Stewart, Charles III, David Canon, Greg Flemming, and Brian Kroeger. 1995. "Taking care of business: The evolution of the House committee system before the Civil War." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

Stewart, Charles III and Timothy Groseclose. 1998. "The Value of Committee Seats in the House, 1947-1991," *American Journal of Political Science,* 42: 453–74.

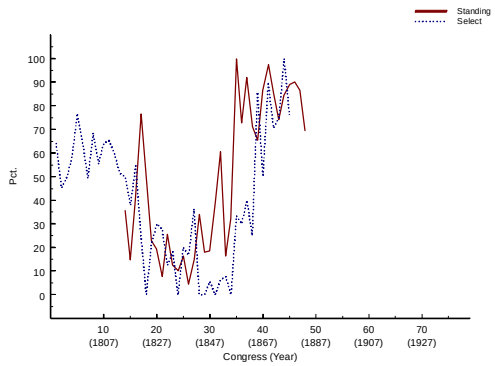
Stubbs, Walter. 1985. *Congressional committees, 1789–1982: A checklist.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Swift, Elaine K. 1997. *The Making of an American Senate: Reconstitutive Change in Congress: 1787-1841*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

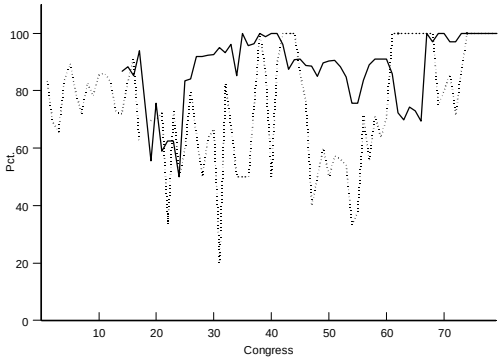
Weingast, Barry R and William J. Marshall. 1988. "The Industrial Organization of Congress." *Journal of Political Economy* 96(1): 132–63.

Figure 1. Measures of majority party dominance on select and standing committees, 1st–79th Congress.

a. Committees with all majority party members ranked above the minority party.



b. Chairs from majority party



d. Committees with a majority from the majority party

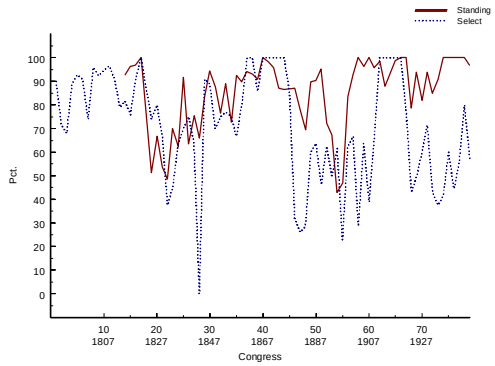
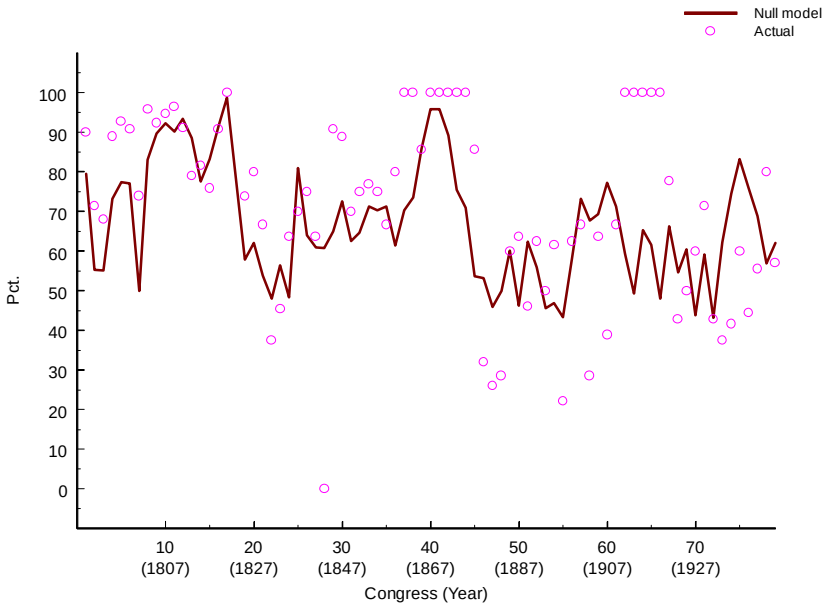


