PIVOTAL POLITICS

Pivotal Politics

A. Goals
   1. Want to apply game theory (namely sub-game perfect equilibrium) to the legislative process in a single dimension to determine the outcome of the game if everyone is rational (i.e. what would be in SPE).
   2. We will build up, with models for
      1. One chamber, *without* 2/3rds override.
      2. One chamber, with 2/3rds override.
      3. One chamber, with 2/3rds override, and filibuster pivot.

B. Assume
   1. all actors are rational.
   2. complete information.

One Chamber, No Override

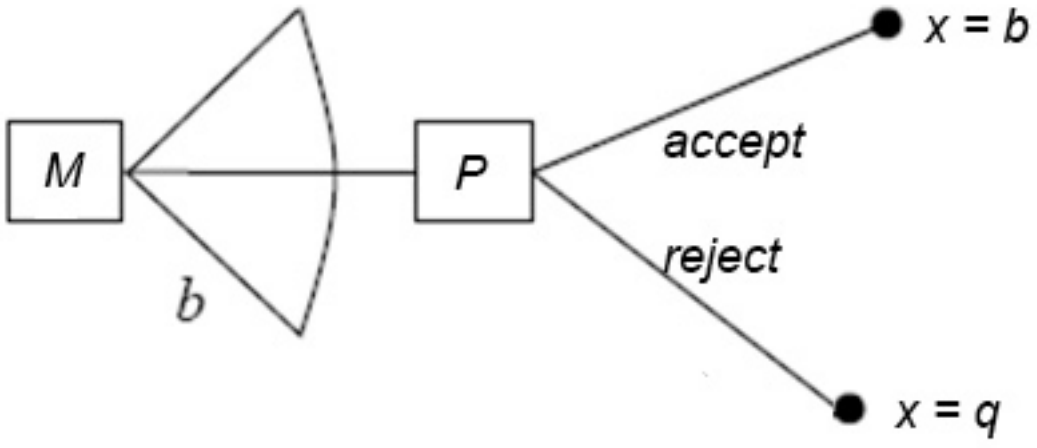
Assume: one chamber, fixed agenda setter, no 2/3rds override.

Median voter (M) proposes a bill b.

President (P) signs bill or vetoes it.

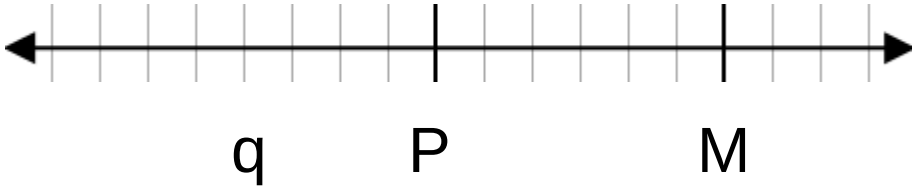
If the president signs, the policy outcome is x = b.

If the president vetoes, the policy outcome is x = q.



Analysis

P = 4, M = 10, q = 0



a. What would M propose?

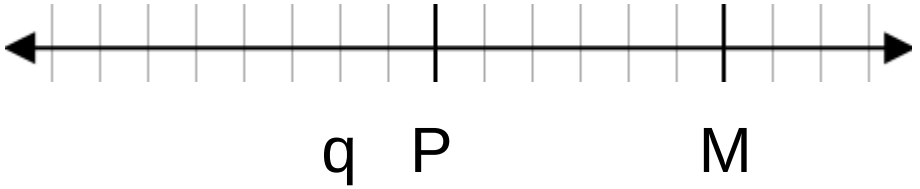
8 – ε, where ε is arbitrarily small.

From here forward, we will just say 8.

b. SPE = {b = 8; accept}

Analysis

P = 4, M = 10, q = 2



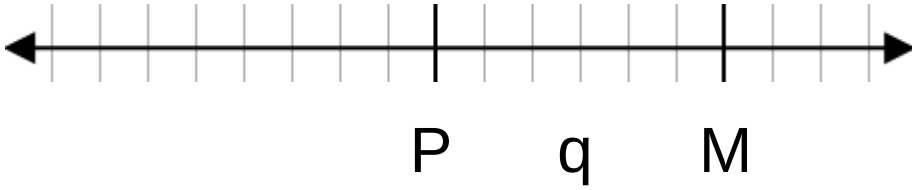
a. What would M propose?

6.

b. SPE = {b = 6; accept}

Analysis

P = 4, M = 10, q = 7



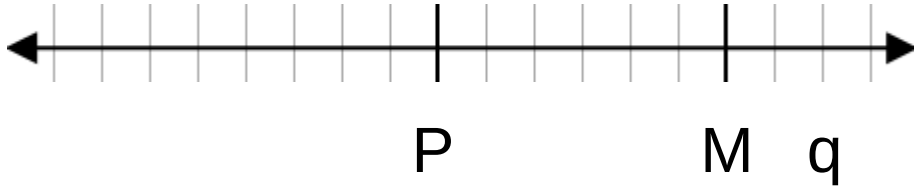
a. What would M propose?

b ≥ 7

b. SPE = {b ≥ 7; reject}. Outcome: x = 7.

Analysis

P = 4, M = 10, q = 12

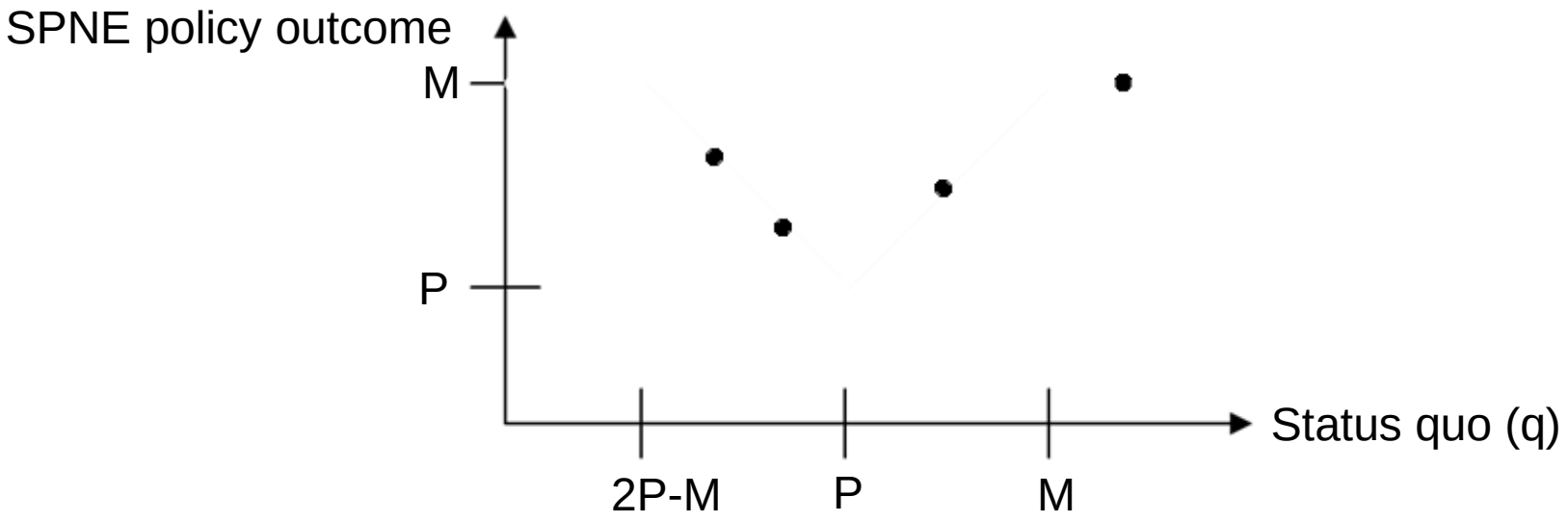


a. What would M propose?

