

# Bicameralism and Minority Party Influence on Legislative Development: Evidence from House Standing Committee Votes\*

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## Abstract

The ability of the minority party to influence legislation in Congress is debated. Most bills are passed with large bipartisan majorities, yet the House, where most legislation is developed, is seen as a majority party dominated institution. I develop a theory of House minority party influence at the committee markup stage as a result of the Senate's institutional rules. An original dataset of congressional committee votes shows that minority party support in House committees predicts House and Senate passage. During unified party control of the chambers, an increase in Senate majority party seats results in lower minority party support for the legislation in the House committee, while during divided party control of Congress, the House majority passes more extreme bills as the chambers polarize. Even in the majority party dominated House, the minority's preferences are incorporated into legislation, and the Senate's institutional rules moderate bills to a significant degree.

**Word Count: 10,960**

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\*The author is grateful for funding provided by the Social Science Research Council's "Negotiating Agreement in Congress" program, and for research assistance by Ryan Bell and D.J. Schaeffer. This research was presented at the 2017 American Political Science Association conference, the 2018 Midwest Political Science Association conference, and the 2018 University of Georgia's Congressional Rules and Procedures Conference. The author thanks participants at each of these conferences, and helpful suggestions from Josh McCrain, Jim Curry, Jonathan Lewallen, Dan Butler, Frances Lee, Laurel Harbridge, Mike Crespino, Charles Stewart, Richard Beth, Elizabeth Rybicki, Jaime Carson, Jaime Monogan, George Krause, John Wilkerson, and Michael Lynch.

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Partisan based theories of legislative organization claim that the House passage process in the last forty years is one of strong majority party control, with little substantive role for the minority. A substantial literature explores how the majority exploits its institutional advantages in the House to pass bills favorable to its own members as a means of achieving individual and collective electoral success. If, however, the majority party wants to enact legislation, its bills must receive 60 votes in the Senate.<sup>1</sup> Whether (and how) the House majority balances its legislative power with its desire to achieve policy accomplishments is an open question. Specifically, given that enactment requires minority party support in the Senate, do substantive policy proposals developed in the House reflect the preferences of the House minority party?

The research here reconsiders the role the minority party plays in the House legislative process by showing *how* the bicameral nature of Congress induces bipartisanship in committees at the legislative development stage. I theorize that the House majority party incorporates the preferences of the minority during the writing/markup of bills because of the necessity of receiving minority party support in the Senate to overcome a filibuster. While a significant number of bills are passed by the House without minority party support, these bills have almost no chance of passing the Senate and seem to be intended for symbolic or messaging purposes.

To evaluate evidence that minority party preferences are accounted for in the legislative development process in the modern House, I use an original dataset of votes to report bills from House standing committees. Minority party support on votes to report legislation out of committee to the House floor positively predicts overall support received on final passage in the House, the probability a bill passes the House, and the probability a bill passes both chambers. To better identify this theorized relationship, I also show that during periods of unified party control of Congress, an increase in the number of majority party Senate seats reduces minority party support on committee votes to report legislation. That is, when the majority party needs

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<sup>1</sup>For the purposes here, I assume that Senate passage requires 60 votes, consistent with the extant literature. I set aside cases such as budget reconciliation or the confirmation of executive nominees, where only 51 votes are needed. Cloture is also not necessary when unanimous consent is given to proceed to passage.

fewer minority party votes to invoke cloture in the Senate, legislation reported from the House standing committees becomes more partisan. This relationship is shown with cross-sectional data and through a change in the number of Senate seats produced by an exogenous shock such as a death or resignation. During divided party control of Congress, the House majority also incorporates minority party preferences on legislation, though as the Senate majority and House majority move away from each other during divided party control, the House majority passes more partisan laws with little chance of enactment to enhance its brand or reputation (similar to claims made by responsible party government theory). The findings are timely as the Senate filibuster rule is widely seen as an impediment to decisive action in the modern Congress, and both academic and popular commentators have called for its removal.<sup>2</sup> They also help clarify competing claims about the divergent effects of Senate rules, which systematically empower minorities, and House rules, which systematically dis-empower them.

Previous attempts to assess committee behavior and legislative development have proven difficult because there is little data on standing committee votes across time. The new dataset introduced here measures recorded roll call votes to report legislation in all House standing committees from the 104th through 114th Congresses, providing sufficient variation across different contexts to explore how committee activity changes as a result of partisan and institutional factors.

## **Majority and Minority Party Power in the House**

The extant literature claims that legislative action in the House is a process which the majority party dominates. Spatial models of majoritarian legislatures demonstrate that the median must be included in any winning coalition, and assuming majoritarian rules, including open

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<sup>2</sup>See for example, “Donald Trump is right: Senate Republicans should kill the filibuster,” Dylan Matthews, Vox.com, July 28, 2017. Accessed January 10th, 2018 at <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/5/2/15515834/filibuster-kill-abolish-nuclear-option-trump-mcconnell>. For an academic perspective see, *Our Undemocratic Constitution*, Levinson 2008. For arguments in favor of the filibuster see Rawls (2009) and Dove & Arenberg 2014.

proposal power, policy will move to the median's ideal point. If the parties are cohesive and distinct from each other, as there is evidence for in Congress (Poole & Rosenthal 1997), legislation can be passed with a coalition of exclusively majority party members. While many theories of lawmaking explicitly account for the preferences of the median, even while dismissing the median's role as a member of the majority party (Krehbiel 1998), there is no formal role for members of the minority party to play in the passage process.<sup>3</sup>

Party-based theories posit that during the lawmaking process, majority parties seek to pull outcomes away from the chamber median and toward the party median by delegating control over the process to the party leadership (Aldrich & Rohde 2000, Bendix 2016, Hanson 2014), especially when majority party members are internally homogeneous and distinct from the other party (Aldrich 1995, Brady, Cooper & Hurley 1979, Rohde 1991, Sinclair 1994). The result is strongly majority party oriented policy (i.e., extreme relative to the status quo), rather than median oriented. In addition to using its institutional advantages to produce extreme outcomes, the majority party can also prevent proposals from reaching the median which could defeat its own party-oriented legislation (Lebo, McGlynn & Koger 2007, Magleby, Monroe & Robinson 2018).

Partisan theories do not specify conditions or mechanisms through which the minority plays a role in the creation and passage of legislation. Unlike in the Senate, where the minority has the ability to obstruct, delay, or amend legislation, the House has adopted rules to limit such actions (Cooper & Brady 1981, Schickler 2000), though a determined minority can seek to delay legislation through the use of motions and roll call vote requests (Green 2015). Other minority party tools might include legislative proposals which roll the majority party, though their rarity demonstrates that the minority party is unable to force its legislative proposals onto the floor (Cox & McCubbins 2005), symbolic votes which embarrass the majority (Egar 2016),

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<sup>3</sup>A winning coalition can consist of minority party members and some majority party members, including the median, but this rarely occurs for reasons described below. Minority party members can be included in the winning coalition, but are not required for passing legislation in the House.

or the introduction of “killer” amendments (Jenkins & Munger 2003, Wilkerson 1999), though evidence any of these affect policy outcomes is weak.

Information and pivot-based theories suggest the minority party in the House should be able to delay or obstruct given certain circumstances, though there is little systematic theorizing explaining minority party influence. For example, during the “textbook” congressional period, strong leadership and the ability to ally with conservative Democrats allowed Republicans to influence the congressional agenda and policy outcomes (Jones 1968). Even Joe Cannon, the quintessential “strong” partisan Speaker, sought compromise with the House minority (Krehbiel & Woon 2005). Similarly Krehbiel and Mierowitz (2002) argue that minority party power is largely unseen because the credible threat of making an amendment that defeats the proposed legislation shapes bargaining over the bill (though see Roberts’ 2005 response). The theory and evidence offered here supports a similar view of minority party power over legislative action, and offers a mechanism for minority party influence on legislative development: the Senate’s institutional rules which require the filibuster pivot prefer the proposed policy to the status quo.

## **Senate Rules as a Limit on House Majority Party Power**

The Senate is expected to reduce majority party power in the House on a subset of legislation because, while the House is a majoritarian institution, Senate rules require that cloture be invoked before final passage, and the Senate majority party rarely has sufficient votes in the chamber to do so without minority party support.<sup>4</sup> If one assumes the Senate filibuster pivot, the House median, and the president/veto pivot’s ideal points can be arrayed along a one-dimensional space, the status quo policy must be exterior to all three for policy change to occur, *and* policy change will be limited to the ideal point of the most moderate pivotal ac-

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<sup>4</sup>The current threshold to invoke cloture on legislation is 60 votes. Prior to a rules change made in the 94th Congress, the threshold was 2/3 of members voting.

tor (i.e., closest to the status quo) if that pivotal actor has proposal power (Krehbiel 1998).<sup>5</sup> These limitations imply that though majority parties in the House may prefer extreme policy outcomes, they are inherently limited by the other two institutional actors. And, even in the modern polarized Congress, most bills are passed by large bipartisan coalitions, an empirical regularity difficult to reconcile with much of the party-based literature's emphasis on majority party control over legislative development and passage in the House (Curry & Lee 2019b). On legislation which is never intended to become law or even pass the Senate, the House majority party faces no such constraints. For these bills, the House majority can pass partisan legislation intended to signal policy preferences to interest groups or satisfy a particular constituency (Gelman 2017).

Thus, an important puzzle exists: the majority party dominates legislative development and passage in the House with no articulated mechanism for the minority party to shape legislation, but the Senate filibuster pivot limits majority party power by requiring minority party support for enactment. I use minority party support of the bill on the committee's vote to report to develop a theory of minority party influence at the committee stage (suggesting at the very least, that minority party preferences are incorporated into the legislation). To summarize, the inclusion of the minority party during the legislative development process is the result of the House majority anticipating the necessity of obtaining a winning coalition in the Senate.

## **A Theory of Minority Party Influence in the House**

When does the House majority incorporate minority party preferences during the creation of legislation? I draw on both pivot and party-based theories to claim that during unified party control of Congress, the cloture requirement in the Senate forces the House majority to allow minority party influence at the markup stage. During divided party control, the theories offer

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<sup>5</sup>If not, policy change is still limited to the distance from the most moderate pivotal actor to the status quo on the other side of the moderate pivotal actor. In short, policy change is always constrained by the most moderate pivotal actor.

differing expectations about whether the House majority seeks legislative success or instead prefers to engage in symbolic, partisan legislating. These competing expectations are adjudicated in the empirical analyses.