Figure 2. Proportion of Senate committees controlled by the majority party, compared to a null model based on the binomial distribution.

a. Select committees



b. Standing committees

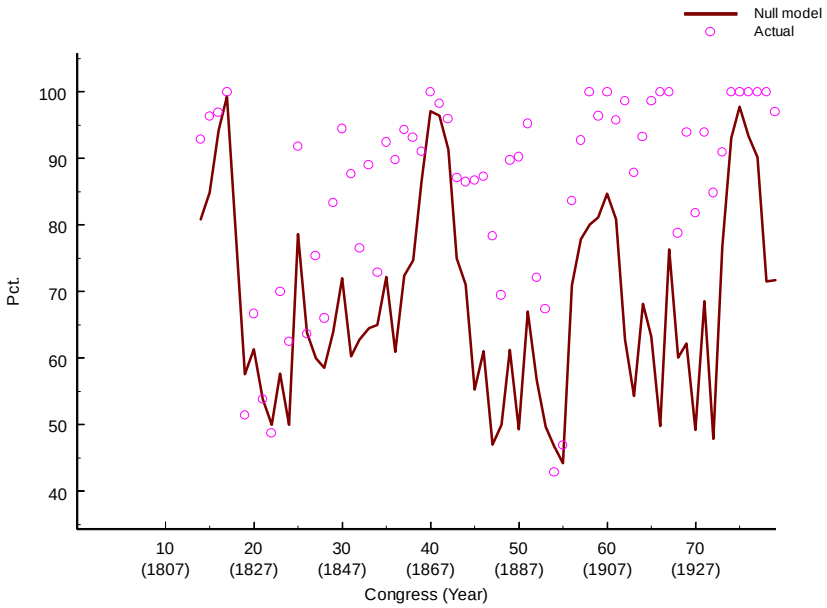


Table 1. Methods of electing Senate standing committee members and chairs 14th–37th Congress.

Cong.	sess.	How	Resolution-presenter	Notes
14	2	Ballot		
15	1	Resolution	Tate	
15	2	Ballot		
16	1	Ballot		
16	2	Ballot		
17	1	Ballot		
17	2	Ballot		
18	1	Resolution/ Ballot		Resolution provided for presiding officer to appoint committees, following balloting for 5 chairs.
18	2	President		
19	1	V.P.		
19	2	Ballot		Separate ballots for chairs and rest of committee members.
20	1	Ballot		
20	2	Ballot		
21	1	Finance Ballot; other by V.P.		
21	2	Finance Ballot; other by president		
22	1	Finance ballot; other by president		
22	2	President		
23	1	Ballot		
23	2	Ballot		
24	1	Ballot		
24	2	Ballot		
25	1	3 ballots; others by V.P.		Vice President appointed members
25	2	V.P.		
25	3	Commerce ballot; others president		
26	1	Commerce ballot; others president		
26	2	Commerce ballot; others president		
27	1	Mixed		
27	2	President pro tempore		
27	3	President pro tempore		
28	1	President pro tempore		
28	2	President pro tempore		
29	1	Ballot/motion	Sevier	6 committees filled by ballot; others by unanimous consent from party lists.
29	2	Ballot (for 6 chairs)/resolution	Sevier	
30	1	Resolution	Sevier	
30	2	Resolution	King	
31	1	Ballot/motion		
31	2	President pro tempore		
32	1	Resolution	Bright	
32	2	Resolution	Bright	
33	1	Resolution	Bright	
33	2	Resolution	Bright	
34	1	Ballot/motion	Cass	
34	2	Resolution	Hunter	
34	3	Resolution	Pearce	
35	1	Resolution	Allen	
35	2	Resolution	Allen	
36	1	Resolution	Bright	
36	2	Vice President		
37	1	Resolution	Fessenden	
37	2	Resolution	Collamer	
37	3	Resolution	Anthony	

Table 2. Estimates of Senate committee service value, 14th–79th Congress, using the Grosewart method.

