Partisanship, Consensus, and Committee-Floor Divergence : A Comparison of Member Behavior in the 96th and 104th Congresses

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A Comparison of Member Behavior in the 96th and 104th Congresses

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Although some studies of Congress have employed aggregate-level ideological measures to characterize the outlier tendencies of congressional committees, such measures cannot reveal intracommittee variation in the propensity for disagreement between committees and the floor. In this analysis, we examine differences in voting behavior between members of the committee to which bills were initially referred and the House in the 96th and 104th Congresses. We demonstrate that significant variation occurs both within and among committees, and divergence is at times quite high among some committees not traditionally considered outliers. In the multivariate analysis, we discover that many vote-level factors significantly influence the degree of committee-floor divergence, and a considerable range of variation is evident in the level of divergence across committees. We also find that the number of committees exhibiting divergent behavior, the degree of this divergence, and the breakdown between the parties differs dramatically between the two periods.

On May 24, 2000, the House of Representatives voted on what observers described as one of the most prominent and intensely lobbied pieces of legislation in the 106th Congress. The vote to extend permanent normal trade status to China passed on the floor of the House by a 237 to 197 count, with support from 164 Republicans and 73 Democrats. Interestingly, earlier committee consideration of the bill (which occurred in the Ways and Means Committee) would have

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given little indication of the looming conflict on the House floor. In voting to report HR 4444, the committee acted in a nearly unanimous fashion, with only four Democrats voting in opposition to reporting the legislation favorably (the final tally was 34 to 4). In this case, a clear division existed between members of the committee with jurisdiction (nearly 90% of whom supported the measure in the Ways and Means Committee) and their House colleagues (of whom only about 52% voted in favor on the floor).[1]

The preceding account draws attention to the significant and, at times, conflicting relationship between committee and noncommittee members of the United States House of Representatives. A substantial amount of scholarly attention has focused on the relationship between House committees and their parent chamber due, at least in part, to the integral role committees play in determining outcomes in Congress. Whereas some scholars have argued that these bodies are essentially microcosms of the chambers from which they are drawn (Krehbiel, 1990, 1991), others have posited that they may be skewed more toward partisan or distributive ends (Adler & Lapinski, 1997; Aldrich & Rohde, 1997-1998; Cox & McCubbins, 1993; Rohde, 1991; Shepsle & Weingast, 1987). These and other scholars have often employed aggregate-level ideological measures in an attempt to characterize committees by whether they consist of high demanders or preference outliers. Unfortunately, such measures cannot reveal intracommittee variation in the propensity for disagreement between committees and the floor. In this article, we employ an alternative method of analysis permitting measurement of differences in voting behavior between members of the committee to which bills were initially referred and the floor, which avoids the aggregation problems of previous research.

The central question in our analysis is, under what circumstances, if any, do the committee and the floor differ in terms of their revealed preferences? The votes on normalizing trade relations with China were an extreme case in which the committee and floor differed starkly in the degree to which each supported the measure. In this paper, we attempt to capture the frequency with which such differences are evident, and the conditions under which they are more or less likely to occur. Theoretically, it seemed most appropriate to look at votes that were jurisdiction specific, so we focused on individual

committees and the votes on bills referred to each. This enabled us to determine the institutional and contextual characteristics that led to more or less representative behavior on the part of committee members.

This analysis moves beyond the debate over competing theoretical perspectives of congressional organization by dealing with the more fundamental question of when and how committees differ from the floor. As such, we do not attempt to determine which organizational theory is more accurate in light of observed patterns of behavior. Previous congressional scholarship sought to characterize individual committees by whether they were preference outliers (see, for instance, Cox & McCubbins, 1993; Krehbiel, 1990, 1991; Weingast & Marshall, 1988). However, an alternative perspective that we advance and test is that legislative politics, and committees more specifically, are both multifaceted and multidimensional (Maltzman, 1995, 1997; Rohde, 1994, 1995). Unlike much of the previous research, our analysis does not rely on unidimensional measures of preferences based on groups or subsets of roll calls (e.g., interest group or NOMINATE scores). Instead, we explore the contexts in which committees exhibit behavior indicating similar preferences to those of the floor by focusing on individual roll calls. We expect that such patterns will not be universal across each committee; even within single bills, the committee and floor may converge on some votes and diverge on others (see, e.g., Hurwitz, Moiles, & Rohde, in press). If we can establish both that committee-floor divergence occurs with some frequency and that divergence varies systematically across committees and contexts, this will set the stage for future work to offer a fully specified theory to explain these patterns.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

In this analysis, we use individual roll calls to offer a more systematic and methodologically sound understanding of when committees and the floor differ in terms of revealed preferences. Our reliance on individual rather than aggregate roll calls allows us to determine if there is systematic variation between committees and the parent chamber related to certain contextual features of the congressional

institution. Our expectation is that committee-floor divergence will vary both across committees (because as Fenno [1973] asserted, committees differ from one another) and within individual committees (because committees are not constant in their propensity toward divergence). As such, we are likely to find vote-by-vote differences in the degree of heterogeneity between a committee and its parent chamber. For instance, when a bill is considered on the floor, members of the committee of jurisdiction may be more likely to vote differently from noncommittee members when faced with hostile amendments. However, when the vote on final passage is taken, such differences may be significantly diminished because many members will prefer passing a bill as a whole (even in a slightly altered form) to not passing one at all.

In addition to the previous example, one might also consider a case where more than one dimension of interests is embedded within the same bill. Hurwitz et al. (in press) described House consideration of agriculture bills in the 104th Congress and demonstrated that multiple motivations influenced committee members' behavior in an area most scholars consider to be populated with high demanders. In particular, they showed that whereas certain district-linked interests constrained members' votes on specific amendments, a broader partisan domain emerged on issues where no such limitation was in force and the two parties had taken well-known and opposing positions. These two scenarios illustrate the conditions under which one might observe variation in the tendency toward committee-floor divergence.