b = A = 10

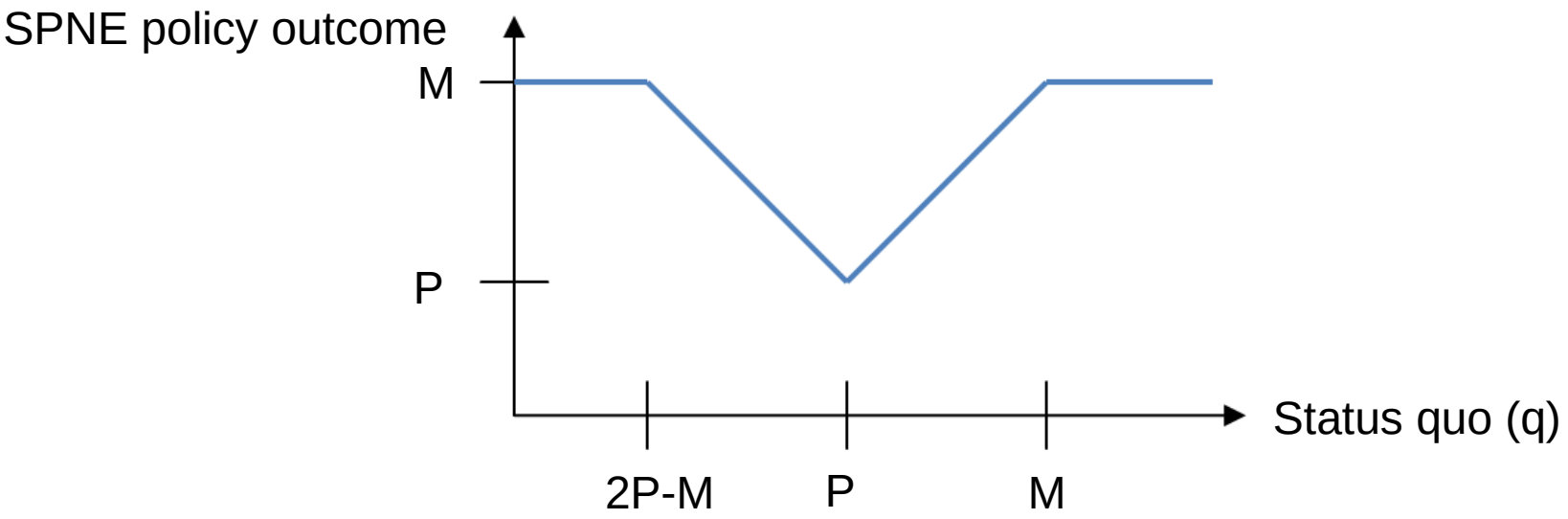
b. SPE = {b = 10; accept}

Comparative statics for q



For the four examples we just did, I mark the outcome on the y-axis given the initial status quo on the x-axis.

Comparative statics for q



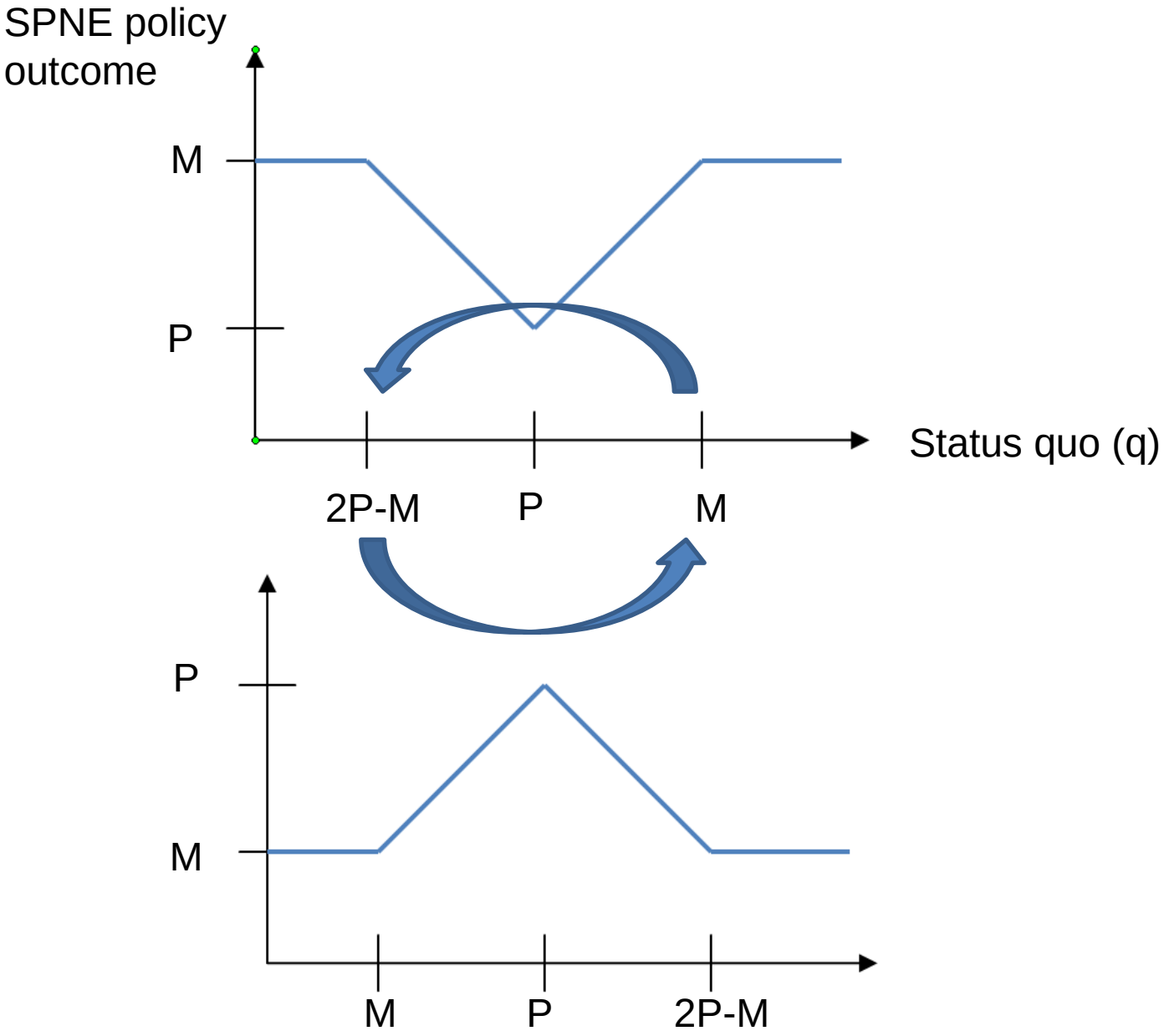
Case I: q < 2P - M

Case III: P < q < M

Case II: 2P – M < q < P

Case IV: M < q

What happens if we switched 2P-M and M?