14th–49th Cong.				49th–66th Cong.				67th–79th Cong.			
Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.	Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.	Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.
1	Railroads	0.78	0.49	1	Expenditures of Public Money	4.36	2.69	1	Foreign Relations	4.51	0.85 *
2	Appropriations	0.64	0.50	2	Appropriations	4.23	0.77 *	2	Finance	3.60	0.73 *
3	Privileges and Elections	0.54	0.37	3	Foreign Relations	3.74	0.77 *	3	Appropriations	3.56	0.77 *
4	Rules	0.53	0.58	4	Expends., Commerce and Labor	2.75	3.46	4	Irrigation and Reclamation	2.67	0.96 *
5	Education and Labor	0.45	0.36	5	Finance	2.72	0.67 *	5	Rules	2.07	0.70 *
6	Military Affairs	0.44	0.22 *	6	Judiciary	2.71	0.65 *	6	Public Lands and Surveys	1.89	0.61 *
7	Civil Service and Retrenchment	0.42	0.44	7	Banking and Currency	2.50	1.17 *	7	Civil Service	1.40	0.61 *
8	Commerce	0.38	0.22 *	8	Commerce	2.13	0.60 *	8	Judiciary	1.27	0.55 *
9	Foreign Relations	0.38	0.19 *	9	Naval Affairs	2.09	0.70 *	9	Audit and Control	1.25	0.60 *
10	Revolutionary Claims	0.27	0.21	10	Expends., Navy	1.98	1.42	10	Banking and Currency	1.04	0.51 *
11	Revision of the Laws	0.27	0.41	11	Expends., Justice	1.72	1.03 *	11	Enrolled Bills	1.03	0.89
12	Patents	0.25	0.22	12	Interstate Commerce	1.69	0.54 *	12	Territories and Insular Possessions	0.99	0.46 *
13	Library	0.25	0.37	13	Military Affairs	1.67	0.57 *	13	Expends., Executive Departments	0.71	0.48
14	Naval Affairs	0.19	0.21	14	Rules	1.61	0.64 *	14	Naval Affairs	0.58	0.48
15	Judiciary	0.18	0.22	15	Expends., War	1.54	0.92 *	15	Agriculture and Forestry	0.52	0.52
16	District of Columbia	0.14	0.17	16	Five Civilized Tribes of Indians	1.37	1.09	16	Interstate Commerce	0.52	0.53
17	Finance	0.13	0.20	17	Expends., Interior	1.35	0.87	17	Commerce	0.46	0.44
18	Public Buildings	0.12	0.23	18	Standards, Weights, and Measures	1.35	1.10	18	Immigration	0.25	0.50
19	Indian Affairs	0.11	0.22	19	Cuban Relations	1.28	0.54 *	19	Library	0.16	0.84
20	Retrenchment	0.10	0.45	20	Expends., Agriculture	1.26	1.23	20	Education and Labor	-0.04	0.48
21	Public Lands	0.09	0.20	21	Geological Survey	1.23	0.83	21	Patents	-0.06	0.61
22	Audit and Control	0.04	0.24	22	Pacific Islands and Porto Rico	1.20	0.70 *	22	Privileges and Elections	-0.09	0.58
23	Post Office and Post Roads	0.01	0.19	23	Phillippines	1.02	0.60 *	23	District of Columbia	-0.10	0.52
24	Enrolled Bills	-0.03	0.25	24	Transp. & Sale of Meat Products	1.01	0.85	24	Public Buildings and Grounds	-0.28	0.59
25	Claims	-0.03	0.18	25	Public Lands and Surveys	0.94	0.56 *	25	Pensions	-0.31	0.54