Given the exploratory nature of this analysis, we do not have explicit, formally derived hypotheses about divergence to test. However, we anticipate that several institutional factors are likely to lead to varying levels of divergence. For instance, a significant degree of the variation in voting cohesiveness is likely to be captured by the type of vote being taken. The logic here is similar to that described in the scenario above for final passage versus amendment voting. However, the issue merits a more thorough discussion. Bach and Smith (1988) discussed the increasingly partisan nature of special rules in the House of Representatives, noting that the majority party's reliance on restrictive provisions is in many cases an attempt to maintain a slim floor coalition or to avoid potentially embarrassing amendment votes (Bach & Smith, 1988, pp. 68-69). Because restrictive rules are often (though not always) designed with partisan intentions, we would expect the

parties to be mostly united against one another on votes to adopt special rules. This is one case in particular where we would not necessarily expect to see high levels of outlying behavior between committee members and their counterparts on the floor.

On the other hand, it is well known that the amending process allows members to pursue a variety of personal and institutional goals. Shepsle and Weingast (1987) paid particular attention to the interest floor members may have in altering committee decisions on bills reported to the full chamber. They posited that committees, in anticipation that floor members may amend or significantly alter the legislation as reported, employ their gatekeeping prerogatives. However, committees cannot in all cases foresee potential floor conflicts and in other cases may be prepared to take positions at odds with noncommittee members. Weingast (1992) also discussed the interplay between members in the context of amendment voting, suggesting that this is one arena in which we are more likely to witness conflict between various coalitions in the House. He argued that we may see this sort of behavior play out as committee members counter the amendments of noncommittee members with second-degree amendments of their own (in effect, fighting fire with fire).

In the 104th Congress, there were instances of intraparty conflict in the amending process, particularly in the case of the Appropriations Committee, in which numerous freshman Republicans were unhappy with the high levels of funding offered to several federal agencies. Although the discord in the majority's ranks did not always appear in votes on final passage, the stages leading up to that point were often marked with a series of contentious votes within the Republican majority (Aldrich & Rohde, 2000). Thus, considerations of partisanship and intraparty division are potentially relevant to the degree of divergence. In fact, it is the high levels of partisanship in the 104th Congress that motivated us to compare its results with those of the 96th, which scholars often characterize as significantly less partisan than more recent Congresses (see, e.g., Rohde, 1991).

Beyond amendments and special rules, two other types of votes that occur frequently merit brief consideration.[2] We alluded earlier to the special considerations underlying votes on final passage. At this stage of the legislative process, members are faced with a simple up or down vote on a bill that potentially contains a number of important provi-

sions, some of which they may favor, whereas others they may oppose. Whereas amendments are likely to accentuate any differences arising between committee and noncommittee members, such variation becomes less likely on final passage votes when particular interests give way to broader concerns. In line with this reasoning, we might expect to see lower levels of divergence on final passage votes compared to votes on amendments. Also, a sizable amount of the House's legislative workload is dealt with under suspension of the rules. Bach (1990) noted that this procedure is used to bring legislation to the floor expeditiously, suggesting that it is suitable mostly when a bipartisan majority supports the measure (Bach, 1990, p. 60). Accordingly, our expectation would be that little or no divergence exists on these types of votes.

Similarly, the type of rule under which a bill is considered is likely to indicate the degree to which the bill is expected to be contentious on the floor. Typically, when a bill is considered under a closed or restrictive rule, leaders are attempting to frame the debate on their own terms (Bach & Smith, 1988). In contrast, open rules present an environment in which members have unlimited capacity to act in accordance with their preferences. Therefore, we might expect to see somewhat higher levels of divergence under an open rule than a closed rule, in which those issues likely to divide members are kept off the agenda. Any differences, however, are likely to be conditioned by the type of vote being taken.

Our goal in this analysis is not to try to use the data to choose one of the competing perspectives on legislative organization as more correct than the others. On one hand, our view is that each of these perspectives is correct about part of the Congress' legislative behavior. Distributive, informational, and partisan considerations all affect legislators' decisions and the relationship between the committees and their parent chamber—sometimes simultaneously on the same bill, sometimes individually on different bills.

Even if this view were not correct, however, we believe—as many other analysts have noted—that roll call data suffer from many deficiencies in the effort to arbitrate among the theories. In general, this stems from the fact that the kinds of votes that would be useful to us may not be available. That is, the agenda is endogenous and variable over time. For example, contested votes on distributive issues tend to

be rare, so such issues may not be reflected in the aggregate measures of preference that are often the focus of analysis, and similarly such votes may not be available to compare to behavior on other kinds of votes.[3] Even if such methodological problems are surmounted, one cannot use roll calls to test hypotheses if no relevant roll calls are taken.

Moreover, Hall and Grofman (1990) noted that certain methodological problems exist with using indices consisting of either roll call data or interest group ratings in their aggregate form. They claimed that using subsets of roll call votes to measure individual preferences is problematic for two reasons. First, intracommittee logrolling may downplay the observable differences between committees and the floor, as members are willing to forgo their preferred position on issues over which they have weak preferences but not on positions for which they have much stronger preferences. Second, and of more concern methodologically, interest group scores collapse onto one dimension preferences that exist over many dimensions (particularly committee jurisdiction–specific dimensions). As such, they do not allow the researcher to measure committee-floor differences on those issues relevant to specific committees.

Hall and Grofman (1990) also noted that the use of interest group scores to test for committee outliers could lead to biased outcomes that severely understate committee-chamber differences.[4] "Even were roll call data appropriate to the task of measuring preferences, the use of interest group-generated indexes further inflates the likelihood of a no-difference finding. Such indexes are simply not well tailored to the jurisdiction-specific hypotheses being tested" (Hall & Grofman, 1990, p. 1154). Their argument was that committees were not necessarily outliers per se; rather, they concluded that committee bias was contingent upon the heterogeneity of a particular committee and the nature of the committee's legislative jurisdiction (Hall & Grofman, 1990, p. 1152).

In terms of more specific limitations on using roll call–based measures of individual preferences, Rohde (1994) has argued that roll calls alone do not represent preferences. Rather, he contended that votes represent the interaction of preferences and agendas, both of which cannot simultaneously be controlled for in a systematic manner. He also has noted that "because different preferences can result in

identical voting patterns, one cannot tell from roll call voting patterns what preferences gave rise to them. Thus it is impossible, using roll call data alone, to recover interval measures of preferences" (p. 346). However, Rohde suggested that focusing on individual rather than aggregate roll calls allows the researcher to effectively bypass this limitation. Analyzing individual roll calls, in essence, fixes the alternatives within the issue space so that one can explore the connected effect of preferences.