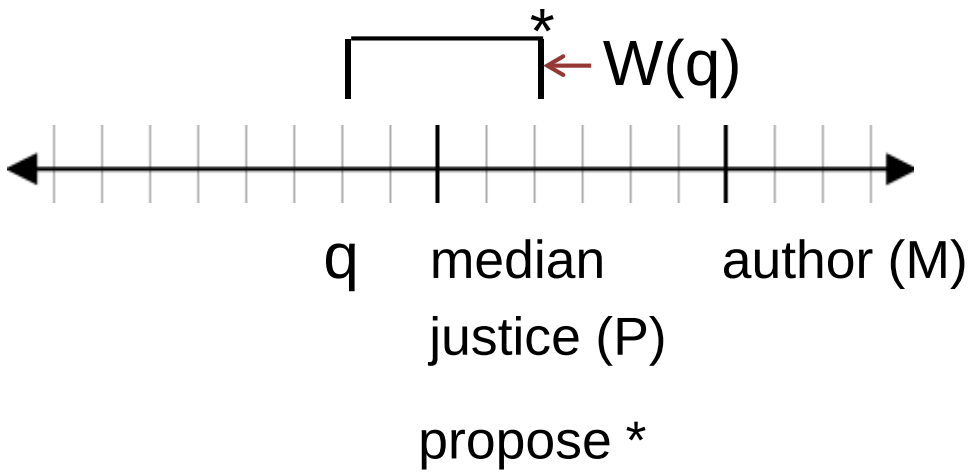
Implications

- Provides basic theoretical insight about the roles of *proposal* power and *veto* power
  - Proposal power is not absolute: may be *constrained* by the veto player
  - Veto power ensures that outcomes are no worse than the status quo
- Comparative statics for q
  - Moderate status quo points $\Rightarrow$ Proposal power constrained/gridlock
  - Extreme status quo points $\Rightarrow$ Proposal power unconstrained
- Comparative statics for ideal points
  - Greater distance between M and P $\Rightarrow$ Greater constraint/gridlock
- Applications
  - Separation of powers: Congress proposes, President may veto
  - Committees and closed rules: Committee proposes, Chamber must approve of final passage

Bonneau et al.
Agenda Control and The Median Justice

A. Model

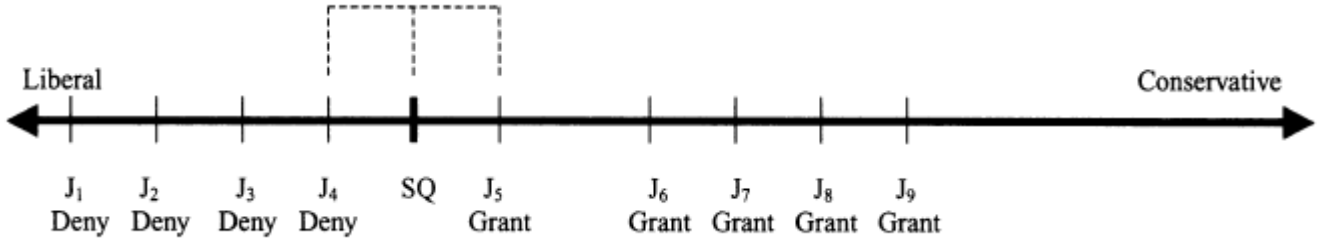
1. Same model except M is the author of the opinion and P is the median justice of the Supreme Court.
   a. The justice writing the opinion will write an opinion that is closest to his/her ideal point that is within the winset of q.



Bonneau et al.
Agenda Control and The Median Justice

B. Data

1. Ideal points estimated two ways:
   a. As percentage of times voting in the liberal direction on Spaeth dataset in the year prior to the decision.
   b. Martin-Quinn Bayesian scores.
2. The status quo the midpoint between two justices: one of whom votes for cert and one of whom votes to deny.

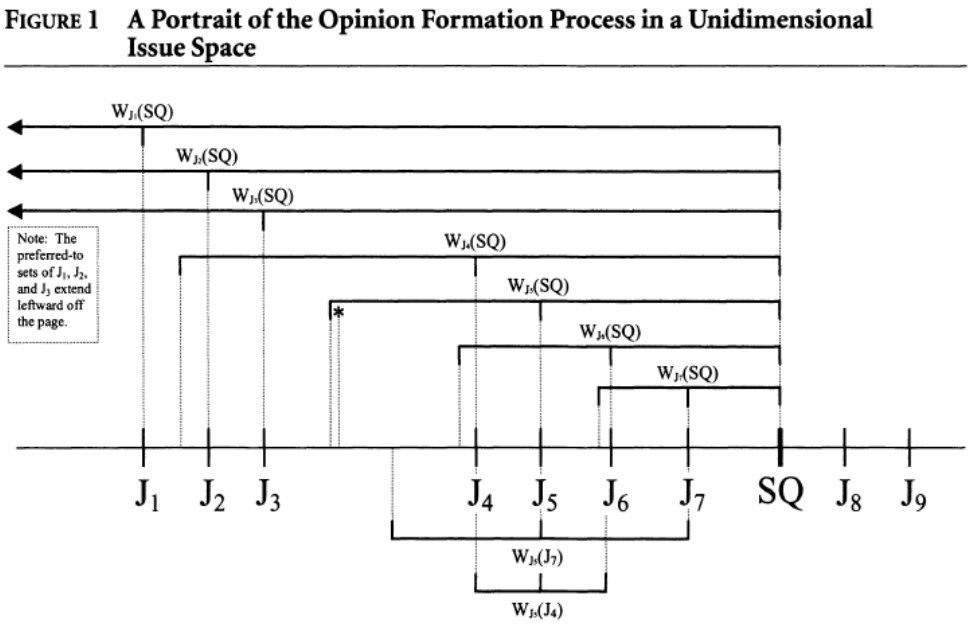


   a. Any problems with that?

Bonneau et al.
Agenda Control and The Median Justice

B. Data

1. Dep Var: = 1 if justice voted with majority; 0 otherwise.
2. Ind Var: *Author acceptability*: justice coded 1 if the rational opinion of the author (*) is closer to their ideal point than q is to their ideal point; 0 otherwise.
3. Ind Var: *Median acceptability*: justice coded 1 if they are closer to the median than they are to q.



Ex: If J_1, J_2, or J_3 are authors, the rational proposal is *.

J_1 to J_5 are coded 1 on *author acceptability* because they are closer to * than to q.

J_1 to J_6 are coded 1 on median acceptability because they closer to J_5 than to q.

Bonneau et al.
Agenda Control and The Median Justice

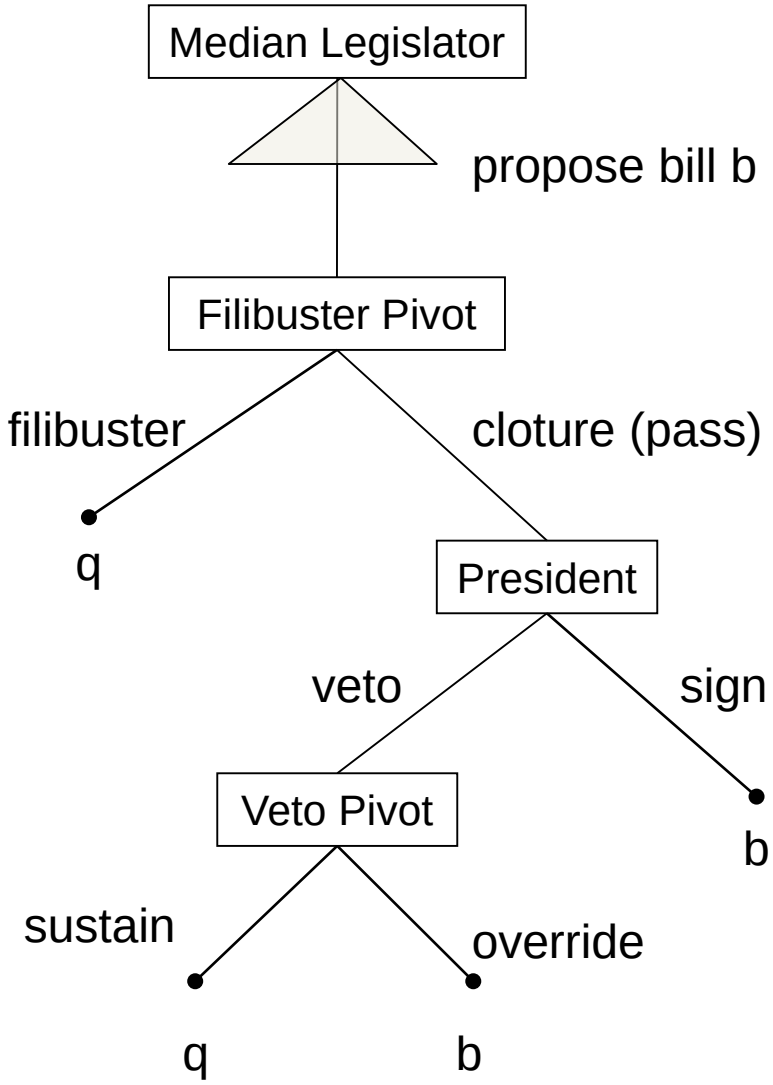
TABLE 4 Logit Estimates of the Probability of Joining the Majority Coalition