Because under most situations status quo locations are unobservable (Smith 2007, Peress 2013), the ideological location of bills cannot be identified *a priori*, but legislative vote totals in committee can be used as a proxy for the location of proposed policy, where minority party votes indicate a more moderate (i.e., closer to the preferences of the minority party) bill (Krehbiel 1998, Riker 1962).<sup>6</sup> If one assumes members of each party are distributed along one-dimension with the Democratic party median lying to the left of the Republican median (as there is ample evidence for in Congress, e.g., Jacobson 2000, Theriault 2006), support for a proposed bill to a gridlocked status quo will come primarily from majority party members. Conversely, bills which propose a change to a non-gridlocked status quo will receive relatively more support from the minority party in committee and are more likely to pass both the House and Senate.

When the status quo lies within the gridlock interval, between the House median and filibuster pivot, change to the status quo is impossible because each pivotal actor wants to move policy in opposite directions. These proposals will receive support from a limited coalition of members in both chambers who lie on the same side of the status quo, and the bill, by definition, will not receive support from any members on the opposite side of the status quo. On House committee votes to report the legislation, minority party support for these types of bills will be low, while majority party support will be high.

Now consider a bill developed and reported by the standing committee intended to defeat the status quo by passing both the House and Senate. For any policy change to occur, the sta-

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<sup>6</sup>Status quo locations can be measured if the policy is represented by cardinal values, such as dollar amounts, but these situations are limited to specific bills such as appropriations. Coalition sizes may not be an adequate measure of the ideological location of a bill if members vote strategically, though that is unlikely on final passage votes, which are generally considered to be the most obvious expression of a preference for the proposed legislation or the status quo (Roberts & Smith 2003).

tus quo must be exterior to the ideal points of the House median and Senate filibuster pivot. These policies are vulnerable to change and the standing committee can propose legislation that moves the status quo from outside the ideal points of the pivotal actors to one of the pivotal actors' ideal points or another location within the gridlock interval. I set aside claims about proposal power and the exact location of the new policy, nor do I claim that these legislative proposals will *always* be successful; there are significant transaction costs associated with passing and negotiating legislation in both chambers, and the two pivotal actors may not be able to compromise even when agreement is possible. But, on average, because of the policy location of these bills, they will receive more voting support from the committee minority party as a larger set of these members prefer the proposed policy to the status quo.

Figure 1 shows a spatial model demonstrating how minority party coalition size in the standing committee voting in favor of the bill changes based on the placement of the status quo and the proposed legislation from the standing committee. In both panels, a one-dimensional policy space ranges from 0 to 1,  $H_m$  represents the House median, F represents the filibuster pivot, and the models assume unified Republican control of Congress. In the top panel, the status quo is located between the House median and the Senate filibuster pivot, and is gridlocked. If the standing committee proposes a bill that is located at  $SQ'$ , which is distance  $\epsilon$  closer to the preferences of the House median from the old status quo, the winning coalition will consist of members of the House and Senate located from  $\frac{\epsilon}{2}$  to the right.<sup>7</sup> This bill, like any other possible proposal closer to the House median's preference, will not pass the Senate because it is farther from the filibuster pivot's ideal point than the status quo.

In the bottom panel, the status quo (SQ) is exterior to the gridlock interval.<sup>8</sup> The standing committee can move SQ toward the House median, to  $\frac{\epsilon}{2}$ . This proposal will receive the support

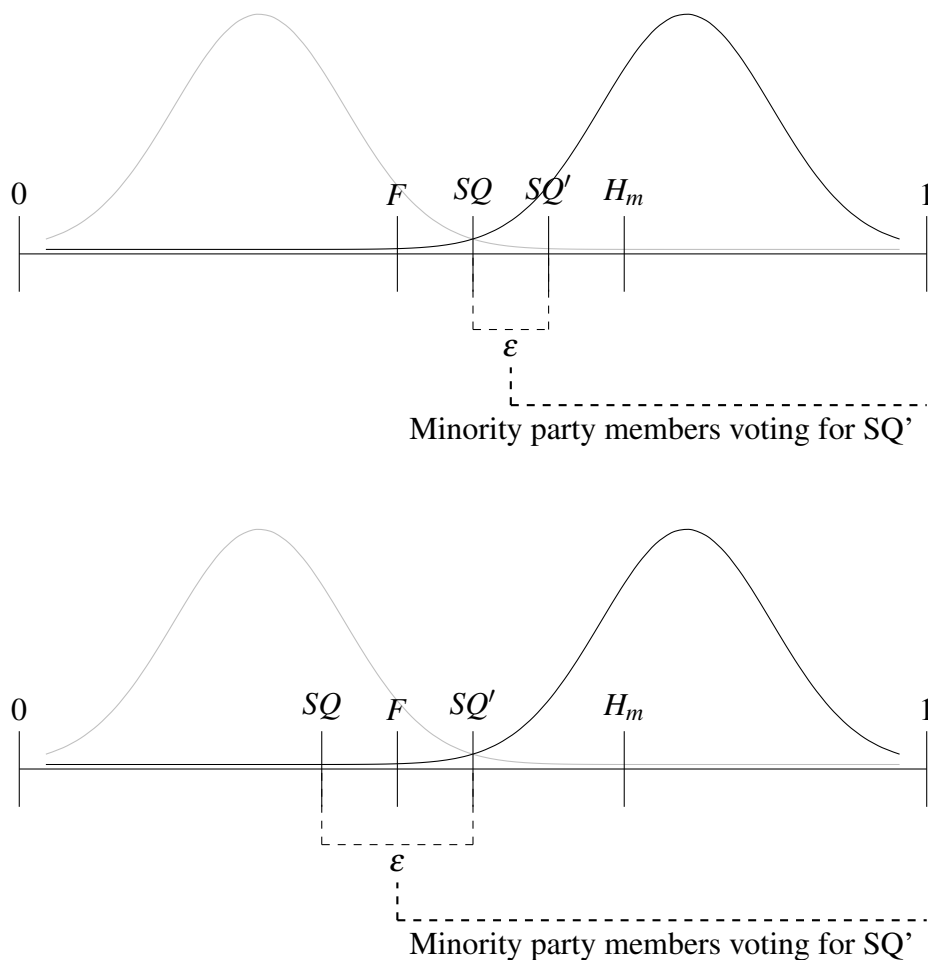
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<sup>7</sup>Members whose ideal point is closer to  $SQ'$  are those with ideal point values greater than the point from one-half of the distance from SQ to  $SQ'$ , or from the point at one-half of  $\epsilon$ . For simplicity, I assume members who are indifferent vote for  $SQ'$ .

<sup>8</sup>Without loss of generality, SQ is to the left of F. If SQ is to the right of  $H_m$  the same intuition applies, though all members of the minority will vote for the proposed policy unless their ideal point is to the right of  $\frac{\epsilon}{2}$ .



Figure 1: Winning Coalitions for Gridlocked (Top Panel) and Non-Gridlocked (Bottom Panel) Bills: Unified Republican Party Control of Congress



- $SQ$  = Status quo policy
- $F$  = Filibuster pivot
- $H_m$  = House median
- $SQ'$  = Proposed policy
- $\epsilon$  = Distance from status quo to proposed policy
- In the top and bottom panels, all minority party members to the right of  $\frac{\epsilon}{2}$  vote for the proposed policy. In the bottom panel,  $\frac{\epsilon}{2} = F$ .

of the filibuster pivot<sup>9</sup> and the proposed policy will be sent to the president. Figure 1 also shows two distributions of party voter ideal points in the House standing committee, with Republicans as the majority party, in black (to the right) and Democrats as the minority party in gray (to the left). Bills which cannot be enacted ( $SQ'$  in the top panel) will receive fewer minority party votes than bills which can be enacted ( $SQ'$  in the bottom panel) due to the location of the status quo.

The theoretical claims and empirical results demonstrate minority party influence *conditional* on strong and coherent parties as articulated by the dominant partisan theories of congressional action. If this is not the case, as was likely true during the “textbook” Congress period when conservative Democrats and liberal Republicans had overlapping preferences on a number of issues, minority party influence has a different, and likely more substantial meaning given that the structure of winning coalitions were not partisan based.

There are a number of testable hypotheses. Because the majority needs to incorporate the minority party’s preferences to an extent that the proposed bill will move into the gridlock interval, the bill will attract greater support from the minority party as it moves toward the preferences of its members. A bill constructed to receive 60 votes in the Senate requires sufficient support from members of the Senate minority party, and thus will also receive more support from House minority party members on the vote to report the bill. Vote totals measure the extent to which minority party preferences have been incorporated into the bill and predict overall support on the House passage floor vote. Likewise, minority party support on votes to report is expected to predict passage by both the House and Senate as any minority party member (in this case Democrats) from  $SQ'$  to the right will vote for the proposed policy.

*Hypothesis 1: As House standing committee minority party support on the vote to report a bill increases, the more support the bill will receive on passage in the House.*

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<sup>9</sup>Assuming the filibuster pivot votes for the new policy if it is indifferent between the two; if it votes for the status quo, the policy can move to  $\frac{\epsilon}{2}$  minus any value greater than zero.

*Hypothesis 2: As House standing committee minority party support on the vote to report a bill increases, the more likely the bill is to pass the House and Senate.*

Overall support on the vote to report the bill from committee is highly correlated with minority party support, though I do not claim overall support has independent causal effects separate from minority party support. Because votes to report the bill from committee, like floor passage votes, are supported by most of the majority party in virtually all cases (majority party support is constant), overall support is largely a function of variation in minority party support. (Descriptive statistics for overall support, majority party support, and minority party support on votes to report legislation from House committees are given in Table A1 of Appendix C.) I also expect majority party support to have *no* relationship on overall support, House passage, or House and Senate passage because, as Figure 1 shows, majority party support does not vary based on whether the bill is passed by the House and Senate (status quo lies within the gridlock interval or not). These predicted null relationships are borne out by the empirical analyses, supporting the theory.