26	Territories	-0.03	0.24	26	Disposition of Useless Papers	0.93	0.82	26	Indian Affairs	-0.44	0.57
27	Pensions	-0.13	0.17	27	Corporations Organized in D.C.	0.89	0.54	27	Claims	-0.46	0.51
28	Roads and Canals	-0.14	0.25	28	Post Office and Post Roads	0.86	0.43 *	28	Military Affairs	-0.53	0.47
29	Agriculture	-0.14	0.22	29	Interoceanic Canal	0.85	0.52 *	29	Printing	-0.62	0.78
30	Private Land Claims	-0.19	0.21	30	Privileges and Elections	0.85	0.55	30	Mines and Mining	-0.85	0.66
31	Improvement of the Miss. River	-0.21	0.95	31	Expends., Commerce	0.81	1.12	31	Manufactures	-0.93	0.58 *
32	Mines and Mining	-0.22	0.31	32	Private Land Claims	0.75	0.54	32	Post Office and Post Roads	-0.99	0.44 *
33	Printing	-0.23	0.29	33	Irrigation and Reclamation	0.70	0.56	33	Interoceanic Canal	-1.12	0.60 *
34	Militia	-0.33	0.28	34	Organization ... of the Exec. Depts.	0.63	0.48				
35	Manufactures	-0.33	0.24	35	Library	0.63	0.64				
36	Engrossed Bills	-0.40	0.23 *	36	Public Buildings and Grounds	0.62	0.55				
37	Pacific Railroads	-0.63	0.47	37	Coast and Insular Survey	0.60	0.81				
38	Transp. Routes to the Seaboard	-1.02	0.64	38	Indian Depredations	0.57	0.52				
39	Commerce and Manufactures	-1.10	0.61 *	39	Canadian Relations	0.53	0.47				
40	Public Lands and Surveys	-2.07	1.10 *	40	Forest Reservations	0.49	0.59				
41	Investigation and Retrenchment	-3.08	1.72 *	41	Audit and Control	0.43	0.69				
				42	Agriculture and Forestry	0.41	0.59				
				43	Expends., Post Office Department	0.40	1.16				
				44	Expends., State	0.40	0.80				
				45	Mississippi River Improvements	0.29	0.50				
				46	Fisheries	0.26	0.66				
				47	District of Columbia	0.21	0.45				
				48	Printing	0.19	0.64				
				49	Conservation of National Resources	0.15	0.76				
				50	Census	0.11	0.48				
				51	Immigration	0.10	0.41				
				52	Pensions	0.09	0.49				
				53	Education and Labor	0.06	0.53				
				54	Expends., Treasury	0.05	1.15				
				55	Pacific Railroads	-0.01	0.53				
				56	Revolutionary Claims	-0.04	0.45				
				57	Engrossed Bills	-0.06	0.64				
				58	Indian Affairs	-0.11	0.48				
				59	Examine the Several Branches of the	-0.17	0.58				
				60	Patents	-0.19	0.58				
				61	Territories	-0.22	0.46				
				62	Epidemic Diseases	-0.24	0.83				
				63	Transportation Routes to the	-0.25	0.45				
				64	Civil Service	-0.25	0.48				
				65	Public Health and National	-0.26	0.54				
				66	Manufactures	-0.27	0.63				
				67	Mines and Mining	-0.42	0.51				
				68	Indian Lands	-0.72	0.90				
				69	Coast Defenses	-0.76	0.58				
				70	Railroads	-1.10	0.57 *				
				71	Enrolled Bills	-1.28	0.85				
				72	Claims	-1.54	0.52 *				
N = 2,560				N = 1,122				n = 607			