	Percent Liberal Issue-Specific Ideology Measure		Martin-Quinn Ideology Measure	
	Agenda Control Model	Bench Median Model	Agenda Control Model	Bench Median Model
Author acceptability	.863***	—	.738***	—
	(.050)		(.041)	
Median acceptability	—	.730***	—	.764***
		(.054)		(.054)
Constant	.764***	.751***	.880***	.724***
	(.035)	(.041)	(.030)	(.042)
Observations	18,419	18,419	18,419	18,419
BIC′	−567.098	−360.772	−417.496	−392.494

***$p < .001$. Robust standard errors were employed (clustered on the case) and are reported in parentheses.
The difference of 206.326 (using the percent-liberal measure) in the BIC′ provides very strong support for the agenda control model over the bench median model. The difference of 25.001 (using the Martin-Quinn measure) in the BIC′ provides very strong support for the agenda control model over the bench median model.

- Here we are simply looking at which model fits the data better. The BIC strongly favor the agenda control model (author proposer).
- Conclude: perhaps the Supreme court is not a simple application of the MVT.

Pivotal politics (Krehbiel 1998)



1. Median legislator proposes a bill

2. Filibuster pivot filibusters or invokes cloture (passes bill)

3. If bill passes, President signs or vetoes

4. If bill vetoed, Veto pivot overrides or sustains

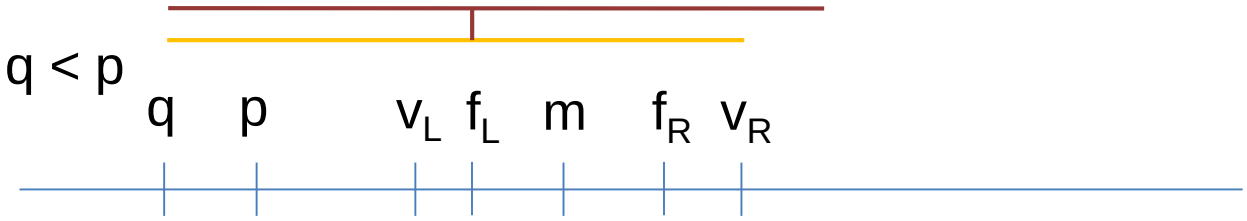
Analysis of vetoes and proposals

First, graph overrides

President could sign or veto, because she cannot affect the outcome (if m proposes rationally, it will pass).

Second determine whether president signs or vetoes.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

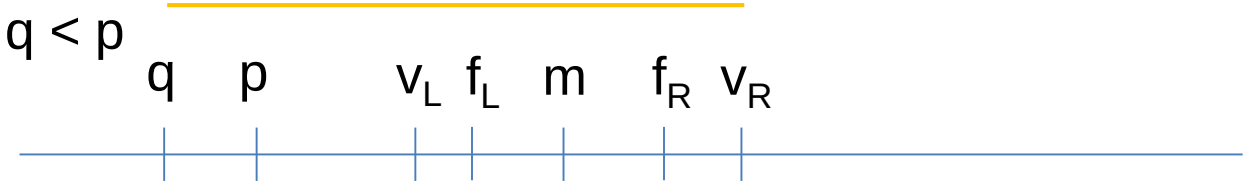


Favor: $W_{f_L}(Q) = W_{f_L}(Q) \cap W_{f_R}(Q)$;
Furthermore, $W_{V_L}(Q) = W_{V_L}(Q) \cap W_{f_L}(Q)$.

Third, graph what filibuster pivots favor.

Note: in these cases, the preferences of the override pivot defines the outcome.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

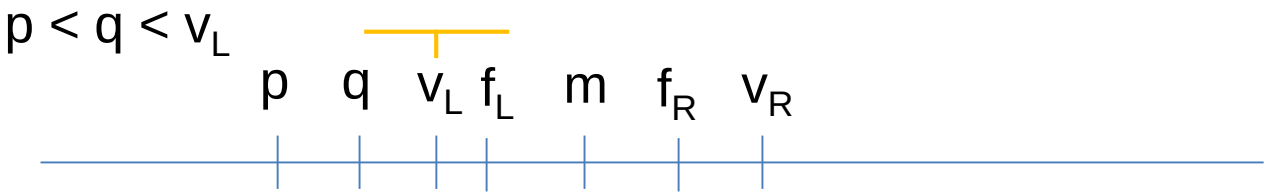


m will propose m because m is in $W_{V_L}(Q)$ which will pass.

Hence, m is the outcome.

Fourth, consider what m would propose.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

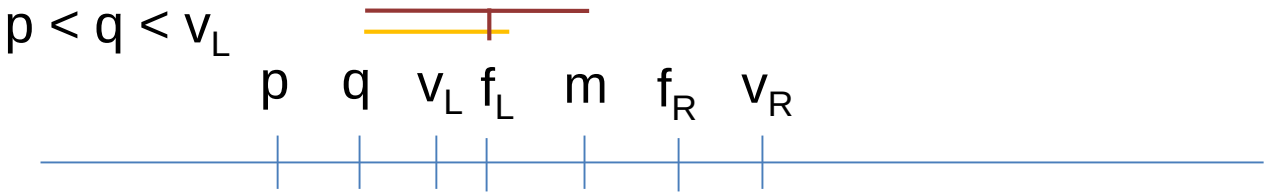


First, graph overrides

President is indifferent between signing and vetoing because $W_{V_L}(Q)$ will be the outcome in either case.

Second determine whether president signs or vetoes.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

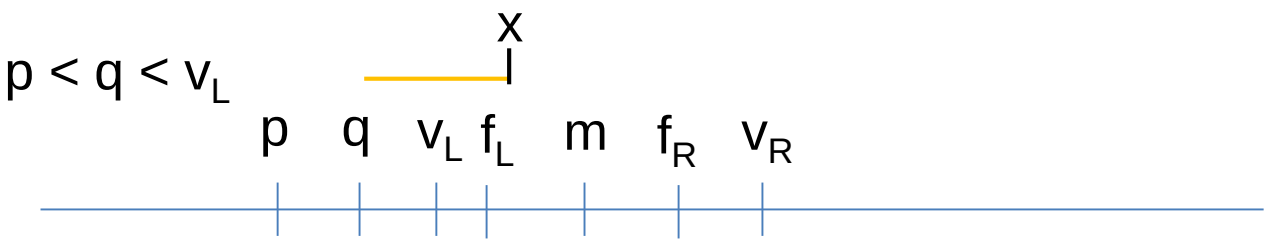


Favor: $W_{f_L}(Q) = W_{f_L}(Q) \cap W_{f_R}(Q)$;
Furthermore, $W_{V_L}(Q) = W_{V_L}(Q) \cap W_{f_L}(Q)$.

Third, graph what filibuster pivots favor.

Note: in this case, the preferences of the override pivot defines the outcome.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals



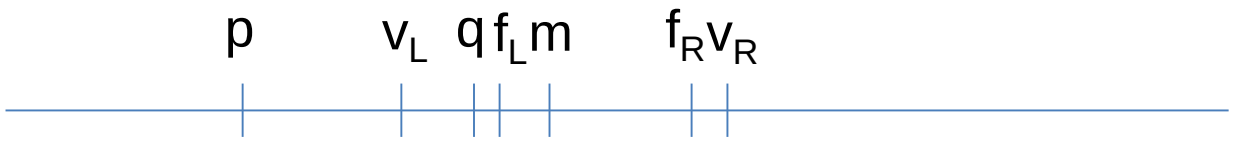
m will propose x because x is the element closest to m that is in $W_{V_L}(Q)$.