I test a second implication of the theory to better causally identify the claim that minority support in House committees is driven by the necessity of appeasing members of the same party in the Senate. The fewer seats the House majority party has in the Senate, the more it will move bills toward the preferences of the House minority party. During periods of unified party control of Congress (Figure 1 assumes Republican control), as the filibuster pivot moves farther away from the House median (to the left in Figure 1), a greater set of policies will be gridlocked and any proposed policy which can defeat the status quo will capture a larger share of minority party voters in the House. Because the filibuster pivot in the modern Senate is almost always a member of the Senate minority party<sup>10</sup>, the greater the number of votes the House majority party needs from the Senate minority, the farther the filibuster pivot will move

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<sup>10</sup>The filibuster pivot is not a member of the minority party only when the majority has 60 seats. In recent congresses, this occurred only very briefly in the 111th Congress, between the seating of Al Franken after a recount and before the death of Ted Kennedy.

from the median, and the more minority party preferences will need to be incorporated in order for the bill to pass the Senate.

During unified control of Congress, minority party support will increase on the vote to report in the standing committee, and as the majority party needs more minority party members to reach 60 votes, the decisive minority party voter is more extreme relative to the majority party's preferences. Conversely, as the number of minority party members needed to reach 60 votes decreases, the decisive voter is more moderate relative to the majority party's preferences (i.e., closer to the preferences of the majority party, or to the right in Figure 1).<sup>11</sup>

*Hypothesis 3: During unified party control of the chambers, as the number of Senate majority party seats increases, support received from the House standing committee minority party will decrease.*

During divided party control of the chambers, pivot-based theories suggest only that the gridlock interval increases and that winning coalitions in both chambers will work toward changing those status quos which are not gridlocked. In the Senate, winning coalitions can be composed of a majority of the majority party *plus* a sufficient number of members of the minority party (who are members of the House majority), or a majority of the minority party and a sufficient number of members of the majority party (enough to reach 60 votes). The latter coalition, in which the majority party is rolled, is virtually never observed in the Senate (Gailmard & Jenkins 2007) but pivot-based theories claim these coalitions are possible (Krehbiel 1998). In this case, an increase in majority party seats makes the gridlock interval larger, and the House majority party must make legislation even more bipartisan as compared to unified party control. That is, during divided party control, the greater the number of members of the Senate majority party (which moves the Senate pivot away from the House median, or to the left in

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<sup>11</sup>Consider the breakdown of the 116th Congress with 53 Republican members and 47 Democrats. If the Republican majority wants to pass legislation, it needs seven Democratic voters, ranging from Joe Manchin (D-WV) to Michael Bennet (D-CO). Bennet has a DW-NOMINATE score of -.207, or in the 57th percentile of liberalism. Now suppose Republicans had a 57 seat majority and only needed three Democratic votes. The most liberal member they would need to attract is Doug Jones (D-AL) who has a DW-NOMINATE score of .111 and is only in the 53rd percentile of chamber liberalism. I expect these dynamics extend to attracting House support.

Figure 1), the greater the extent to which minority party preferences will be incorporated at the committee stage and the more minority party votes the bill will receive in the House committee (the opposite result from that predicted under unified party control of Congress.)

*Hypothesis 4a: During divided party control of the chambers, as the number of Senate majority party members increases, support received from the House standing committee minority party will increase.*

Alternatively, the House majority may seek to construct more partisan legislation during these situations (high ideological distance between the Senate filibuster pivot and House median), ignoring prospects for passage, as party-based theories suggest that the leadership may prefer to engage in symbolic lawmaking as a way of differentiating the House majority from the Senate majority and ensuring that voters understand the differences between the two party's preferences or brands, as responsible party government predicts (Aldrich 1995, The American Political Science Association 1950, Cox & McCubbins 1993, also see Lebo, McGlynn, & Koger 2007). Passing partisan legislation with little hope of enactment is also consistent with claims that in the distribution of status quo points, relatively few fall outside the gridlock interval, giving Congress fewer opportunities to change policy. This does not occur during periods of unified congressional control because the gridlock interval is smaller, a larger set of policies can be changed, and the majority party seeks policy successes rather than symbolic legislating. Counter-intuitively, this theory predicts that divided government and increased differences between the chamber majorities will produce *more* partisan legislation in the House with less minority party support, contra the predicted relationship in Hypothesis 4a. In the former, an increase in ideological distance between the House and Senate majority will lead to more minority input at the House committee stage, if the House majority, on balance, is making an effort to enact legislation by generating bipartisan support. If, however, the House majority prefers to forgo legislative passage and instead burnish its partisan reputation, minority support

will decline.

*Hypothesis 4b: During divided party control of the chambers, as the number of Senate majority party members increases, support received from the House standing committee minority party will decrease.*

Votes to report from standing House committee are used to measure minority party support for the legislation as they reflect the final policy proposal from the committee. The extant literature demonstrates that vote choices for committee members on the committee vote and the floor vote are consistent, supporting the claim that votes to report in committee are strongly related to the content of the legislation voted on by the chambers. Unekis (1978), using a sample limited to 128 votes in the 92nd and 93rd Congresses, finds vote consistency is the same more than 90% of the time, Hamm (1982) uses state committees to find vote consistency is greater than 80%, and Battista (2006) finds committee members cast consistent votes between 90 to 95 percent of the time in the California state assembly. Maltzman (1995), examining Congress, also finds voting patterns between the committee and floor are largely consistent, with some variation based on jurisdictional saliency. Congress has changed substantially in the last few decades, though the evidence here also suggest consistency between committee voting and chamber voting. Further, if legislation was substantively modified by the House or Senate (e.g., made more or less ideological) then there would be no relationship between voting patterns on reporting the bill and voting on the floor of the House or Senate.

The theory and empirical results are limited to situations in which bills are referred to committees but in recent congresses, the party leadership may be responsible for legislative development on some bills, though even when committees are not explicitly in charge of the markup process, they still have the ability to affect the content of legislation (Curry & Lee 2019b). If certain types of bills skip the committee markup process, and the reason for not being referred to committee is correlated with the level of minority party support received

(e.g., the most controversial bills skip committees), then the theory would only apply to less controversial legislation. To investigate the extent to which this occurs, I examined all bills from the 104th through 114th Congresses which received floor action in the House and Senate but were not referred to a committee. There are 111 bills for which this is the case, but of these, 109 became law, suggesting that many of these bills were not referred to committees because of their mundane or uncontroversial nature. Even bills which are largely perceived to have been written by the party leadership are often referred to committees after the substantive markup is over and votes to report are taken (for example, the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, H.R. 1 in the 115th Congress.)<sup>12</sup>

## **Standing Committee Votes Data**

Committee votes allow for comparisons between legislation which receive a floor vote in the House and Senate, and all other bills reported from committees. There is ample evidence that House floor votes are not a random sample of all possible bills and comparing minority support on floor votes selects the most partisan bills (Snyder 1992, Vandoren 1990). Another approach to determine how the Senate's filibuster rules affect legislative development in the House would be to compare House minority party support on votes to report when the majority party has 60 votes in the Senate, but this situation is so rare as to preclude systematic analysis.

Beginning in the 92nd Congress, committees were required by the passage of the Legislative Reorganization Act (LRA) to report roll call votes in some manner. Despite the potential insights into the committee system the new data offered, there has been strikingly little research using committee votes. What work has been done typically examines only a few committees over a few congresses (Dodd 1972, Dodd & Pierce 1975, Dyson & Soule 1970, Manley 1970, Casstevens 1972, Matthews 1960, Westfield 1974), due to the difficulty in collecting compre-

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<sup>12</sup>See Tankersley, Jim. "Republicans Ready to Move on Tax Cut Bill Few Have Seen," *The New York Times*, October 19, 2017. Accessed at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/19/us/politics/tax-bill-trump-senate.html> on August 22, 2019.

hensive data on committee votes in multiple committees across multiple congresses. The data described here represent an important contribution in that they reflect House standing committee votes to report over eleven congressional terms (104th-114th) resulting in substantially more observations than is typical in research using committee votes.

The data were scraped from committee report text and include member names and recorded vote positions, along with the vote type (vote to report or not), the committee report number, and the bill number to which the committee report pertains. Votes to report bills were identified using the vote descriptions contained in the committee reports. Names and committees were matched with Stewart's Committee Data (Stewart & Woon 2016) and with DW-NOMINATE data to identify individual members (Poole & Rosenthal 2007). (See Appendix A for additional details on the data collection process, excluded voice votes and unanimous consent votes. See Appendix B for a complete description of the word stems used to identify votes to report.)

## **Partisan Voting Patterns on Standing Committee Votes**

There are 954 total roll call votes in the sample, with the mean number of votes taken with a congress is about 87. Table A1 in Appendix C shows descriptive statistics on votes to report in each committee across all congresses in the sample (104-114), including average overall support, average majority party support, and average minority party support. Support is found by the total number in favor divided by the total number of members voting, consistent with previous research (Krehbiel 1998). For all bills which received a roll call vote to report to the House, average overall support is high, with nearly 70% of members voting to report the bill. Almost 93% of majority party members vote to report, on average, though only about 34% of minority party members do so.

For bills which did not pass the House, the patterns are starkly different. While overall support is only slightly lower (66% as compared to 69% in favor) and majority party support is



nearly identical to the results for all bills, average minority party support is reduced by about 9%, indicating that these bills are more partisan and more extreme. Though the House is a majoritarian institution, minority party support is meaningful as bills with more support from the minority seem more likely to pass the House. The percentage of minority party members voting to report legislation also tracks closely with the percentage of the minority party agreeing to final passage on the floor for bills which become law (Curry & Lee 2019*b*).