The difficulties discussed above are less of a problem in the current analysis because our purpose is only to determine if there is systematic variation to be explained and see if that variation is linked to some contextual features. In the longer run, however, as scholars move toward more theoretically based explanations of committee-floor relations, it will be desirable to supplement roll call data with other types of evidence wherever possible.

DATA AND METHOD

In exploring the nature of committee-floor distinctiveness, we assembled a list of all the bills and resolutions that received one or more roll call votes on the floor of the House of Representatives in the 96th and 104th Congresses.[5] This information was taken from *Congressional Quarterly*'s Congressional Roll Call books for both sessions of each Congress. For this subset of bills and resolutions considered on the floor of the House, we used Legi-Slate and THOMAS to obtain the legislative histories for each and then linked them with the committees to which they were referred.[6] We also categorized the measures by whether they were singly or multiply referred, thus allowing us to isolate those bills falling within the jurisdiction of an individual committee and those that were dealt with under the jurisdiction of more than one committee. Also, the type of special rule employed on each bill was coded for the 104th Congress.[7] In addition, a number of other vote-level characteristics (such as the type of vote, degree of partisanship, etc.) were computed and are discussed at greater length in the following section (see also Appendix A). We employed individual-level roll call data for the two Congresses we examine to compute the degree of committee-floor divergence on

each vote for all committees under consideration.[8] The final product is a data set consisting of 957 nonconsensual votes in the 96th Congress and 1,567 nonconsensual votes in the 104th Congress (a nonconsensual vote occurs when less than 90% of the members vote the same way).[9]

In the 96th Congress, we found that 444 legislative bills dealing with a substantive policy issue were introduced, were referred to one or more committees, and eventually received at least one roll call on the House floor.[10] Measures that were not referred and those that dealt with purely procedural matters are not included in this analysis because they do not allow us to examine issues of specific jurisdictional interest.[11] For the 444 bills considered, we collected 1,362 total roll calls that could be linked to one or more committees. This figure slightly exceeds the total number of recorded votes taken in the 96th Congress because bills that were referred to multiple committees will appear more than once.[12] Of the 1,362 roll calls, 992 were nonconsensual in nature. Because we are interested in exploring those situations in which committees and the floor may differ, we will be focusing on this subset of the total roll calls.

The 104th Congress differed from the 96th in a number of ways. Most prominent were the significant increase in the number of roll call votes, the amount that were nonconsensual, and the changing workload among the committees in the two Houses.[13] Although there were more roll calls in the 104th Congress, this difference is even more pronounced here due to the greater frequency with which bills were multiply referred in the 104th. In accord with our expectations, whereas about 73% of the votes in our subset were nonconsensual in nature for the 96th Congress, this proportion rose to about 85% in the 104th Congress.[14] We also observed that some committees, such as Judiciary and Government Reform, played a more prominent role in the latter Congress. Others, such as the Commerce Committee, did not exhibit as frequent a presence in floor voting or in the number of bills referred. We identified a total of 386 bills that could be linked to a committee and received at least one roll call vote on the floor of the House. Of the 2,040 roll calls, we again focus on the subset that were nonconsensual, which leaves a total of 1,723 votes.

In considering which committees to include in our analysis, we sought to present as complete a picture of the differences between the

committees as possible while maintaining an adequate sample size. Although we would like to generate insights about all committees, the work of certain committees is not as visible in terms of roll call voting on the floor. One reason this may be the case is that certain committees deal principally with less contentious issues that are generally agreed on with a simple voice vote. Meanwhile, others do not have many issues come before them in a given session. For these reasons, we have included those committees that had more than 20 floor roll calls on bills falling within their jurisdiction.[15] This effectively eliminates District of Columbia, Ethics, Intelligence, Rules, Small Business, and Veterans' Affairs from the 96th Congress and Ethics, House Oversight, Intelligence, Small Business, and Veterans' Affairs from subsequent analysis of the 104th Congress.

For each vote included in our analysis, we employed individual-level roll call data and coded for members' party affiliation and committee membership.[16] These categories allowed us to compute the three primary measures of our dependent variable. First, on each roll call we determined the percentage of committee members voting yea and the percentage of floor members voting yea then computed the absolute difference between them, yielding our measure of committee-floor divergence for all members. Second, the same calculation was carried out for Republican committee members and their floor counterparts. Similarly, we computed an absolute-difference score reflecting the deviation between Democratic committee members and nonmembers. These latter two calculations offer the opportunity to examine whether the contingents on each committee differed with respect to their party cohort.[17]

SUMMARY EVIDENCE

We begin our analysis by exploring the nature and degree of divergence between the two parties and across the Congresses under consideration here. A simple frequency plot of the percentage of votes falling within various ranges of divergence reveals prominent differences both between Republicans and Democrats and between members of the 96th and 104th Congresses in the propensity for divergence between committees and the floor. Figure 1 indicates that the propor-

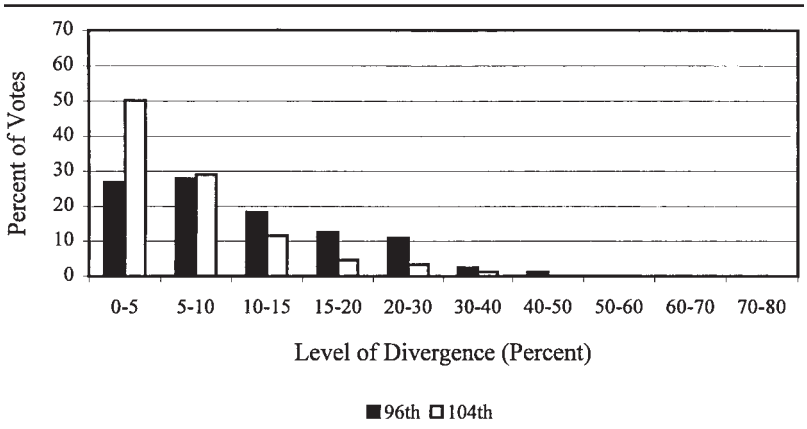

Figure 1: Frequency of Divergence by Congress

tion of votes on which the committee and floor exhibited various levels of divergence changed rather dramatically between the two Congresses we examine. Whereas in more than 50% of roll call votes in the 104th Congress the committee closely mirrored the floor (0%-5% divergence), this proportion was only about 27% in the 96th Congress. Also, we observe fairly high levels of divergence for a significant proportion of votes in the 96th (the right-hand tail of the frequency distribution contains nearly 15% of all votes at levels exceeding 20% divergence).