Hence, x is the outcome.

Fourth, consider what m would propose.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$v_L < q < f_L < m$

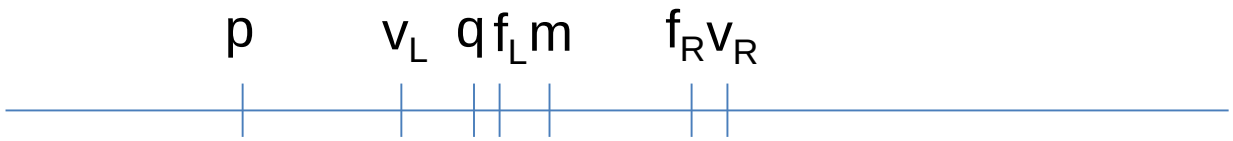


First, graph overrides.

$W_{V_L}(Q) \cap W_{V_R}(Q) = \varnothing$ No overrides.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$v_L < q < f_L < m$

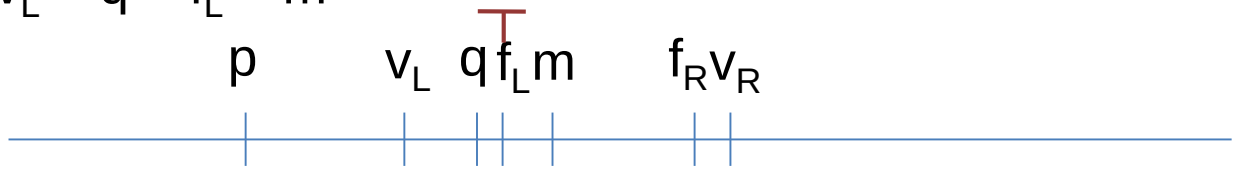


President vetoes because m wants to move the bill to the right.

Second, determine whether president signs or vetoes.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$v_L < q < f_L < m$

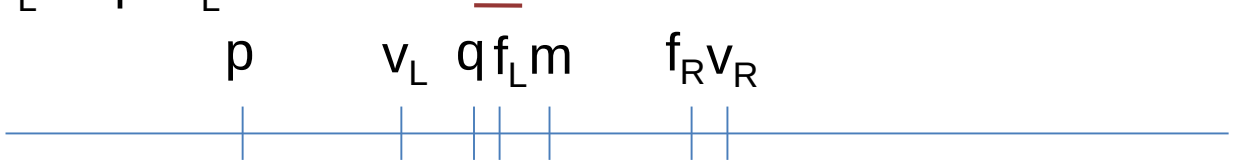


Third, graph what filibuster pivots favor.

Favor: $W_{f_L}(Q) = W_{f_L}(Q) \cap W_{f_R}(Q)$.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$v_L < q < f_L < m$

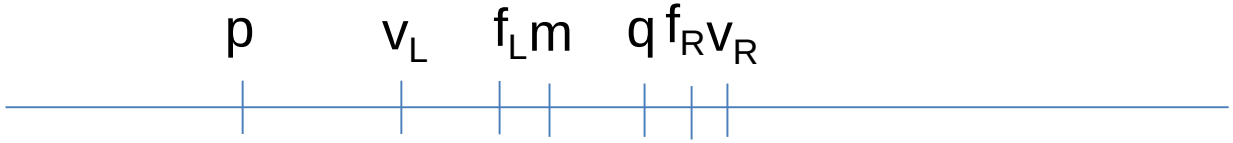


m cannot propose anything that passes, so m proposes a throw away (i.e. any x: x > q).

Fourth, consider what m would propose.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$m < q < f_R$

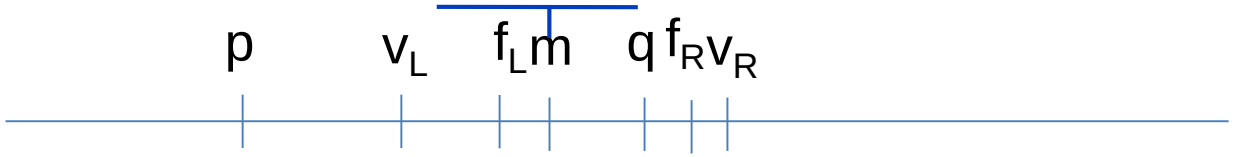


First, graph overrides.

$W_{V_L}(Q) \cap W_{V_R}(Q) = \varnothing$ No overrides.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$m < q < f_R$

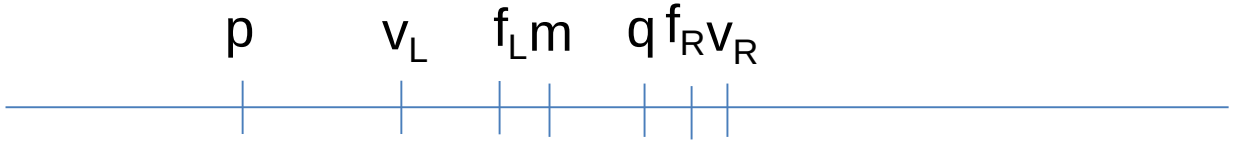


President signs anything in $W_m(Q)$ because he prefers that to q.

Second, determine whether president signs or vetoes.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$m < q < f_R$



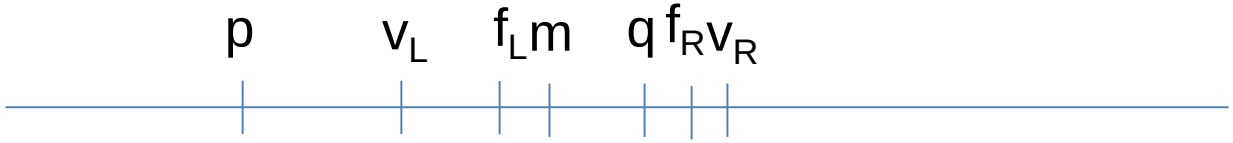
Third, graph what filibuster pivots favor.

q cannot be get past filibuster pivots, because $f_L < q < f_R$.

Generally: any q: $f_L < q < f_R$ cannot be defeated.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$m < q < f_R$

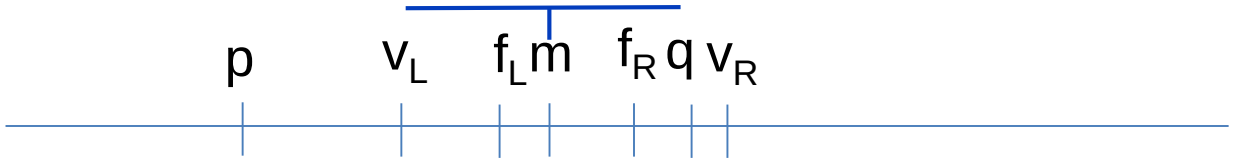


m cannot propose anything that gets past filibuster pivots, so m proposes any x.

Fourth, consider what m would propose.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$m < f_R < q < 2f_R - m$



$W_{V_L}(Q) \cap W_{V_R}(Q) = \varnothing$ No overrides.

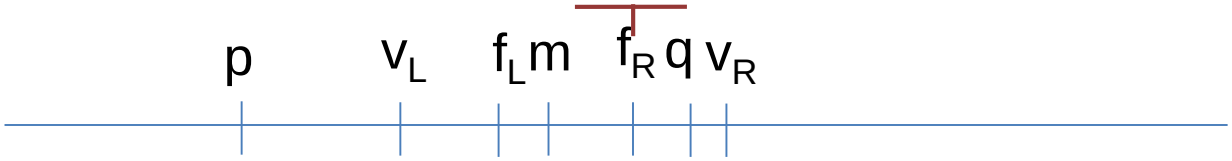
President signs anything in $W_m(Q)$ because he prefers that to q.