### **Committee Roll Call Vote Partisanship and Bill Support**

Table 1 shows results from three regression models predicting the percentage of overall support the bill received on passage in the House, with the key independent variables of overall committee support on the vote to report (model 1), majority party support on the vote to report (model 2), and minority party support on the vote to report (model 3). The hypotheses predict that both overall support and minority party support will increase overall support in the chamber, the probability a bill passes the House, and the probability a bill is sent to the president.<sup>13</sup> House vote totals are taken from the Rohde/PIPC dataset (Crespin & Rohde N.d.). The analysis is conducted at the vote-level with controls for vote-level characteristics. The models include fixed intercepts for committees and congresses which control for temporal heterogeneity and cross-sectional heterogeneity across committees, accounting for unobserved factors that might affect the baseline level of support bills receive, including the level of partisanship within committees, the strength of party power within a congressional term, the partisanship of a committee, etc. Standard errors are clustered at the committee level. Because the dependent variable is bounded between 0 and 1, Appendix D shows fractional probit regressions as a robustness check (Paolino 2001). The substantive results from OLS and fractional probit are nearly identical, while the standard errors are generally smaller in the fractional probit estimates making

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<sup>13</sup>There are only a few bills in the sample over which the president exercised a veto, and the results are not sensitive to their inclusion or exclusion. The preferences of the president offer an important avenue for future research but are not directly addressed here.

OLS a more conservative modeling strategy.

Table 1: OLS Estimates of Bill Characteristics and Chamber Passage Support

Independent Variables	DV=Percentage of House Voting to Pass		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Chair or Ranking Mem. of Referral Committee	-2.20 (2.20)	-3.10 (3.71)	-1.83 (2.35)
Member of Referral Committee	-0.29 (4.44)	0.08 (4.90)	0.70 (4.78)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-8.18* (3.55)	-20.45* (2.17)	-8.43# (4.06)
Sponsor Ideological Extremity	-7.19 (6.09)	-4.41 (8.33)	-4.59 (7.30)
Overall Percentage Voting to Report Bill	0.54* (0.07)		
Majority Percentage to Report		0.03 (0.04)	
Minority Percentage to Report			0.24* (0.03)
Constant	46.51* (7.31)	101.03* (4.44)	69.59* (4.42)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.45	0.22	0.46
AIC	4730.97	4935.05	4726.09
N	584	584	584

\* $p < .05$ , # $p < .1$ ; Regression with fixed effects for committee and congress and clustered standard errors for committee. The dependent variable in all models is percentage of members voting in favor on passage in the House. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of sponsor. The sample is any bill, 104th-114th Congresses, which received a recorded roll call vote in the standing committee to report the bill *and* received a recorded roll call vote to pass the bill on the floor of the House.

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the percentage of minority party members voting to report the bill increases the level of overall support on bill passage in the House, as does the overall percentage of members on the standing committee voting to report the bill. The coefficients can be directly interpreted and show that when overall support to report the bill from committee

increases by 1%, support for bill passage in the entire House increases by about .54% (95% CI: .40% to .69%). Likewise, for an increase in committee minority party support of 1%, support on the floor increases by about .24% (95% CI: .19% to .30%). These are substantively meaningful effects, as for example, an increase of about 10% in minority party support in committee results in about ten additional Representatives voting for the bill on passage in the House. The relationship between majority party support in committee and overall support in the House is not statistically significant, as expected because majority party support to report the bill within the standing committees is nearly constant.

Whether or not the bill sponsor is a member of the majority party is also statistically significant and in the expected direction. Of course, virtually all bills receiving a vote on the floor are sponsored by members of the majority party, but the eight bills (out of 584) which were sponsored by a minority party member and had a floor vote received more support than other bills.

## **Committee Roll Call Vote Partisanship and Legislative Passage**

In Table 2, six different logit models are shown predicting whether or not the bill passed the House (models 1-3) and whether the bill passed both chambers (models 4-6).<sup>14</sup> The models which include the Senate explicitly account for the constraints imposed on the House majority party by Senate cloture rules. The sample includes all bills which received a roll call vote to report in committee, even if the bill did not receive a floor vote in one or both chambers. As with the previous models, the independent variables measure bill characteristics, and also include variables measuring the average level of support on committee votes (models 1 and 4), the average level of support received from the majority party (models 2 and 5), and the average level of support received from the minority party (models 3 and 6).

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<sup>14</sup>Ordered logit models with passage in neither chamber as the baseline, and ordinal values assigned to House passage and Senate passage are shown in Appendix D, Table A3. It is not clear that the reporting of a bill and House passage should be assumed to be ordered, but the results are robust to the ordered logit specification.

In both models 1 and 4, overall support is positively related to the probability of a bill passing the House and passing both chambers. The direct test of Hypothesis 2 is whether minority support increases the chances a bill passes both congressional chambers. As models 3 and 6 show, a one percentage increase in minority support increases the chances of passing the House by .99% (95% CI: .65% to 1.34%) and the chances of passing both chambers by 1.25% (95% CI: .78% to 1.72%). More support from the committee as a whole and more support from the minority party make it more likely a bill passes both the House and Senate. As models 2 and 5 show, there is no similar effect for majority party support indicating it is a necessary but insufficient condition for legislative success. I also estimate models which predict both House overall support on the passage vote, similar to the models in Table 1, and House and Senate passage, similar to the models shown in Table 2, but including overall support, majority party support, and minority party support as independent variables in the same model. Only minority party support remains significant (results shown in Appendix D, Table A4) because differences in floor support or the probability of passage is driven by changes in minority party support rather than majority party support. These results demonstrate that even in an era of strong majority parties, serious lawmaking attempts must receive support from members of the minority in committee.

Other variables are statistically significant and in the expected direction. Congressional passage is more likely if the sponsor is a leader of the referral committee (an increase of about 95% in model 4). As with the previous results, virtually all bills passed are sponsored by the majority, so those few bills sponsored by minority party members are likely to be minor and bipartisan, resulting in a negative coefficient on passage. Similarly, whether the sponsor is a member of the referral committee has negative effects on the likelihood of House passage. More than one-sixth of bills which pass are sponsored by a member not from the referral committee and these are likely to be relatively minor or unimportant bills.

Table 2: Bill Characteristics and Bill Progression

Independent Variables	DV=Bill Passed House Or Not			DV=Bill Passed Both House and Senate Or Not		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Chair or Ranking Mem. of Referral Committee	0.23 (0.19)	0.21 (0.19)	0.26 (0.20)	0.66* (0.29)	0.54* (0.22)	0.67* (0.27)
Member of Referral Committee	-0.57* (0.17)	-0.57* (0.18)	-0.57* (0.18)	-0.57 (0.37)	-0.51 (0.33)	-0.55 (0.34)
Sponsor Member of Majority	0.92* (0.34)	0.72* (0.35)	1.01* (0.27)	-0.81* (0.35)	-1.12* (0.37)	-0.80* (0.37)
Sponsor Ideological Extremity	0.44 (0.49)	0.57 (0.47)	0.51 (0.49)	0.08 (0.54)	0.17 (0.52)	0.19 (0.63)
Overall Percentage Voting to Report Bill	0.02* (0.01)			0.03* (0.01)		
Majority Percentage to Report		-0.002 (0.01)			0.01 (0.01)	
Minority Percentage to Report			0.01* (0.002)			0.01* (0.002)
Constant	-2.32* (0.63)	-0.60 (0.63)	-1.80* (0.51)	-3.72* (0.78)	-1.42* (0.60)	-2.16* (0.48)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R-squared	0.08	0.06	0.08	0.18	0.14	0.17
AIC	1204.64	1218.89	1195.53	705.29	731.84	710.44
N	936	936	936	945	945	945

\* $p < .05$ , # $p < .1$ ; Logit regression with fixed effects for committee and congress and clustered standard errors for committee. The dependent variable in models 1-3 is whether the bill passed the House, and in models 4-6, whether the bill passed the House and Senate. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of bill sponsor. The sample is any bill, 104th-114th Congresses, which received a recorded roll call vote in the standing committee to report the bill. Some bills excluded in models 1-3 because committee fixed effects perfectly predict the outcome.

The congress and year fixed effects do not reveal significant temporal or cross-sectional heterogeneity. There are some significant differences for the committee-level fixed effects, indicating that some committees have higher levels of voting support and passage. There is, however, no interactive effect for committee value (measured using Grosewart scores)<sup>15</sup> and voting support or passage. All results remain if distributive committees, like Appropriations are removed from the analysis as well, demonstrating that the results are not due to norms of universalism on certain types of bills.

### **The Effect of House Majority Party Senators on Committee Support**

The theory claims that because the Senate majority party rarely has a filibuster-proof supermajority, bills which are meant to become law must be designed to win support from members of the minority party. The House majority strategically responds to the dynamics in the Senate differently under divided and unified party control of the chambers. During unified control, more minority party members in the Senate will constrain the majority party to a greater extent, and more majority (minority) party seats held in the Senate should produce less (more) bipartisanship on votes to report in House standing committees (Hypothesis 3). During divided control, an increase in the number of seats held by the Senate majority party might produce an even larger positive effect as the House majority must win support from members of the Senate majority (Hypothesis 4a), or the House majority may seek only to legislate on partisan or symbolic legislation given the few status quos which are vulnerable to change (Hypothesis 4b). If this is true, the farther the Senate majority moves from the House (the greater number of seats controlled by the Senate majority), the less minority support House bills will receive in committee.

The dependent variable differs in each of the three models in Table 3, with model 1 using the

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<sup>15</sup>I use recent versions of the Grosewart scores developed by Stewart (2018) as he shows there are significant differences in scores between earlier congresses and the 104-115th Congresses.

number of Senate majority party members to predict overall support on House votes to report, model 2 predicts House majority party support on votes to report, and model 3 predicts House minority party support on votes to report. The dependent variables are continuous (support on the committee's vote to report, ranging from 50% plus one to 100%), and because the number of majority party Senate seats is established prior to committee votes on bills, the independent variable is temporally prior to the dependent variables. Committee fixed effects are included, but because the interaction term capturing unified or divided government is at the congress-level, congress fixed effects are collinear and are not included. (As before the results are also shown using fractional probit in Appendix D, Table A5.)

In model 1 the number of Senate seats held by House majority party members decreases the overall percentage of support a bill receives on the House vote to report, while in model 2 there is no effect on majority party support. In model 3, which uses Senate majority party seats to predict House minority party support received on votes to report the bill, there is a negative and statistically significant effect. This component term shows that when there is unified party control of the chambers (divided chambers variable equals zero), there is a significant and negative effect on minority party support in House committees as the number of majority party Senate seats increases.