Another interesting pattern is revealed when we examine the frequency of divergence at various levels for each party. Figures 2 and 3 graph the percentage of votes falling within various ranges of divergence for Democrats and Republicans in the 96th and 104th Congresses, respectively. As observed in Figure 1 for all members, both Democrats and Republicans exhibit higher levels of divergence (between party contingents on the relevant committee and their fellow partisans) with greater frequency in the 96th as opposed to the 104th Congress.

At least one other pattern stands out here as well. The Republican distribution of scores tightened dramatically from the 96th to the 104th Congress, such that although the party had some exceedingly high levels of divergence in the 96th Congress (exceeding 50%), its overall cohesion greatly exceeded that of Democrats in the 104th. A number of potential explanations exist, one of which is that majority status and the potential for committee control carries with it more evi-

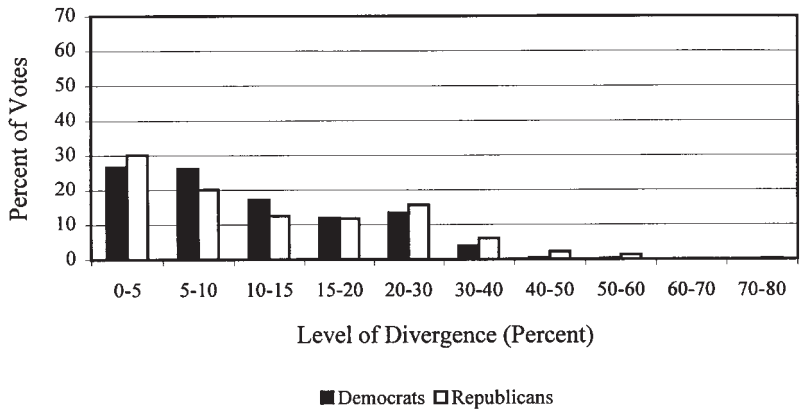

Figure 2: Frequency of Divergence by Party, 96th Congress

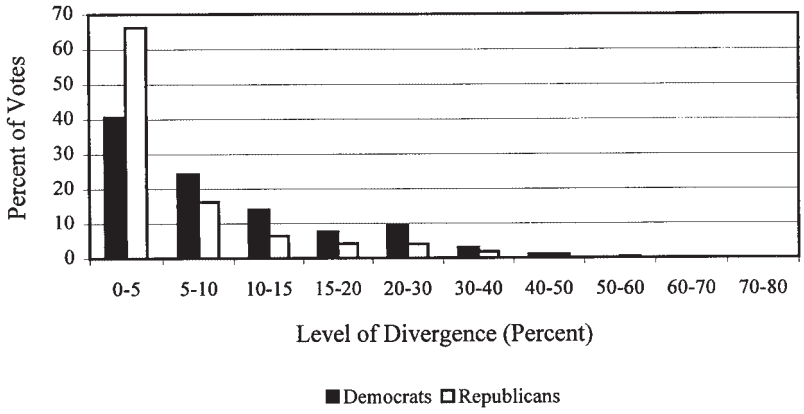

Figure 3: Frequency of Divergence by Party, 104th Congress

dence of reflective behavior by party contingents on the various committees who act on the party's agenda. This is supported by the fact that in both Congresses, high levels of divergence are more common in the minority party. Another potential explanation is that the ceding of power to Republican Party leaders and the party conference in the 1980s that allowed the leadership to appoint the chairmen of certain panels and subjected all chairmen to approval by the conference tightened the relationship between parties and committees.

Another interesting finding that the reader may have noticed in the preceding figures is that at times the degree of divergence can be very large.[18] For example, the highest level of divergence between the committee and the floor (in this case among Republicans) occurring in the 96th Congress was nearly 80%. On this occasion, members were voting on a motion to order the previous question on the rule governing consideration of H.Con.Res. 307 (Fiscal 1981 Budget Targets). Whereas Republican members of the Budget Committee voted 7 to 1 in favor of the motion, the breakdown among the rest of the party was 12 to 132, leaving us with an exceedingly high level of divergence between the two contingents. Although few votes exhibited such high levels of committee-floor disagreement, the figures demonstrate that such differences occurred more frequently than one might expect.

Furthermore, it is important to note that not all the votes with the highest levels of divergence were associated with committees linked to distributive politics. Instead, a significant proportion was connected with committees such as Budget, Appropriations, and Ways and Means. For instance, of the ten highest scores among all members and Republicans in the 104th Congress, four and five votes, respectively, came on bills from Appropriations or Ways and Means. Moreover, there was some degree of difference between Republicans and Democrats, as well, in that whereas committees such as Agriculture, Post Office, and Armed Services/National Security exhibited high levels of divergence for Democrats, the highest levels of Republican divergence occurred more frequently on the money and policy committees. Finally, a large proportion of the highest scores, particularly in the 104th Congress, occurred on amendments, thus indicating support for our vote-based hypothesis described earlier.

MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

Although we have seen that some committees exhibit unexpectedly high levels of divergence, it is necessary to examine the full set of votes to determine whether in fact these committees are significantly deviant from the floor when considering all votes within their jurisdiction and a number of factors that may influence such behavior. A more realistic picture of the legislative process would capture the simulta-

neous effects of these variables, many of which are obviously relevant on individual roll calls. Thus, we turn to a multivariate analysis, enabling us to specify a model including a number of relevant variables discussed in the preceding section.