*p < .10

Table 3. Estimates of Senate committee service value, 14th–48th Congress, using the Grosewart method.

14th–29th Cong.				30th–36th Cong.				30th–48th Cong.				3	
Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.	Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.	Rank	Committee	coeff.	s.e.	Rank	Com
1	Patents	0.49	0.48	1	Commerce	0.73	0.48	1	Judiciary	0.76	0.33 *	1	Judiciary
2	Military Affairs	0.36	0.34	2	Naval Affairs	0.59	0.46	2	Railroads	0.75	0.49	2	Railroads
3	Commerce	0.21	0.37	3	Judiciary	0.51	0.51	3	Naval Affairs	0.61	0.30 *	3	Revolutionary C
4	Roads and Canals	0.18	0.31	4	Library	0.46	0.60	4	Appropriations	0.60	0.50	4	Military Affairs
5	Audit and Control	0.17	0.39	5	District of Columbia	0.41	0.36	5	Foreign Relations	0.55	0.25 *	5	Foreign Relation
6	Foreign Relations	0.16	0.28	6	Foreign Relations	0.40	0.41	6	Privileges and Elections	0.55	0.37	6	Appropriations
7	Revolutionary Claims	0.15	0.38	7	Military Affairs	0.36	0.45	7	Rules	0.52	0.58	7	Naval Affairs
8	Retrenchment	0.14	0.70	8	Patents	0.32	0.40	8	Commerce	0.51	0.28 *	8	Privileges and E
9	Pensions	0.09	0.30	9	Post Office and Post Roads	0.25	0.41	9	Military Affairs	0.50	0.29 *	9	Rules
10	Claims	0.05	0.28	10	Public Lands	0.20	0.45	10	Education and Labor	0.43	0.36	10	Finance
11	Indian Affairs	-0.04	0.40	11	Retrenchment	0.18	0.59	11	Civil Service and Retrenchment	0.42	0.44	11	Civil Service and
12	District of Columbia	-0.05	0.27	12	Indian Affairs	0.17	0.49	12	Library	0.41	0.43	12	Education and L
13	Finance	-0.05	0.29	13	Finance	0.15	0.42	13	Public Lands	0.34	0.27	13	Library
14	Agriculture	-0.10	0.34	14	Pensions	0.11	0.33	14	Finance	0.33	0.29	14	Public Lands
15	Private Land Claims	-0.12	0.32	15	Public Buildings	0.04	0.46	15	Revolutionary Claims	0.33	0.26	15	Public Buildings
16	Manufactures	-0.19	0.38	16	Audit and Control	-0.08	0.54	16	Revision of the Laws	0.30	0.41	16	Commerce
17	Naval Affairs	-0.21	0.29	17	Enrolled Bills	-0.09	0.39	17	District of Columbia	0.26	0.23	17	Revision of the I
18	Public Lands	-0.22	0.30	18	Revolutionary Claims	-0.10	0.39	18	Public Buildings	0.25	0.27	18	Enrolled Bills
19	Public Buildings and	-0.24	0.46	19	Private Land Claims	-0.12	0.38	19	Post Office and Post Roads	0.23	0.26	19	Post Office and I
20	Post Office and Post Roads	-0.24	0.27	20	Territories	-0.19	0.41	20	Patents	0.18	0.25	20	Indian Affairs
21	Judiciary	-0.24	0.30	21	Printing	-0.36	0.48	21	Indian Affairs	0.16	0.26	21	District of Colur
22	Militia	-0.27	0.32	22	Claims	-0.38	0.45	22	Retrenchment	0.16	0.59	22	Territories
23	Printing	-0.34	0.60	23	Agriculture	-0.69	0.64	23	Enrolled Bills	0.10	0.26	23	Patents
24	Library	-0.35	0.73	24	Militia	-0.75	0.66	24	Territories	0.00	0.25	24	Engrossed Bills
25	Engrossed Bills	-0.62	0.37 *	25	Roads and Canals	-0.82	0.48 *	25	Audit and Control	-0.04	0.30	25	Claims
26	Territories	-0.84	0.82	26	Engrossed Bills	-0.87	0.55	26	Claims	-0.08	0.23	26	Audit and Contr
27	Commerce and Manufactures	-1.07	0.61 *	27	Manufactures	-0.95	0.61	27	Improvement of the Miss. Riv.	-0.17	0.95	27	Agriculture
28	Enrolled Bills	-3.24	2.04					28	Agriculture	-0.20	0.28	28	Printing
								29	Printing	-0.24	0.34	29	Improvement of
								30	Mines and Mining	-0.25	0.31	30	Manufactures
								31	Private Land Claims	-0.26	0.28	31	Mines and Minir
								32	Pensions	-0.27	0.21	32	Private Land Cla
								33	Engrossed Bills	-0.29	0.31	33	Pensions
								34	Manufactures	-0.44	0.31	34	Pacific Railroads
								35	Pacific Railroads	-0.69	0.47	35	Transp. Routes t
								36	Militia	-0.72	0.65	36	Public Lands and
								37	Roads and Canals	-0.82	0.48 *	37	Investigation and
								38	Transp. Routes to the Seaboard	-1.05	0.64 *		
								39	Public Lands and Surveys	-2.05	1.10 *		
								40	Investigation and Retrenchment	-3.04	1.73 *		
	n = 905				n = 561				n = 1,656				