The substantive interpretation of this result supports Hypothesis 3: during unified party control of Congress, as the number of minority party seats in the Senate declines, the less minority support the bill will receive on the vote to report. The substantive effect is that an increase in majority party seats from 51 to 60 reduces minority party House support on the vote to report by about 16% (95% CI: -6.7% to -25.5%). Because bills which are not intended for passage and are symbolic and more partisan cannot be identified *a priori* they are included in this result, meaning these effects understate the extent to which the House majority party modifies legislation to capture minority party support.

Table 3: Senate Majority Party Seats and Support on Committee Votes to Report

Independent Variables	DV=Overall Support	DV=Majority Support	DV=Minority Support
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Chair or Ranking Mem. of Referral Committee	-1.01 (2.04)	0.27 (1.68)	-2.59 (5.13)
Member of Referral Committee	-0.09 (1.50)	1.08 (1.57)	-1.47 (3.53)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-11.91* (1.84)	1.92 (2.97)	-29.63* (9.77)
Sponsor Ideological Extremity	3.11 (3.36)	3.97 (5.65)	1.74 (8.52)
Senate Majority Party Senators	-0.45* (0.19)	-0.14 (0.32)	-1.77* (0.49)
Divided Chambers	12.84 (26.51)	-99.46* (39.65)	109.90* (36.97)
Senate Majority Party Senators x Divided Chambers	-0.29 (0.50)	1.93* (0.77)	-2.27* (0.69)
Constant	107.28* (10.84)	83.39* (20.16)	188.56* (25.50)
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.13	0.06	0.18
AIC	7960.72	8502.16	9551.12
N	954	954	954

\* $p < .05$ , # $p < .1$ ; Regression with fixed effects for committee and clustered standard errors for committee. The dependent variable in model 1 is overall support on the vote to report the bill, in model 2 it is majority party support on the vote to report the bill, and in model 3 is minority party support on the vote to report the bill. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of bill sponsor. The sample is any bill, 104th-114th Congresses, which received a recorded roll call vote in the standing committee to report the bill.



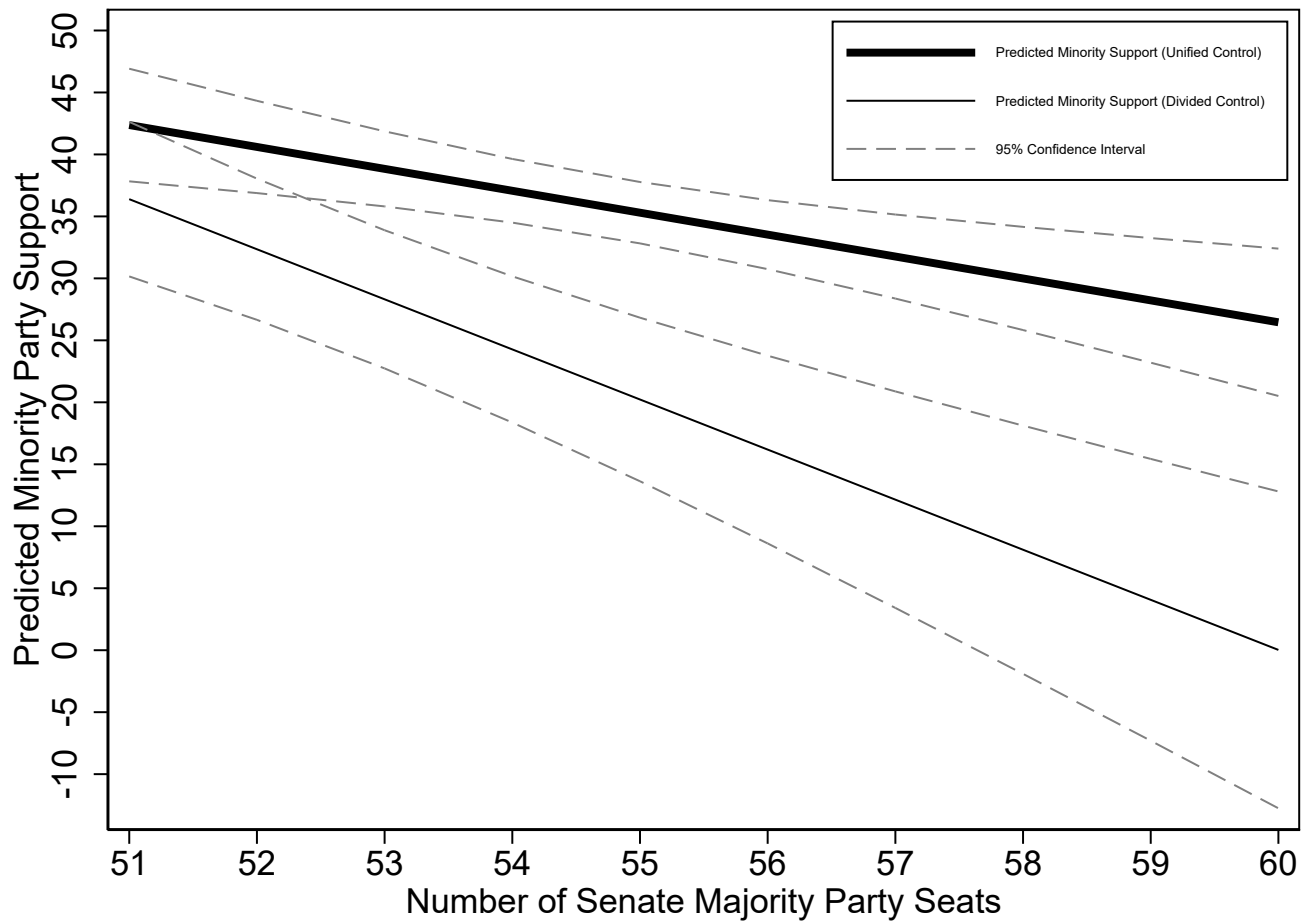
The interaction term in model 3 clarifies competing expectations about the House majority's response during divided congresses. The interaction term is negative and significant, indicating that during divided government, as the Senate majority moves away from the House majority, there is *less* support from the House minority on bills to report, consistent with Hypothesis 4b. Figure 2 shows the substantive effect of the interaction by plotting predicted values of House committee minority support as the number of Senate party majority seats increases, with the thick line and associated dashed lines showing predicted minority support during unified party control of Congress while the thin line and associated dashed lines show predicted minority support with 95% confidence intervals during divided party control.<sup>16</sup>

When the Senate majority party is small and minority party support is necessary to pass legislation, House minority support on the vote to report is high in both unified and divided government. In unified party control, as the number of Senate majority party seats increase, minority party support decreases, as expected. But, in divided party control, there is a dramatic reduction in minority support as the number of Senate majority party seats increases. Divided party control of Congress promotes extreme legislation from the House, rather than compromise bills, a result consistent with the claim that the House majority engages in partisan or symbolic legislating rather than substantive action. These results hold when the independent variable is ideological extremity of the Senate median (measured using DW-NOMINATE scores), ideological extremity of Senate majority party median, or the distance between the House and Senate medians (results not shown).

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<sup>16</sup>See Figure A1 in Appendix D for the distribution of observations across votes. I also split the sample by unified/divided party control of the chambers and estimate the effect of Senate majority party senators. The results are consistent with the interaction term. See Table A6 in Appendix D. Because Judiciary and Energy and Commerce make up almost 1/3 of all committee votes, all models were also run with those committees excluded. The results are largely robust to their exclusion, though the interaction terms in Table 3 are significant at the .1 level rather than the .05 level. (Results not shown but code provided in replication file.)

Figure 2: The Conditional Effect of Majority Party Seats During Unified and Divided Party Control of Congress



Predicted minority party support on the vote to report from results presented in model 3 in Table 3. For the percentage of observations across Senate majority party seats see Figure A1 in Appendix D.

### The Effects of Exogenous Changes to Senate Membership on Minority Party Support in the House

Senate majority party composition occasionally changes as a result of an event such as a death or unexpected resignation. Using these membership changes isolates variation in the independent variable, majority party seat share, because these changes are not caused by other unobservable factors which might also cause changes in minority party support on votes to report, such as national political conditions or party leadership. I use four of these events, all occurring under unified chamber control, to identify how changes in Senate party composition

affect voting patterns in House committees. See Table A7 in Appendix E for more details on each of these events.<sup>17</sup> Committee votes included are those where the bill was reported to the chamber before the majority party seat gain (pre-treatment votes), and those that were reported after the seat switch (post-treatment votes). The expected relationship is that an increase (decrease) in majority party seats will produce a positive (negative) change in minority party support on votes to report.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 3 is a scatterplot of percentage of minority party support (y-axis) and days from the change in majority party seats, limited to 30 days before and after the seat gain (x-axis), with the exogenously imposed seat gain occurring at zero. The effect of the seat gain is displayed as the difference in the two linear best fit lines at zero (treatment assignment). After the gain, predicted minority party support is reduced, which cannot be caused by other congress- or bill-level factors. Bill-level differences are not controlled for in this figure so the best fit line appears to increase after the treatment, but these must be due to bill-level characteristics rather than changes at the committee or congress level, which are time-invariant (e.g., variation in polarization, different leadership styles or strategies, different committee chair preferences, etc).<sup>19</sup>

All other committee- and congress-level factors remain constant before and after the treatment (party seat change in Senate) in the empirical models, so the model in Table 4 includes only bill-level variables with congress and committee fixed effects. The model takes the following form:

$$Outcome_i = \beta * treatment_i + \theta * X_i' + \gamma_t + \omega_j + e_i \quad (1)$$