Tables 1 and 2 present the regression results corresponding to the 96th and 104th Congresses.[19] We estimated a separate model for each of the dependent variables so as to capture overall effects, along with those that may be particular to each party.[20] The general variables linked to the vote being taken are strongly significant in their influence on the degree of divergence and are robust across both parties for the two Congresses. We notice that regardless of party status, the amount of consensus and the level of partisanship are both highly significant in their impact on committee-floor differences in the 96th Congress (see Table 1). In the 104th House, a similar pattern is borne out for all members and Republicans (see Table 2), although the parameter estimate for consensus on the Democratic dependent variable does not obtain statistical significance.

Substantively speaking, Republican members in the 104th Congress, for instance, are about 26 percentage points less divergent between the committee and the floor as partisanship increases one standard deviation (approximately 27%). Similarly, as bills become more consensual, Republicans tend to exhibit lower levels of divergent behavior. The fact that this variable does not obtain statistical significance for Democrats (although the sign is the same) seems to indicate that Republican members are influenced to a large degree by the conflict perceived in the environment around them, whereas Democratic differences between the committee and floor are not as systematically related to the amount of overall consensus.[21]

We also find that Democrats in the 96th Congress tend to be slightly less divergent (between their committee and floor contingents) when voting on bills that were multiply referred. Why this might be is unclear. Nowhere else in our results does this variable stand out, and because we do not have any explicit theoretical expectations regarding its impact, we do not make any substantive claims regarding its influence.

Also of interest is the fact that all members exhibit lower levels of divergence on votes taken on bills receiving a restrictive rule in the 104th Congress. Although the magnitude of this variable is small in

(Text continued on p. 21)

TABLE 1

Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Committee-Floor Divergence, 96th Congress

	All Members		*Republicans*		*Democrats*	
Committee	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE
Agriculture	.033**	.004	–.003	.005	.049**	.003
Appropriations	.038**	.002	–.016**	.002	.044**	.002
Armed Services	.090**	.003	.017*	.007	.112**	.004
Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs	.052**	.002	.022**	.003	.062**	.002
Budget	.073**	.001	.030**	.003	.088**	.002
Education and Labor	.067**	.005	.023**	.007	.106**	.005
House Administration	.045**	.009	.048**	.015	.080**	.006
Interior and Insular Affairs	.036**	.007	.042**	.014	.076**	.006
International Relations	.092**	.003	.105**	.006	.065**	.002
Interstate and Foreign Commerce	.016**	.004	–.016*	.007	.035**	.004
Judiciary	.039**	.004	.010	.006	.039**	.003
Merchant Marine and Fisheries	.019*	.007	.005	.014	.029**	.005
Post Office and Civil Service	.023**	.007	–.012	.011	.058**	.005
Public Works and Transportation	.078**	.003	.083**	.005	.066**	.003
Science and Technology	.025**	.006	–.021	.012	.046**	.004
Ways and Means	.043**	.004	–.001	.006	.069**	.004
Amendments	–.008	.010	–.013	.009	.001	.009
Final Passage votes	.011	.012	.016	.017	.003	.009
Rules votes	.007	.011	.064**	.018	–.016	.010

(continued)

TABLE 1 Continued

	All Members		*Republicans*		*Democrats*	
Committee	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE
Suspension votes	.028*	.013	.047*	.017	.011	.012
Degree of partisanship	–.152**	.021	–.200**	.031	–.181**	.022
Degree of consensus	–.313**	.052	–.321**	.089	–.346**	.050
Multiple referral	–.011	.008	–.005	.019	–.017*	.006
Constant	.180**	.017	.249**	.023	.193**	.019
R^2	.216		.192		.220	
F-statistic	14.88**		63.55**		30.39**	
$N = 957$						

*Significant at $p < .05$. **Significant at $p < .01$.

TABLE 2

Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Committee-Floor Divergence, 104th Congress

	All Members		*Republicans*		*Democrats*	
Committee	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE
Agriculture	.051**	.002	.031**	.003	.036**	.006
Appropriations	.033**	.006	.015	.007	.001	.010
Banking	.021**	.002	–.010**	.003	.042**	.003
Budget	.021**	.002	–.003	.002	–.006**	.001
Commerce	.021**	.001	.001	.004	.016**	.004
Education	.015**	.003	.004	.005	.019**	.004
International Relations	.024**	.002	.003	.003	.040**	.004
Judiciary	.017**	.003	–.005	.003	.086**	.005
National Security	.065**	.003	–.001	.004	.094**	.004
Resources	.026**	.003	.016**	.003	–.015**	.003
Science	.016**	.001	.001	.002	.027**	.003
Transportation	.021**	.005	–.011	.005	.028**	.007
Ways and Means	.023**	.002	–.006	.005	.015**	.004
Amendments	.006	.004	.010	.008	.013**	.004
Final Passage votes	.004	.005	–.001	.003	.026**	.009
Rules votes	.001	.005	–.004	.004	.009	.004
Suspension votes	.002	.012	.007	.015	.022	.024
Restrictive rule	–.008*	.003	.004	.005	–.012	.007
Degree of partisanship	–.147**	.024	–.259**	.020	–.103**	.023

(continued)

TABLE 2 Continued

	All Members		*Republicans*		*Democrats*	
Committee	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE	*Coefficient*	*Robust* SE
Degree of consensus	–.216**	.044	–.469**	.054	–.011	.075
Multiple referral	–.009	.006	–.009	.007	–.017	.013
Constant	.175**	.021	.285**	.024	.144**	.021
R^2	.317		.422		.267	
F-statistic	14.41**		69.19**		17.85**	
N = 1,567						

*Significant at $p < .05$. **Significant at $p < .01$.

comparison to that of partisanship and conflict (it represents about a 1% change in divergence), there most certainly is a systematic element that tends to unite committee and noncommittee members in an environment in which a restrictive rule is employed. Also noteworthy is the variation in divergence by vote type.[22] We see that amendments are significant in increasing the level of divergence for Democrats in the 104th Congress, although they exhibit no such influence in the 96th. Furthermore, final passage votes exhibit even higher levels of divergence for Democrats in the 104th Congress whereas they exert essentially no impact on Republicans.