Table 4. Inter-period rank-order correlation of Senate committee value.

First period	Second period	Rank-order correlation in committee values
14th–29th Congress (1815–1847)	30th–36th Congress (1857–18861)	.23
30th–36th Congress (1857–1861)	37th–48th Congress (1861–1885)	.62
37th–48th Congress (1861–1885)	49th–66th Congress (1885–1921)	.41
49th–66th Congress (1885–1921)	67th–79th Congress (1921–1947)	.45

Table 5. Probability that a committee will be dominated by the majority party as a function of Grosewart values (probit analysis).

	Congress						
	14–48	14–29	30–48	30–36	37–48	49–66	67–79
Committee value	0.65 (0.16)	0.31 (0.09)	0.54 (0.18)	0.61 (0.38)	0.30 (0.15)	0.15 (0.05)	0.19 (0.14)
Constant	0.77 (0.11)	0.55 (0.18)	1.09 (0.10)	1.09 (0.13)	1.16 (0.13)	0.99 (0.19)	1.50 (0.18)
N	2,429	692	1,704	524	1,180	942	430
$?^2$	15.87	10.68	9.42	2.60	4.00	8.09	1.76
Prob($?^2$)	0.0001	.001	.002	.11	0.05	.004	.18
Pct. maj. dominated	83	71	88	85	89	88	94

Table 6. Multivariate analysis of select committee membership, 1st–14th Congress.

	Entire sample	Majority party only	Minority party only	Fixed effects
Size of state (0–0.15)	1.55 (0.33)	1.55 (0.39)	1.57 (0.56)	0.08 (1.35)
Slave state (0–1)	-0.030 (0.028)	-0.022 (0.034)	-0.076 (0.051)	—
In majority party (0–1)	0.099 (0.032)	—	—	0.19 (0.04)
Ideologically extreme (0–1.49)	0.003 (0.055)	0.066 (0.066)	-0.11 (0.10)	-0.11 (0.07)
Prior House service (0–1)	-0.075 (0.071)	-0.49 (0.10)	0.27 (0.10)	—
Congresses served in house (0–16)	0.016 (0.007)	0.021 (0.007)	0.014 (0.014)	—
House committee service (0–1)	0.05 (0.10)	0.70 (0.15)	-0.49 (0.13)	—
College (0–1)	0.074 (0.029)	0.044 (0.033)	0.12 (0.06)	—
Senate seniority (1–9)	0.017 (0.009)	0.019 (0.010)	0.030 (0.017)	0.002 (0.007)
Lawyer (0–1)	0.030 (0.031)	0.029 (0.035)	-0.026 (0.064)	—
Constant	0.22 (0.06)	0.29 (0.06)	0.30 (0.09)	0.40 (0.10)
N	388	270	118	388
R-sq	.15	.17	.18	.13
RMSE	0.27	0.26	0.25	—
F-test for fixed effects (154/229 d.f.)				5.695 $p < .0005$