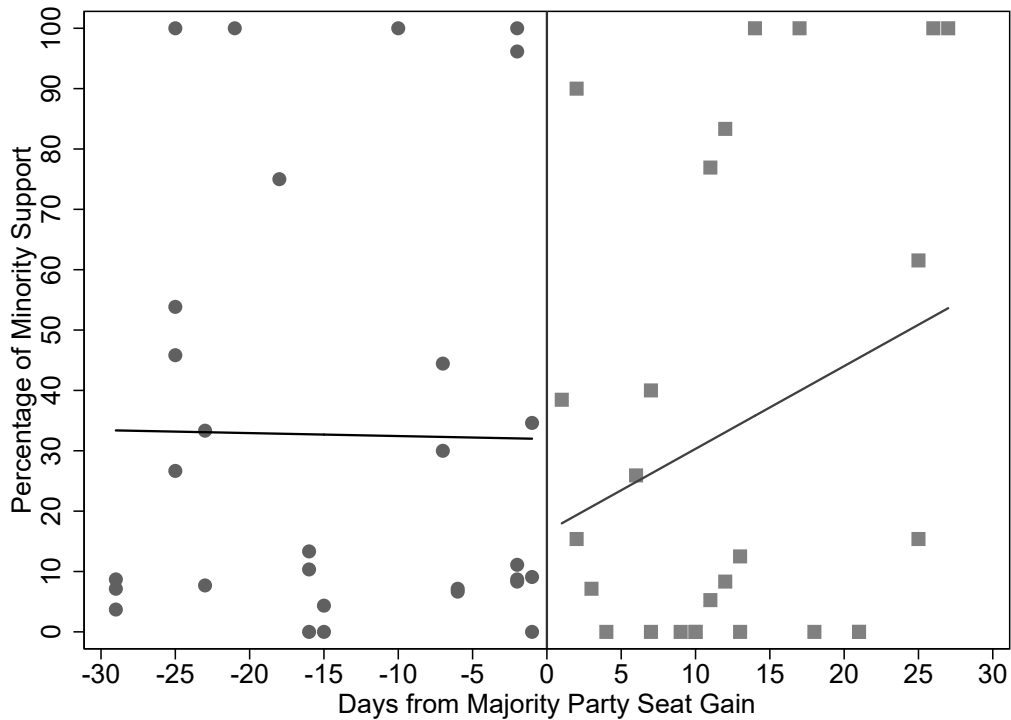
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<sup>17</sup>Other party changes occur throughout the sample, but are not well identified (e.g., a special election, which might cause House members to anticipate a Senate party composition switch), or do not have a sufficient number of observations before and after the event (e.g., the death of Ted Kennedy in 2009, shortly after the Minnesota recount ended and Al Franken was sat.)

<sup>18</sup>Each switch is coded as a change in majority party seats such that post-treatment is the larger number of majority party seats.

<sup>19</sup>The average level of minority party support before the exogenous increase in Senate majority seats is 38.8%, while after it is 45.25%, though the difference is not statistically significant at the .05 level.

Figure 3: Scatter Plot of Minority Party Support with Best Fit Line as a Result of Exogenously Imposed Majority Party Seat Gain



where  $Outcome_i$  is the predicted value for each of the three dependent variables,  $treatment_i$  is the number of majority party Senate seats after the exogenous change,  $X_i'$  are the set of bill-level covariates included in the models,  $\gamma$  are congress fixed effects,  $\omega_j$  are committee fixed effects, and  $e_i$  is the estimated robust residual for observation  $i$ .

As Table 4 shows, exogenous shifts in the size of the Senate majority party produce a large, statistically suggestive decline ( $p=.097$  two-tailed test,  $t=1.76$ ) in minority party support on House votes to report.<sup>20</sup> The estimated effect for an increase from 51 majority party seats to 60 seats is a decrease in House committee minority party support of about 69% (90% CI: .72% to 135%), indicative of substantive changes in the content of bills to make them more

<sup>20</sup>It is unsurprising that the statistical significance is marginal given its inefficiency with the inclusion of five independent variables, three congress-fixed effects, 17 committee-fixed effects, and clustered standard errors estimated with only 242 observations. When the same model is estimated using regression with robust standard errors, the House majority party senators variable is significant at the .066 level, and with regular standard errors the variable is significant at the .053 level. When the congress-fixed effects, of which there are only three, are excluded the variable is significant at the .03 level even with clustered standard errors for committee. The results here present the most conservative plausible estimate. See different specifications shown in Appendix F, Tables A8 and A9.

Table 4: OLS Estimates of Exogenous Senate Party Changes and Minority Support on Committee Votes to Report

Independent Variables	DV=Overall Support	DV=Majority Support	DV=Minority Support
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Member of Referral Committee	-2.65 (3.70)	1.98 (4.31)	-10.67 (7.97)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-18.38* (3.51)	4.22 (8.77)	-46.63* (9.05)
Multiple Referral	3.93 (3.57)	-0.02 (5.74)	7.51 (8.86)
Ideological Extremity	-3.32 (6.15)	4.36 (11.91)	-19.29 (15.19)
Number of Senate Majority Party Members	-2.38 (2.59)	0.57 (3.53)	-7.71# (4.37)
Constant	216.91 (141.67)	51.21 (186.10)	514.72* (232.96)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
R-squared	0.20	0.15	0.20
AIC	2031.24	2164.10	2429.63
N	241	241	241

\* $p < .05$ , # $p < .1$ ; Regression with clustered standard errors and fixed effects for congress and committee. The dependent variable in all models is minority party support on the vote to report the bill. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of bill sponsor. See Table A7 in Appendix E for additional details on votes included in the sample.

partisan. Similar to the previous estimates, this result likely under-estimates the effect because they include all bills, including those that were never intended to become law. For those bills that the House majority wants to enact, the effects on partisan voting patterns should be even more striking as the content of those bills is strategically shaped to win support in the Senate.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The evidence here supports the notion that the Senate's institutional rules create a meaningful barrier to legislative action during the current era of polarization, a topic of debate in the literature. By limiting the power of the majority party in the Senate, the House majority must incorporate minority party preferences if it wants to pursue its policy priorities. This is most likely to be true during unified party control of Congress as the majority party has strong incentives to engage in lawmaking and improve its electoral position. The evidence here shows that even in these situations, legislation must be moderated to receive support in the Senate from at least a few minority party members.

Counter-intuitively, divided party control of Congress does not always allow the minority increased say over legislation. During divided party control, when party division in the Senate is close, the House majority makes bills more moderate to draw minority party support. As the two majority parties move away from each other, the House majority seeks less support from the House minority party, apparently instead preferring to pursue more partisan legislation without worrying about policy success. I theorize that this is because in these cases the set of status quos which are subject to change is very small, and the House majority prefers to enhance its legislative brand in hopes of improving its standing in the next congressional election.

This research adds to a growing consensus that while the House is a party-dominated, majoritarian institution, legislation which is enacted is generally quite bipartisan. I offer one rules-based mechanism to explain why this is the case, though other theoretical perspectives

are beginning to emerge that explain the apparent disconnect between voting behavior on substantive legislative proposals (i.e., lawmaking bills) and the narrative of strong polarization and partisan disagreement in the chambers.

Recent calls to reform congressional procedures have focused on cloture's supermajority requirement, with both Republicans and Democrats viewing it as an impediment to quick legislative action. While research has shown that the filibuster reduces the quantity of enacted legislation, there has been little focus on how it affects the types of policies being made. The theory and results here demonstrate that the filibuster moderates legislation significantly, even at the earliest stages of development and even under unified party control of the chambers. Removing the supermajority requirement would undoubtedly speed up action and allow parties to pass more legislation, but it would also promote more extreme legislation, perhaps worsening polarization.

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**Appendices/Supplemental Information for Online  
Publication**

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## **Appendix A: Additional Details on the Data Collection Process**

The text of committee reports was collected through a variety of sources, including Congress.gov and ProQuest's electronic collection of the U.S. Government's Serial Set. A number of points about the data bear mentioning. First, votes within House committees are classified according to the name of the committee as of the 114th Congress. Though the substantive focus and jurisdiction of committees largely stays the same, the names frequently change. For example, in the last few years, the Education and Labor Committee has been called the Economic and Educational Opportunities Committee and the Education and the Workplace Committee. I treat all votes taken in these committees as belonging to the same committees and I also consider the Select Committee on Homeland Security and the Homeland Security Committees as the same committee, as the Select Committee was created before the committee became permanent in 2005.

All roll call votes to report to the House floor taken in committee and listed in the report issued by the committee which accompanies the bill are recorded. Only committee reports which contain the term "vote" were examined for a committee vote. Far more committee reports mention the word "vote" than actually contain a recorded vote, but this strategy was used to screen out hundreds of committee reports which do not contain a roll call vote. A significant number of votes are reported in tables which are not machine-readable. These votes were hand-coded.

A number of votes are embedded in the committee report of a different committee. This is the case for a large number of votes taken by other committees and reported in the Budget Committee's report for reconciliation bills. Where identified, these votes are considered to be votes in the committee of record for the members, not for the Budget Committee. Finally, the level of detail in the extracted data varies significantly in how member names are reported with some committees reporting full names, some reporting last names, and some reporting states.



Names and committees were matched with Stewart's Committee Data (Stewart & Woon 2016) and with DW-NOMINATE data to identify individual members. In some committees where two members have the same last name and no state identification is given, members cannot be matched. These discrepancies were ignored if members voted the same or if they were of the same party as these two factors do not affect inferences on party votes as described below. Still, there are approximately 1,200 member-votes out of the roughly 325,000 total votes that cannot be matched due to insufficient information reported in the committee report. Given that a non-matched member is the result of a random process (i.e.g, having the same last name as another member on the same committee in the same Congress), these non-matched members should not affect the causal claims drawn.

Voice votes and unanimous consent votes are not included in the data for a number of reasons. First, some committees report voice votes and some do not, and even among the committees which do report voice votes, record-keeping appears to be inconsistent over time. Voice votes, when reported, are often mentioned in the text of the committee report rather than in the reporting votes section of the report. Unanimous consent votes do not appear to be recorded by any committee. Division votes are occasionally taken by committees, but not reported in the committee reports. Both division votes and unanimous consent votes are more likely on bills which are less substantive or important (e.g., naming federal buildings, commemorating people or events). Excluding these bills will not affect the inferences about the more important, substantive legislation included in the analyses and the exclusion of these bills should bias the results toward null effects, given that the missing data are more bipartisan and more likely to pass the House and Senate producing a stronger relationship than actually observed in the analyzed data. In fact, bills which passed the House and did not receive a recorded committee roll received 348 yeas on average, while bills in the dataset which received a recorded committee roll vote and a House vote received, on average, only 291 yeas on final passage,

indicating these are more contentious bills.