The 96th House presents a dramatically different picture. We found that whereas the effect of amendments and final passage votes are statistically indistinguishable from zero, both rules votes and votes to pass a bill under suspension of the rules exert a positive effect on divergence among Republicans. The effect of rules votes for Republicans is perhaps not surprising, given the decreased control exhibited by party leaders over their members at the time and the congruent ability of minority members to see their goals and interests served on specialized committees. In such cases, members of the minority may have an interest in seeing a committee bill receive a restrictive rule.

In examining the coefficient estimates for individual committees, we observe a number of interesting patterns.[23] First, we find that the 96th Congress contained a large number of committees that were significant in their deviation from the floor. Among all members, all 16 House panels are statistically significant at traditional levels, whereas for Republicans this number drops to 10 and for Democrats remains at 16.

The 104th Congress displays comparatively fewer committees that deviated significantly from the floor for Republicans, where the change occurred both numerically and categorically. Appropriations, Budget, Commerce, Education, International Relations, National Security, and Transportation and Infrastructure no longer exhibit such divergent behavior, whereas Agriculture becomes significant. On the Democratic side, the significantly divergent committees remain the same with the exception of Appropriations (however, there were fewer committees for analysis in the 104th). A noteworthy trend between the two Congresses is that Democrats persistently have more significantly outlying committees than Republicans.[24]

Beyond the sheer number of committees displaying divergent behavior, we are also interested in the magnitude of these effects. For instance, in the 96th Congress on bills falling within the jurisdiction of the International Relations Committee, Republican members on this panel exhibited about a 10 percentage point increase in divergence from the baseline committee (Government Operations). On the Democratic side, perhaps unsurprisingly, the Armed Services Committee displays one of the highest levels of divergence among the various committees (it would appear to be the highest—however, unstandardized coefficient estimates do not allow us to ascertain the magnitude of a variable's effect when contrasted with others). Turning to the 104th Congress, on votes linked to the Judiciary Committee, Democratic divergence increases by more than 8 percentage points, whereas a roll call associated with National Security leads to more than a 9 percentage point increase in the dependent variable. For Republicans, a bill considered by the Agriculture Committee is associated with an increase in divergence of more than 3 percentage points on average.

CONCLUSION

This analysis has been motivated by a number of questions central to properly assessing the interplay between committees and the floor in the U.S. House of Representatives. We sought to determine whether, as we expected, significant levels of divergence between the committee and the floor existed and whether there was systematic variation among committees in the propensity for divergence. In both instances, we found evidence to support our expectations. There are a number of points worth noting in this regard. First, we observed that at times the level of divergence could be quite high. Not only did very high levels of divergence occur at times, it is important to note that many of these votes are associated with committees not traditionally linked to distributive issues.

Second, our findings suggest there is notable variation in divergence that needs to be explained. That is, it is neither true that divergence is nonexistent across the board nor is it constant across the variables we expected to be of interest. One should keep in mind, however,

the distinction between substantive and statistical significance in these results. Although a number of the committees in our analysis exhibit statistically significant patterns of divergence, in some cases the magnitude of the coefficients is rather small and may not offer much in the way of substantive interpretation. Nevertheless, it is apparent that substantively discernible effects are evident for a number of variables relating to both institutional and committee-specific variables. However, because our model is not grounded in a particular theoretical perspective that seeks to explain cross-committee variation in the degree of divergence, future research should seek to build a more explicit theory for predicting the conditions under which divergence occurs.

We also wanted to see if the degree of divergence was systematically related to certain contextual features, like the type of vote or the underlying level of partisanship, that we might plausibly have expected to have an effect. These relationships were also found to be present to a degree. Finally, we examined whether there were some predictable differences between the majority and minority party in terms of the amount of divergence exhibited, and there were.[25]

With this preliminary support, we think it worthwhile to advance the analysis further to see if we can produce more substantial results. Given that there is relevant variation to explain, we want to work to develop more explicit theoretical expectations regarding the propensity for divergence. For one thing, we want to focus on a priori classifications of various types of bills and votes linked to the different theoretical perspectives that can reflect their varying expectations about divergence. Is it the case, for example, that issues and votes that we can classify as distributive produce relatively high levels of divergence compared to partisan ones?

Another avenue of future research relates to the findings concerning the effects of partisanship. We found here that not only was divergence more significant at the extremes, but that it was distributed across many committees, particularly for the Democratic Party. Moreover, it appears as though majority status affects the degree to which members are prone to exhibit divergent behavior. Further analysis may well shed additional light on the exact relationship between partisanship and committee-floor divergence over a broader time series,

but we offer at least some additional evidence that the two are systematically related.

In addition, we want to reiterate our earlier point that although this study has certain benefits because it combines all committees, in the long run we will probably get clearer results from more focused studies of one or two committees. Because there could potentially be interactions between the committees and other more general variables we do not include, it would be useful to study a few committees independently. Another limitation arising from the fact that we include most committees is the multiple counting of votes resulting from multiple referral. This practice was not nearly as prevalent in the 96th Congress, and given our results (and the fact that we ran the models on just singly referred measures with no substantive difference in estimates), it seems likely that this is not a serious limitation.

One final point worth mentioning may serve as a guide for subsequent analyses seeking to measure the degree of committee-floor divergence. In this article, we have focused exclusively on the absolute level of difference, thus precluding us from speaking to the directionality of divergence. For instance, as we alluded to earlier, it would be interesting to determine whether the medians of the floor and the committee agreed or disagreed on the votes of interest. Our examination of the absolute level of divergence allows us to explore the degree to which the two contingents differ, whereas a median-based analysis could speak more directly to the question of actual preferences over outcomes. With these considerations in mind, however, we anticipate that this analysis will serve as a foundation for future studies seeking to determine how and when committees differ from the floor. More important, we anticipate that our analysis will be informative for those congressional scholars seeking to build theories related to issues of committee-floor divergence in the U.S. Congress.