Table 7. Standing Committee Assignments in the Senate, 1816-1884

	14th-48th Cong.		14th-29th Cong.		30th-48th Cong.	
Variable Name	Coeff.	Signif.	Coeff.	Signif.	Coeff.	Signif.
Constant	-.260 (.076)	.0005	-.446 (.096)	.0001	.079 (.092)	.195
Freshman	-.076 (.025)	.0015	-.040 (.041)	.162	-.176 (.045)	.0001
Lawyer	.065 (.025)	.0045	.0050 (.045)	.451	.133 (.043)	.001
Farmer	.04 (.046)	.192	.132 (.069)	.0275	-.146 (.094)	.06
College	.047 (.019)	.0075	.063 (.032)	.0235	.021 (.034)	.271
Distance from party median	.063 (.059)	.14	.096 (.091)	.146	.028 (.110)	.40
Distance from chamber median	-.083 (.033)	.0055	-.057 (.057)	.160	-.173 (.057)	.001
Seniority (Senate)	.019 (.005)	.0001	.0267 (.008)	.001	.028 (.009)	.001
House service	.012 (.003)	.0001	.011 (.004)	.002	.015 (.005)	.0035
Southern state (after the Civil War)	.013 (.04)	.368	–	--	.021 (.056)	.30
Slave state (before the Civil War)	.107 (.023)	.0001	.054 (.031)	.0415	.062 (.053)	.12
Small party majority	.079 (.037)	.017	.0079 (.051)	.439	.069 (.079)	.19
Relative state pop.	1.11 (.28)	.0001	.774 (.406)	.0295	1.605 (.553)	.002
	N=1,749 Adjusted R^2=.204		N=732 Adjusted R^2=.076		N=1,016 Adjusted R^2=.201	

Table 8. Standing Committee Assignments in the Senate, 1885-1946

	49th-79th Cong.		49th-66th Cong.		67th-79th Cong.	
Variable Name	B	Signif.	B	Signif.	B	Signif.
Constant	.122 (.323)	.352	.314 (.350)	.185	3.914 (.452)	.0001
Freshman	-1.36 (.129)	.0001	-1.479 (.168)	.0001	-1.99 (.266)	.0001
Lawyer	.393 (.109)	.0001	.255 (.150)	.044	.539 (.204)	.004
Farmer	-.238 (.197)	.113	-.073 (.266)	.291	-.384 (.378)	.155
College	-.108 (.109)	.162	.199 (.132)	.067	-.726 (.246)	.0015
Distance from party median	-1.702 (.301)	.0001	-2.192 (.432)	.0001	-2.506 (.542)	.0001
Distance from chamber median	.466 (.155)	.0015	.117 (.197)	.276	.513 (.317)	.0925
Seniority (Senate)	.313 (.015)	.0001	.396 (.020)	.0001	.233 (.027)	.0001
House service	.046 (.010)	.0001	.033 (.013)	.0225	.0324 (.018)	.036
Southern state	-.526 (.108)	.0001	.0152 (.144)	.458	-1.349 (.329)	.0001
Small party majority	.446 (.153)	.002	.502 (.152)	.001	-.108 (.379)	.387
Relative state pop.	20.49 (2.17)	.0001	32.53 (2.84)	.0001	11.55 (4.215)	.003
	N=2,947 Adjusted R^2=.390		N=1,638 Adjusted R^2=.495		N=1,252 Adjusted R^2=.193	