There are 897 bills in the dataset for which a standing committee took at least one vote to report the bill (excluding the Rules Committee). The Rules Committee is excluded because they are not developing substantive bills and most votes to report are resolutions (rules) attached to substantive legislative items. There are 954 total roll call votes to report across all bills and congresses in the dataset due to the discrepancy between the number of bills and the number of votes to report occurs because multiple committees report the same bill and because sometimes committees take more than one vote to report, even if the first vote passes. For example, in the 104th Congress, the Judiciary Committee voted twice to report H.J. Res. 1. The two vote descriptions are as follows: “Final passage. Mr. Hyde moved to report H.J. Res. 1, as amended, favorably to the whole House. The resolution was ordered favorably reported by a roll call vote of 20-13, with one Member (Ms. Jackson Lee) voting ‘present.’” The second vote to report was: “Mr. Sensenbrenner moved that the resolution be reported favorably to the House in the form of a single amendment in the nature of a substitute, incorporating the amendments adopted during committee consideration. The motion was approved by a rollcall vote of 17-14.” The unit of analysis is the roll call vote, so repeated votes to report or votes to report the same bill from two different committees are considered separate observations.

One additional complication comes from the different versions of a bill that the House and Senate often pass. For complicated or salient legislation, the Senate frequently strikes the House language and inserts its own after the bill is sent to that chamber. But, the House passed version, which almost always occurs first in the modern Congress, anchors the bargaining space over which the two chambers negotiate (Ryan 2018). The data here bear this out as well. Of the 954 bills in the sample, 26 are House Joint Resolutions, 924 are House bills, and 4 are Senate bills. If the final passage bill is systematically related to the bill passed by the House, then the level of legislative extremity in the House passed version and the Senate passed version will be

similar even if the bill is changed. If this were not the case, the expected empirical relationships would be mitigated, and observed relationships will be biased downward.

## **Appendix B: Identification of Votes to Report from Committee Reports**

Identifying votes to report the bill involves identifying key words or word stems in the description of the vote contained in the committee report. To minimize issues with punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, all word stems were capitalized, and all punctuation and spaces were removed.

Decision rules to identify votes to report the bill are as follows:

- “TOTHEHOUSE”
- “FAVORAB”
- “FINALPASS”
- “MOTIONTOREPORT”
- “REPORT” *and* “WITHAMEND”
- “REPORT” *and* “WITHOUTAMEND”
- “REPORT” *and* “ASAMEND”
- “REPORT” *and* “ORDER”
- Any of the above *and not* “RECONSIDERTHE”
- Any of the above *and not* “PREVIOUSQUESTION”

## Appendix C: Summary Statistics—Votes to Report

Table A1: Summary Statistics—Votes to Report, 104th-114th Congresses

Committee Name	Avg. Yea Percentage	Avg. Maj. Party Yea Percentage	Avg. Min. Party Yea Percentage	Number of Votes
<b>Agriculture</b>				
All Bills	70.18	81.53	55.32	14
Failed to Pass House	62.03	79.83	38.47	8
<b>Appropriations</b>				
All Bills	63.45	91.13	24.64	14
Failed to Pass House	59.85	98.70	4.78	5
<b>Armed Services</b>				
All Bills	87.48	90.39	84.03	24
Failed to Pass House	73.58	76.43	70.25	5
<b>Budget</b>				
All Bills	60.74	98.44	0.00	6
Failed to Pass House	NA	NA	NA	0
<b>Education and the Workforce</b>				
All Bills	62.80	86.87	27.48	91
Failed to Pass House	56.23	80.09	18.62	32
<b>Energy and Commerce</b>				
All Bills	72.05	95.45	38.90	121
Failed to Pass House	69.79	95.22	33.42	51
<b>Financial Services</b>				
All Bills	70.78	86.37	49.64	90
Failed to Pass House	66.27	89.50	34.44	31
<b>Homeland Security</b>				
All Bills	76.16	100.00	41.43	10
Failed to Pass House	72.30	100.00	30.61	7
<b>House Administration</b>				
All Bills	63.86	100.00	7.69	13
Failed to Pass House	60.00	100.00	0.00	7
<b>Intelligence (Permanent)</b>				
All Bills	80.04	100.00	51.53	7
Failed to Pass House	NA	NA	NA	0
<b>International Relations</b>				
All Bills	81.93	88.54	74.06	28
Failed to Pass House	79.82	86.68	71.54	5
<b>Judiciary</b>				
All Bills	69.70	95.35	30.17	207
Failed to Pass House	66.82	95.06	22.64	74
<b>Natural Resources</b>				
All Bills	62.09	90.47	21.56	116
Failed to Pass House	63.04	94.95	17.28	77
<b>Oversight and Government Reform</b>				
All Bills	62.58	91.08	20.91	29
Failed to Pass House	61.20	89.43	22.67	15
<b>Science, Space, and Technology</b>				
All Bills	77.94	98.36	49.07	9
Failed to Pass House	73.83	98.68	35.94	4
<b>Small Business</b>				
All Bills	87.35	100.00	62.50	4
Failed to Pass House	NA	NA	NA	0
<b>Transportation and Infrastructure</b>				
All Bills	67.50	89.90	37.94	15
Failed to Pass House	69.29	99.36	32.51	4
<b>Veterans' Affairs</b>				
All Bills	67.60	72.71	61.54	3
Failed to Pass House	NA	NA	NA	0
<b>Ways and Means</b>				
All Bills	70.13	98.57	24.54	154
Failed to Pass House	69.14	98.72	20.58	66
<b>Averages and Total</b>				
All Bills	69.21	92.97	33.86	954
Failed to Pass House	65.87	93.44	24.55	391

## **Appendix D: Robustness Checks and Alternative Specifications**

### Alternative Estimates of Bill Support and Bill Progression

While analyzing dependent variable bounded between 0 and 1 using OLS is extremely common, there is the possibility that OLS may produce heteroskedastic errors, and fit the data poorly, generating incorrect standard errors (Paolino 2001). As a result, fractional probit regressions are run as a robustness check. Fractional probit uses robust standard errors. Fractional logit is also appropriate in some cases, but because the values do not represent a probability, probit is preferred. Beta regression can also be used but in this case, some observations take on the value of 1, and the beta distribution does not have support at that value.

Table A2: Fractional Probit: Bill Characteristics and Chamber Passage Support

Independent Variables	DV=Percentage of House Voting to Pass		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Chair or Ranking Mem. of Referral Committee	-0.07# (0.04)	-0.09# (0.05)	-0.05 (0.04)
Member of Referral Committee	-0.002 (0.06)	0.001 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-1.26* (0.24)	-1.69* (0.23)	-1.28* (0.22)
Sponsor Ideological Extremity	-0.25 (0.15)	-0.14 (0.16)	-0.18 (0.15)
Overall Percentage Voting to Report Bill	0.02* (0.002)		
Majority Percentage to Report		0.001 (0.001)	
Minority Percentage to Report			0.01* (0.001)
Constant	0.73* (0.37)	2.55* (0.32)	1.52* (0.30)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R-squared	0.07	0.03	0.07
AIC	720.53	745.05	720.37
N	584	584	584

\*p<.05, #p<.1; Fractional probit with fixed effects for committee and congress and robust standard errors. The dependent variable in all models is percentage of members voting in favor on passage in the House. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of sponsor. The sample is any bill, 104th-114th Congresses, which received a recorded roll call vote in the standing committee to report the bill *and* received a recorded roll call vote to pass the bill on the floor of the House.

Table A3: Ordered Logit Estimates of Bill Characteristics and Bill Progression

Independent Variables	DV=Overall Support	DV=Majority Support	DV=Minority Support
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Chair or Ranking Mem. of Referral Committee	0.36* (0.15)	0.32* (0.15)	0.37* (0.16)
Member of Referral Committee	-0.55* (0.18)	-0.53* (0.18)	-0.55* (0.18)
Sponsor Member of Majority	0.44 (0.53)	0.22 (0.54)	0.48 (0.53)
Sponsor Ideological Extremity	0.31 (0.42)	0.43 (0.42)	0.40 (0.42)
Overall Percentage Voting to Report Bill	0.02* (0.004)		
Majority Percentage to Report		0.0001 (0.002)	
Minority Percentage to Report			0.01* (0.002)
Cut-point 1 Constant	1.99* (0.86)	0.16 (0.81)	1.16 (0.80)
Cut-point 2 Constant	4.29* (0.87)	2.41* (0.82)	3.47* (0.81)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
AIC	1871.64	1898.35	1864.72
N	955	955	955

\*p<.05; Ordered logit with fixed effects for committee and congress. The dependent variable in all models is progression of a bill, where zero equals did not pass House, one equals passed House, two equals passed by House and Senate. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of bill sponsor.



Table A4: Robustness Check: Controlling for Overall Chamber Support, Majority Party Support, and Minority Party Support on Percentage of House Voting to Pass, Probability of Passage, and Probability of Congressional Passage

DV=	Percentage of House Voting to Pass	Bill Passed House Or Not	Bill Passed Both House and Senate Or Not
Independent Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
Chair or Ranking Mem. of Referral Committee	-0.05 (0.04)	0.25 (0.20)	0.69* (0.29)
Member of Referral Committee	0.02 (0.06)	-0.58* (0.18)	-0.58 (0.36)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-1.16* (0.23)	1.02* (0.28)	-0.80* (0.35)
Sponsor Ideological Extremity	-0.23 (0.15)	0.48 (0.47)	0.13 (0.59)
Overall Percentage Voting to Report Bill	0.01 (0.004)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)
Majority Percentage to Report	0.003 (0.003)	0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)
Minority Percentage to Report	0.01* (0.002)	0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Constant	0.70# (0.36)	-2.29* (0.69)	-3.49* (0.84)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R-squared	0.08	0.08	0.18
AIC	718.46	1193.19	706.58
N	584	936	945

\*p<.05, #p<.1; Model 1 is fractional probit where the dependent variable is the percentage of House members voting to pass the bill. Models 2 and 3 are logit models with clustered standard errors for committee where the dependent variables are whether or not the bill passed the House and whether or not the bill passed both the House and Senate. All models include fixed effects for Congress and committee. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of sponsor. The sample is any bill, 104th-114th Congresses, which received a recorded roll call vote in the standing committee to report the bill (models 2 and 3); For model 1, the bill *also* received a recorded roll call vote to pass the bill on the floor of the House.