APPENDIX A
Description of Variables Included in Multivariate Analysis

Variable Name	*Description of Variable*
Agriculture	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Appropriations	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Armed Services	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Banking	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Budget	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Commerce	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Education	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Government Reform	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
House Administration	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Interior	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
International Relations	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Judiciary	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Merchant Marine & Fisheries	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
National Security	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Post Office	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Public Works	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Resources	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Science	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)

(continued)

APPENDIX A Continued

Variable Name	*Description of Variable*
Transportation	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Ways and Means	Measure on which roll call was taken was referred to the corresponding committee (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Amendments	Vote was on an amendment (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Final Passage Votes	Vote was on final passage (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Rules Votes	Vote was to adopt a special rule (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Suspension Votes	Vote was to pass a measure under suspension of the rules (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Restrictive Rule	Special rule governing consideration was closed, modified-closed, or modified-open (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)
Degree of Partisanship	Absolute value of the difference between the proportion of Republicans voting yea and the proportion of Democrats voting yea
Degree of Consensus	Absolute value of the difference between 0.5 and the percentage of all members voting yea; higher values of this variable indicate a greater degree of consensus
Multiple Referral	Measure on which roll call was taken was multiply referred (coded 1 if it was, 0 otherwise)

APPENDIX B1
Summary Statistics of Variables Included in Multivariate Analysis, 96th Congress

	Dichotomous Variables—Frequency	
Variable Name	*0*[a]	*1*[a]
Agriculture	927	30
Appropriations	772	185
Armed Services	930	27
Banking	908	49
Budget	884	73
Commerce	855	102
Education	936	21
Government Operations	907	50
House Administration	904	53

APPENDIX B1 Continued

	Dichotomous Variables—Frequency	
Variable Name	*0*[a]	*1*[a]
Interior	919	38
International Relations	854	103
Judiciary	901	56
Merchant Marine and Fisheries	933	24
Post Office	930	27
Public Works	931	26
Science	936	21
Ways and Means	885	72
Amendments	536	421
Final passage votes	729	228
Rules votes	914	43
Suspension votes	898	59
Multiple referral	741	216

	Continuous Variables—Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	SD	*Maximum*	*Minimum*
All member divergence	.112	.088	.495	.000
Republican divergence	.136	.122	.792	.000
Democratic divergence	.117	.091	.593	.000
Degree of partisanship	.422	.214	.991	.001
Degree of consensus	.154	.113	.400	.000

a. See Appendix A for definitions of 0 and 1.

APPENDIX B2
Summary Statistics of Variables Included in Multivariate Analysis, 104th Congress

	Dichotomous Variables—Frequency	
Variable Name	*0*[a]	*1*[a]
Agriculture	1,527	40
Appropriations	1,172	395
Banking	1,519	48
Budget	1,445	122
Commerce	1,475	92
Education	1,508	59
Government Reform	1,439	128
International Relations	1,516	51
Judiciary	1,301	266

(continued)

APPENDIX B2 Continued

	Dichotomous Variables—Frequency	
Variable Name	*0*[a]	*1*[a]
National Security	1,475	92
Resources	1,522	45
Science	1,539	28
Transportation	1,512	55
Ways and Means	1,421	146
Amendments	721	846
Final passage votes	1,325	242
Rules votes	1,416	151
Suspension votes	1,543	24
Restrictive rule	425	1,142
Multiple referral	666	901

	Continuous Variables—Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	SD	*Maximum*	*Minimum*
All member divergence	.068	.064	.505	.000
Republican divergence	.057	.086	.574	.000
Democratic divergence	.095	.091	.543	.000
Degree of partisanship	.665	.266	1.000	.000
Degree of consensus	.128	.099	.500	.000

a. See Appendix A for definitions of 0 and 1.

NOTES

1. It is interesting that two Republican House members, J. D. Hayworth (Arizona) and Mac Collins (Georgia), switched from voting in favor at the committee stage to voting against the bill on the floor.

2. For the purposes of this article, we do not consider purely procedural votes (such as motions to adjourn or votes to approve the House Journal). Although these do in some cases represent important issues or tactical considerations, because they cannot be linked to a committee with substantive jurisdiction, they do not allow for a comparison of committee-floor differences.

3. Of course, when such votes are available, they can reveal whether the pattern of members' preferences is different in the two instances (Hurwitz et al., in press). Certainly we should be on the lookout for such data to assist in our efforts. Our point is only that such votes may not be available, and to the extent that the distributive perspective is applicable, we would expect them to be rare or nonexistent.

4. Snyder (1992) reached similar conclusions to that of Hall and Grofman (1990), although his critique of roll call–based indices centered on issues of selection bias leading to a seemingly unidimensional issue space.

5. Initial analysis of the 104th Congress indicated that high levels of partisanship seemed to significantly reduce the propensity for divergence between committees and the floor. To test this

result further, we extended our analysis to include the 96th Congress to determine if divergence was more common in an era when parties exhibited somewhat less influence in the legislative arena. Also, this gave us the opportunity to systematically explore levels of partisan divergence when the Democratic Party controlled the House. Among the other institutional characteristics common to this era were a lower frequency in the use of restrictive rules and lesser use of multiple referral. As the results presented below suggest, the variables related to partisanship and consensus (which led us to choose a more highly partisan and a less partisan Congress) are fairly stable across Congresses. Thus, we do not expect that the results would be substantively different with the inclusion of additional Congresses.

6. THOMAS is the official Web site of the Library of Congress containing legislative information. It can be accessed at http://thomas.loc.gov. Although Legi-Slate no longer exists, the relevant data for this analysis may be obtained from the authors on request.

7. We employ the data collected by Marshall (1999), who classified all bills receiving special rules in the 104th Congress. Because his data do not extend to the 96th Congress, we were unable to incorporate this measure into our models dealing with this Congress. Data presented in Bach and Smith (1988), however, indicate that there were significantly fewer restrictive rules in the 96th Congress in comparison to more recent years.

8. Data for the 104th Congress were obtained from Keith Poole's Web site (http://voteview.uh.edu), whereas the roll call data for the 96th Congress were acquired from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research archive (Study No. 9822). We discuss later the criteria we use to determine which committees to include in our analysis.

9. Focusing specifically on nonconsensual votes is quite common in studies of congressional voting (see, e.g., Collie, 1988; Rohde, 1991). However, our purpose was more instrumental in that on consensual votes, divergence is by nature absent or extremely small. Thus, there is little to be gained by including such votes, and the various theories of committee organization would generally look for divergence in those cases where such conflict is likely to occur.