First, graph overrides

Second, determine whether president signs or vetoes.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$m < f_R < q < 2f_R - m$

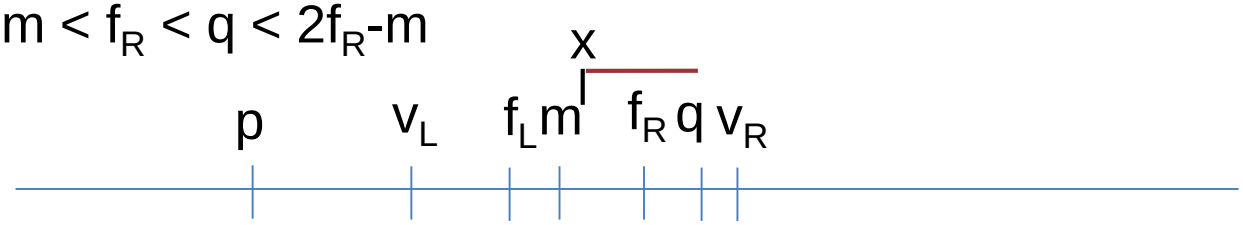


Third, graph what filibusters favor.

Favor: $W_{f_R}(Q) = W_{f_L}(Q) \cap W_{f_R}(Q)$.

Analysis of vetoes and proposals

$m < f_R < q < 2f_R - m$



Fourth, consider what m would propose.

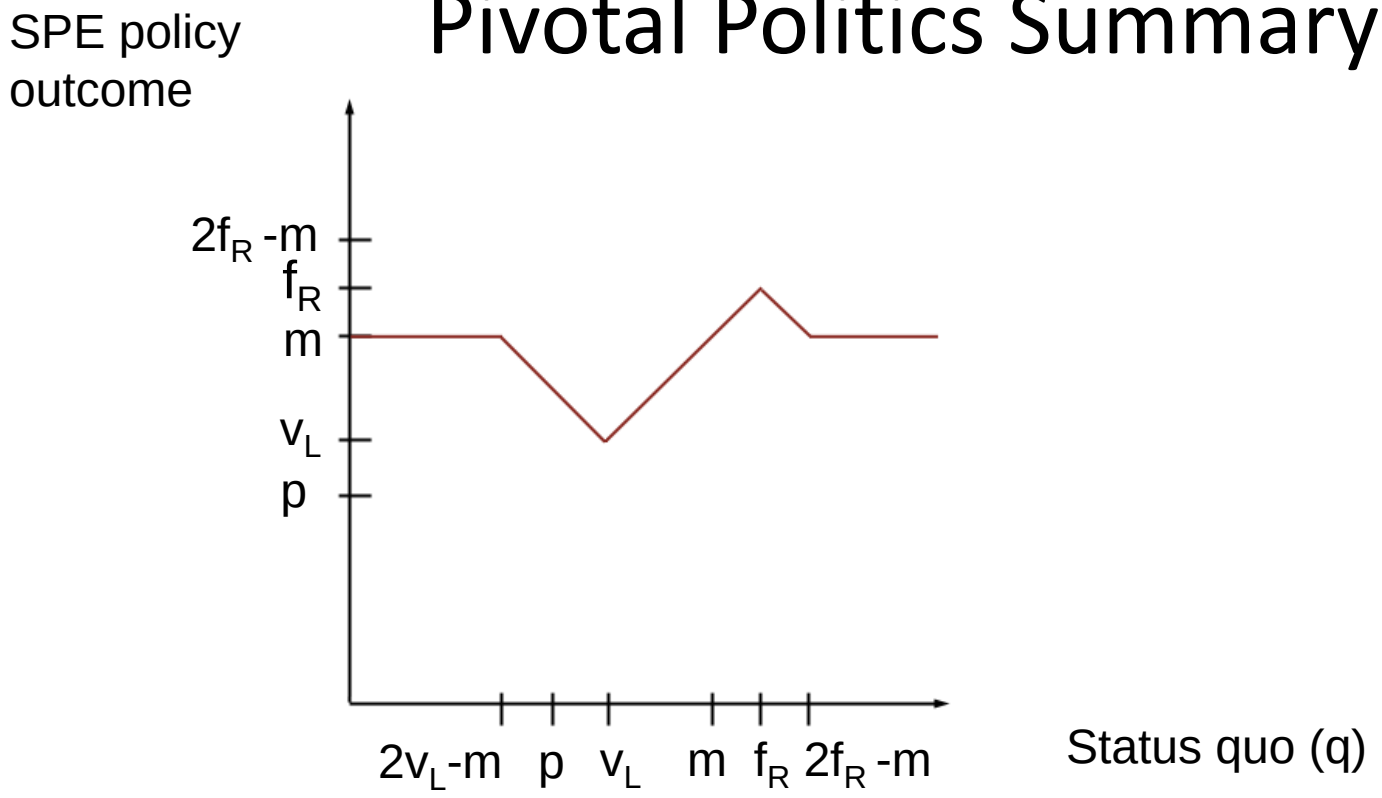
m will propose x because x is the element closest to m that is in $W_{f_R}(Q)$. Hence, x is the outcome.

Revisiting, what will the president do?

Note, for any q in $[f_R, 2f_R - m]$, the outcome is the point furthest left in $W_{f_R}(Q)$.

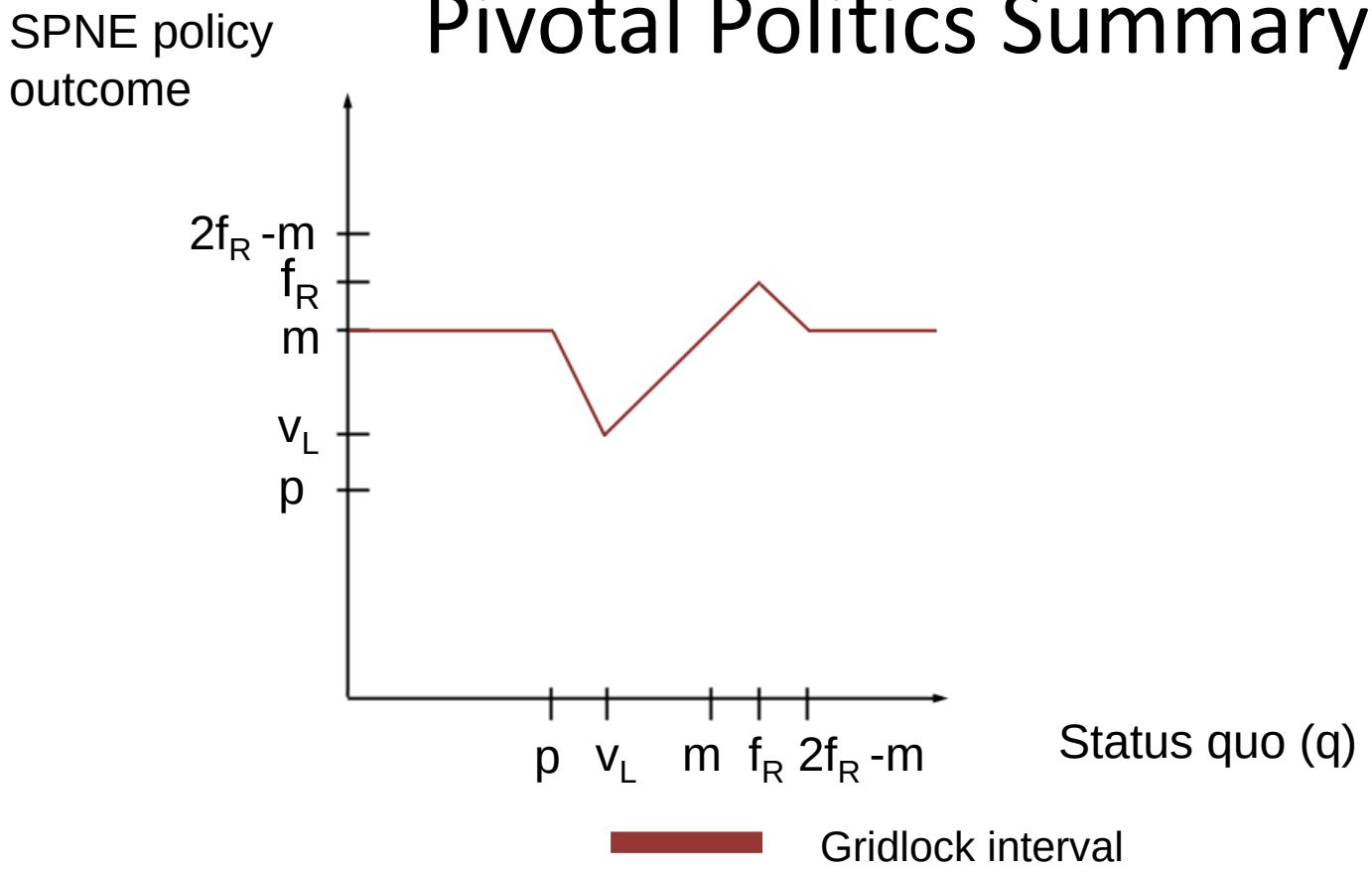
Only the filibuster pivot on the far side comes into play in the model.