Table 5: Table A5: Fractional Probit Estimates of Senate Minority Party Seats and Support on Committee Votes to Report

Independent Variables	DV=Overall Support	DV=Majority Support	DV=Minority Support
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Chair or Ranking Mem. of Referral Committee	-0.03 (0.03)	0.02 (0.12)	-0.08 (0.09)
Member of Referral Committee	0.00 (0.04)	0.07 (0.16)	-0.04 (0.10)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-0.38* (0.13)	0.12 (0.29)	-0.82* (0.27)
Sponsor Ideological Extremity	0.09 (0.10)	0.22 (0.31)	0.07 (0.23)
Senate Majority Party Senators	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.05* (0.02)
Divided Chambers	0.31 (1.03)	8.00* (3.65)	4.15 (2.58)
Senate Majority Party Senators x Divided Chambers	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.17* (0.08)	-0.08# (0.05)
Constant	1.63* (0.47)	1.10 (1.48)	3.99* (1.06)
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R-squared	0.01	0.09	0.10
AIC	1212.86	492.94	1150.45
N	954	954	954

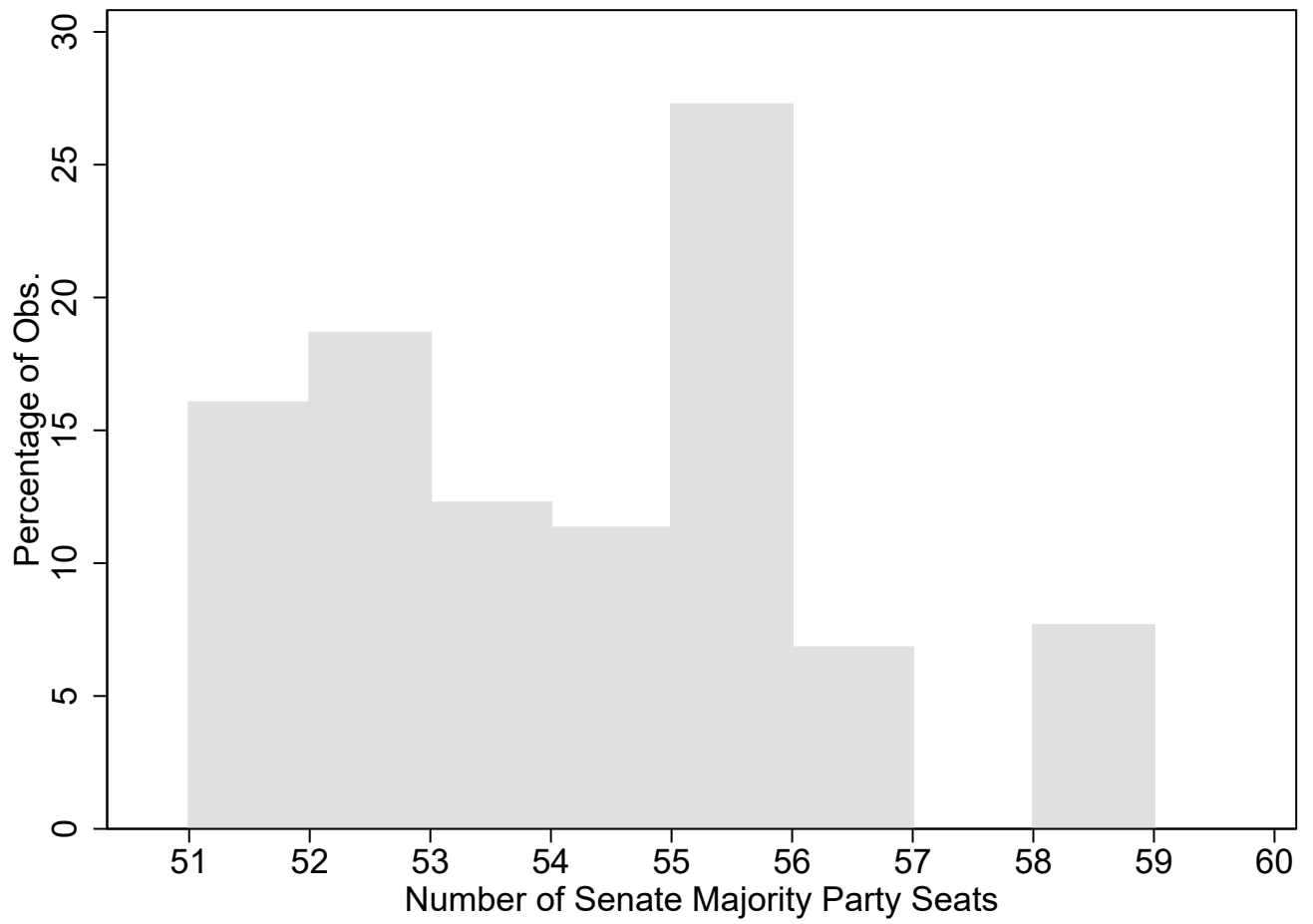
\*p<.05, #p<.1; Fractional probit with fixed effects for committee and robust standard errors. The dependent variable in model 1 is overall support on the vote to report the bill, in model 2 it is majority party support on the vote to report the bill, and in model 3 is minority party support on the vote to report the bill. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of bill sponsor. The sample is any bill, 104th-114th Congresses, which received a recorded roll call vote in the standing committee to report the bill.

Table A6: Senate Majority Party Seats and Minority Support on Committee Votes to Report—Sample Split by Divided and Unified Chambers

Independent Variables	Unified Chambers	Divided Chambers
	(1)	(2)
Chair or Ranking Mem. of Referral Committee	-0.14 (0.10)	0.07 (0.15)
Member of Referral Committee	-0.03 (0.12)	-0.09 (0.21)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-0.85* (0.31)	-0.63 (0.58)
Sponsor Ideological Extremity	0.09 (0.28)	0.22 (0.43)
Senate Majority Party Senators	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.11* (0.05)
Constant	4.03* (1.13)	6.88* (2.60)
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R-squared	0.10	0.13
AIC	828.37	344.33
N	656	298

\* $p < .05$ , # $p < .1$ ; Fractional probit with fixed effects for committee and robust standard errors. The dependent variable is minority party support. Model 1 shows the results for unified chambers while model 2 shows results for divided chambers only. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of bill sponsor. The sample is any bill, 104th-114th Congresses, which received a recorded roll call vote in the standing committee to report the bill.

Figure A1: Percentage of Observations Across Senate Majority Party Seats



*Note:* Percentages shown are for the results presented in model 3 in Table 3 and the marginal effects results in Figure 2.

## **Appendix E: Details of Exogenous Majority Party Changes**

Table A7: Details of Exogenous Majority Party Changes Used to Estimate Effect on House Minority Party Support

Party Switch Description	Date	Sample Time Period	Majority Party Senate Seats	No. of Votes in Sample	
				Pre-Treatment	Post-Treatment
Ben Nighthorse Campbell switches parties	3/3/95	Start of Congress though 10/1/95	54→53	15	35
Robert Packwood resigns amid sexual harassment claims	10/1/95	10/1/95 through end of Congress	53→52	55	35
Death of Paul Coverdell	7/18/00	Entire Congress	55→54	17	62
Arlen Specter switches parties	4/28/09	Start of Congress through 6/30/09	59→60	13	10
Total				100	142

The sub-sample which ends on 10/1/95 after the Nighthorse Campbell switch occurs because of Packwood's resignation; the sub-sample which ends on 6/30/09 for Specter's switch ends due the seating of Al Franken after an extended recount. The death of Kennedy in the 111th cannot be used because there is only one committee vote to report between the seating of Franken and death of Kennedy.

**Appendix F: Exogenous Senate Party Changes and Minority Support on Committee Votes to Report—Alternative Specifications**

Table A8: Fractional Probit: Exogenous Senate Party Changes and Minority Support on Committee Votes to Report

Independent Variables	DV=Overall Support	DV=Majority Support	DV=Minority Support
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Member of Referral Committee	-0.09 (0.08)	0.20 (0.20)	-0.30# (0.17)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-0.68* (0.22)	0.25 (0.42)	-1.68* (0.49)
Multiple Referral	0.12 (0.09)	-0.04 (0.23)	0.23 (0.21)
Ideological Extremity	-0.12 (0.29)	0.33 (0.57)	-0.51 (0.57)
Number of Senate Majority Party Members	-0.08 (0.05)	0.05 (0.17)	-0.21# (0.11)
Constant	5.28# (2.85)	-2.03 (9.11)	13.26* (5.94)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R-squared	0.03	0.15	0.11
AIC	325.86	163.43	339.48
N	241	241	241

\*p<.05, #p<.1; Fractional probit with robust standard errors and fixed effects for congress and committee. The dependent variable in model 1 is overall support on the vote to report the bill, in model 2 it is majority party support on the vote to report the bill, and in model 3 is minority party support on the vote to report the bill. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of bill sponsor. See Table A2 for additional details on votes included in the sample.

Table A9: Exogenous Senate Party Changes and Minority Support on Committee Votes to Report—Alternative Specifications

Independent Variables	DV=Minority Support	DV=Minority Support	DV=Minority Support
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Member of Referral Committee	-11.06 (6.09)	-11.06 (5.99)	-11.07 (8.15)
Sponsor Member of Majority	-47.24* (9.45)	-47.24* (18.45)	-49.57* (8.13)
Multiple Referral	7.56 (7.62)	7.56 (7.57)	7.72 (8.62)
Ideological Extremity	-18.64 (21.56)	-18.64 (19.60)	-14.91 (14.27)
Number of Senate Majority Party Members	-7.53# (4.08)	-7.53# (3.87)	-2.93* (1.30)
Constant	505.28* (217.14)	505.28* (207.19)	263.24* (65.96)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	No
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
AIC	2469.67	2473.67	2438.43
N	242	242	242

\* $p < .05$ , # $p < .1$ ; Model 1 is regression with robust standard errors and fixed effects for Congress and committee; model 2 is regression with regular standard errors and fixed effects for congress and committee; model 3 is clustered standard errors by committee and fixed effects for committee. The dependent variable in all models is minority party support on the vote to report the bill. Ideological extremity measured using absolute value of DW-NOMINATE score of bill sponsor. See Table A2 for additional details on votes included in the sample.