10. The reader should note that some bills included in our analysis were not explicitly referred to a committee upon introduction. For instance, appropriations bills often originated in the Appropriations Committee and, after drafting and decision making, were introduced and reported to the floor without formal referral to the Appropriations Committee. Similar behavior is evident, although less frequent, on bills considered by the Budget and Rules Committees. In cases such as these, where a bill was obviously tied to a specific committee but was not actually referred, we treated the measure as having been referred to its respective committee.

11. Most of these measures are House resolutions, in many cases dealing with issues such as adjournment, approval of the House Journal, and other housekeeping matters.

12. Both here and in future analyses, we need to be aware of the potential impact that this multiple counting of votes may have on our interpretation of the results. For this paper, all analyses presented have also been conducted solely on singly referred measures with little or no substantive change in the results.

13. As a result of the reforms enacted by Republicans in the 104th Congress, three committees (District of Columbia, Post Office and Civil Service, and Merchant Marine and Fisheries) were eliminated and the names of others changed (Armed Services to National Security; Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs to Banking and Financial Services; Education and Labor to Economic and Educational Opportunities; Government Operations to Government Reform and Oversight; House Administration to House Oversight; Interior and Insular Affairs to Resources; Interstate and Foreign Commerce to Commerce; and Public Works and Transportation to Transportation and Infrastructure). We refer to the Congress-specific name throughout the article, except when comparing committees across Congresses, in which we use the current name.

14. Again, we can only speculate that the difference is due to the changing nature of partisanship and consensus in the two Congresses. Other factors are likely to be at play, as well as the presence of multiple counting of votes due to multiple referral. However, a similar pattern emerges when one looks at all votes (not simply those tied to a specific committee). In the 96th Congress, 69% of all roll calls were nonconsensual, whereas in the 104th Congress, 84% were classified as such.

15. Although the Rules Committee does meet this criterion in the 104th Congress, we have chosen to exclude it from our analysis for two reasons. First, most of the bills referred to it could not be considered in any way part of its substantive jurisdiction. Beyond those measures dealing with the decorum of the House, all of its bills were referred to at least one other committee. Including just the former, although substantively more appropriate, would present an incomplete picture compared to other committees in which we include all votes, whereas including all votes would be a poor gauge of the issues on which we would expect Rules members to have a jurisdictional interest. Second, the very small number of minority party members on this committee has the potential to distort dramatically the level of divergence based on the votes of one or a few individuals.

16. Two brief points regarding party and committee membership merit discussion here. In the 104th Congress, several Democrats switched to the Republican Party. In some cases, the member's committee assignment remained the same, whereas in others, the member was offered a seat on a more attractive panel. We obtained the date when transfers were passed on the House floor from THOMAS (see http://thomas.loc.gov) and found the corresponding roll call on which the transfer would have taken effect, allowing us to accurately code committee membership in such cases. Similarly, a number of representatives transferred to other committees (while remaining in their own party), and the same procedure was used to identify and code for appropriate committee assignments. The task was much simpler for the 96th Congress, where we were able to employ Nelson's (1993) reference detailing all committee assignments and membership changes.

17. This method is similar to that employed by Maltzman and Smith (1994).

18. A large divergence score is one indicator of variation for which we should seek substantive explanation. Another indicator worth noting is evidence of disagreement between the committee and the floor. We ran cross-tabulations on all amendment votes in the 104th Congress to determine whether the positions of the committee and noncommittee members were in agreement. On 82 of the 824 votes, majorities of the two groups voted in opposite directions.

19. Appendix A describes the variables included in our analysis and Appendix B presents summary statistics.

20. Three issues related to our estimates merit specific attention. First, ordinary least squares (OLS) is employed because the dependent variable is continuous in nature (from zero to one) and does not appear either theoretically or empirically to suffer from any censoring problems (this intuition was confirmed through a separate estimation employing tobit, which revealed no substantive change in the results). Second, to correct for the potential impact of heteroscedasticity, we report robust standard errors using the cluster option in Stata 6.0. In addition to correcting for general heteroscedasticity in the sample, this method accounts for any nonindependence that may arise due to the multiple observations on each committee in our analysis. Third, the distribution of our dependent variable indicated the possibility of non-normality (which may affect the efficiency of our estimates) and diagnostic checks indicated the presence of non-normal disturbances. Although some have suggested (e.g., Aldrich & Cnudde, 1975) that with large samples, statistical tests do not require the normality assumption, we confirmed the robustness of our estimates using nonparametric methods. While robust regression (using an M-class estimator) closely approximated the OLS results, we were not satisfied with the theoretical assumptions

underlying the procedure as it related to our data. Not only were the most theoretically interesting cases (in which divergence was high) assigned small weights or dropped entirely, but the boundedness and concentration of the dependent variable close to zero focused most of the attention on those cases exhibiting little divergence. In light of these concerns, we also employed bootstrapping techniques to estimate the error distribution absent a parametric assumption. The resulting standard errors were nearly indistinguishable from those of the original OLS estimates, thus allowing us to be confident of the latter's validity.

21. As an anonymous reviewer suggested, this phenomenon might also be explained by the fact that House Democrats tend to have a broader preference distribution than their Republican counterparts.

22. The baseline for the vote type variables is all other votes beyond those appearing in the models (amendments, final passage, rules, and suspensions). Therefore, this includes a variety of votes such as motions (e.g., to strike, to recommit, to rise and report to the Committee of the Whole) and second-degree amendments.

23. In this and subsequent estimations, we use the Government Operations (96th Congress)/Government Reform and Oversight (104th Congress) Committee as the baseline for comparison. This committee seemed appropriate in that it is not traditionally associated with high levels of partisanship nor is it associated with policy issues falling within the domain of distributive or partisan ends.

24. For a more extensive discussion of the House Appropriations Committee during the early years of Republican control, see Marshall, Prins, and Rohde (2000).

25. Given that this analysis has centered on establishing the existence of committee-floor divergence, we are hesitant to draw explicit conclusions related to competing theories of legislative organization. However, as one anonymous reviewer noted, the findings do suggest an important role for partisanship in that on more partisan issues, committees tend to be more reflective of their parent chamber in votes taken on the House floor. In future analyses, we hope to explore this dynamic more extensively.

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