Pivotal Politics Summary



- The status quos that cannot be defeated are between v_L and f_R -- an wider range than without the filibuster pivot.
- All outcomes will be between v_L and f_R.
- Extreme status quos are still dictated by m.

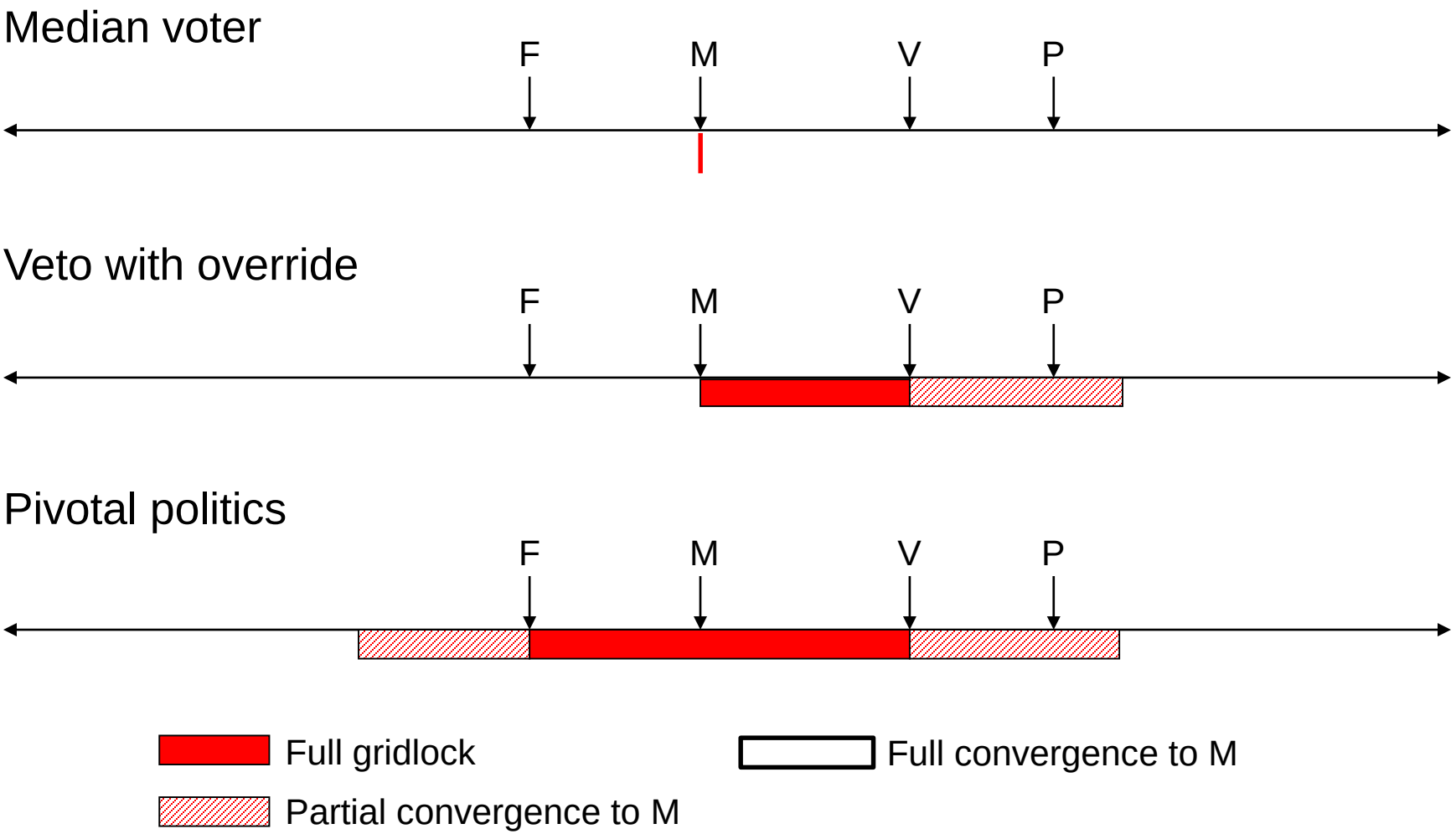
Pivotal Politics Summary



- This range is called the gridlock interval because status quos in this interval do not change.

Comparison of EIG across models

Note: P is on right. We had him/her on left.

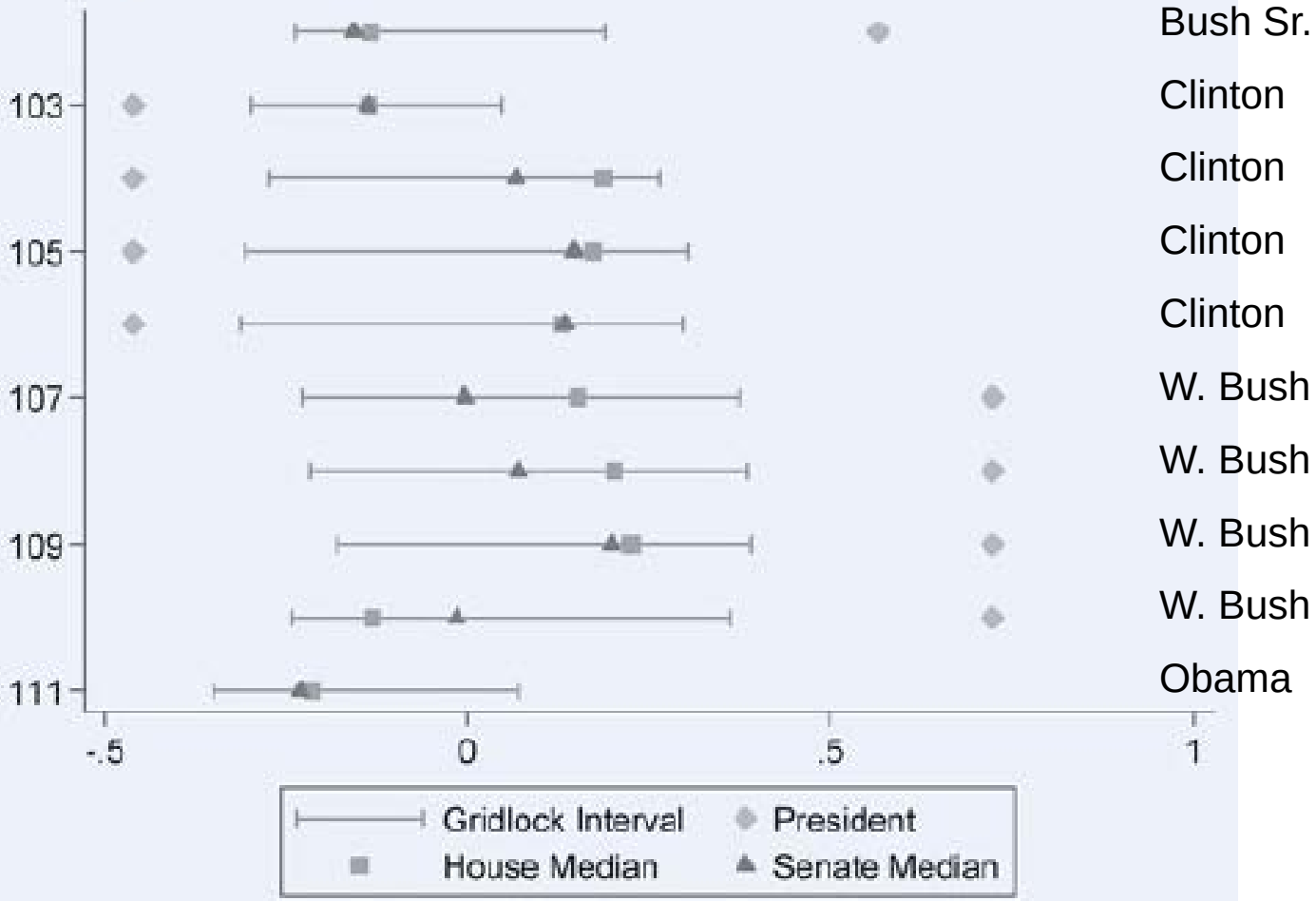


Empirical implications

- Gridlock interval: the set of points in equilibrium under the rules of the game.
- If the gridlock interval becomes *bigger* than previous Congress, *less* legislation should pass.
- If the gridlock interval becomes *smaller* than previous Congress, *more* legislation should pass.
- Krehbiel tests this by looking at the volume of major legislation.

Figure 2

Gridlock intervals, 102nd to 111th Congresses (1991–2010)



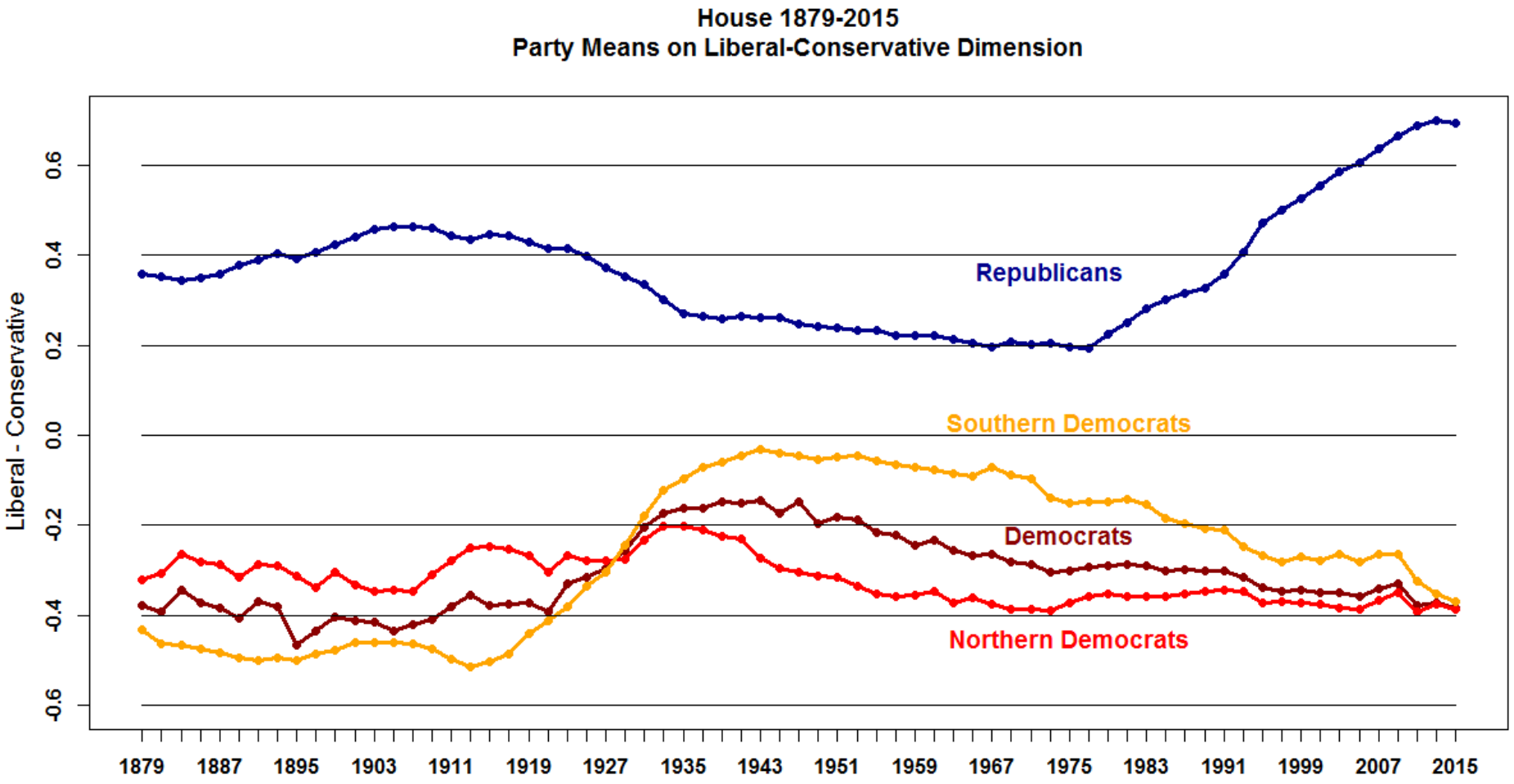
Bush Sr.
Clinton
Clinton
Clinton
Clinton
W. Bush
W. Bush
W. Bush
W. Bush
Obama

Krehbiel (1998) *Pivotal Politics*

Table 3.7
Joint Tests with Alternative Dependent Variables

	Landmark Enactments			Ordinary Enactments		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Change in gridlock interval	−0.281	−0.410	−0.279	−2.142	−2.394	−2.101
	(−2.302)	(−2.689)	(−2.170)	(−1.687)	(−1.389)	(−1.560)
Change in activist mood	0.831			6.426		
	(0.769)			(0.573)		
Change in domestic policy mood		0.051			0.725	
		(0.198)			(0.249)	
Change in tax mood			0.093			1.301
			(0.728)			(0.972)
Change in government regime	3.005	4.072	2.717	7.273	10.193	6.827
	(2.448)	(3.053)	(1.894)	(0.571)	(0.676)	(0.454)
Constant	0.244	0.621	0.413	0.869	0.971	1.329
	(0.361)	(0.881)	(0.547)	(0.124)	(0.122)	(0.168)
N observations	23	21	20	23	21	20
Adjusted R^2	0.318	0.361	0.288	0.034	−0.048	0.060

NOTE: Source for dependent variables: Cameron and Howell 1996; *t*-statistics in parentheses.


House 1879-2015
Party Means on Liberal-Conservative Dimension
Liberal - Conservative
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
-0.2
-0.4
-0.6
Republicans
Southern Democrats
Democrats
Northern Democrats
1879
1887
1895
1903
1911
1919
1927
1935
1943
1951
1959
1967
1975
1983
1991
1999
2007
2015