# Coding Protocol

Decision Making in the Federal Judicial Hierarchy

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### Introduction

The goal of this project is to develop and examine empirically a model of judicial decision making. More specifically, the purpose of this pilot study is to demonstrate the feasibility of a data collection effort which would measure and record the policy preferences of the judges responsible for all judicial decisions made by lower federal judges in cases formally decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. Such a database would, among other things, allow scholars to examine the extent to which ideological factors operate differently at different levels of the federal judicial hierarchy, and to do so while controlling for case—specific and other idiosyncratic factors.

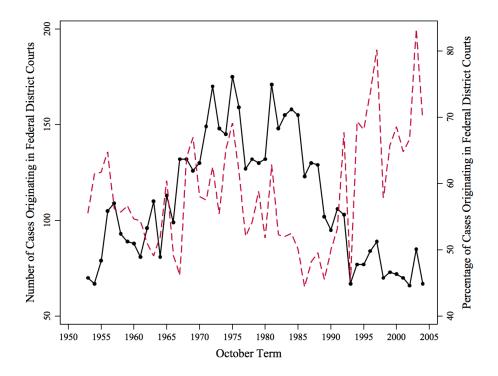
#### Goals

The purpose of the larger study is to evaluate the differential impact of judicial ideology on judicial decision making at various levels of the federal courts. To accomplish this, the study will measure the ideology and votes of all federal district court and federal court of appeals judges who cast votes in cases originating in the federal district courts that were eventually decided by the U.S. Supreme Court during OT1953-2005. As of July 2006, the total number of such cases (for OT1953-2005) was 5,739, or 56.9 percent of the 10,086 cases decided by the Court during that period; Figure 1 plots the annual numbers of such cases.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, the primary goal of the pilot study was to evaluate the feasibility of coding those cases on those variables, and to provide a preliminary estimate of the man-hours necessary to do so. The pilot also provided preliminary data on a sample of cases, on which preliminary analyses may be conducted.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>The specifics of case selection are detailed below.

Figure 1: Annual Number and Percentage of Supreme Court Cases Arising in the Federal District Courts, 1953-2004)



Note: The figure plots the number (solid line) and percentage (dashed line) of all cases (analu  $\leq 1$ ) decided by the U.S. Supreme Court that originated in the Federal District Courts.

### Data

The project begins with all cases decided in the U.S. Supreme Court which originated in a federal District court; these data were identified in and drawn from Harold Spaeth's Supreme Court Judicial Database (SCJD) (Spaeth 2006). The eventual goal will be to code all such cases from 1953-2005; for the project's pilot study, however, we will consider only those cases meeting our criteria that were decided during the October terms 1968, 1982, and 1990. More specifically, cases from the SCJD were selected for the pilot study if they met *all* of the following criteria:

- 1. They originated in a federal district court (as indicated by the SCJD's origin variable).
- 2. The case had analu  $\leq 1$  (that is, cases were chosen by docket number).
- 3. They were decided by the Supreme Court in OT1968, OT1982, or OT1990.

These criteria were chosen for a number of reasons:

- 1. Those terms also have available to the PI data on the pool of non-in forma pauperis certiorari petitions (see Caldeira, Wright, and Zorn 1999).
- 2. The terms chosen yield a number of cases (N = 605, or about ten percent of the total number of cases in the larger project) that is appropriate for the pilot.
- 3. The terms chosen provide a reasonable approximation of the relative prevalence of cases originating in the district courts across the years in the study.
- 4. The terms selected also provide a relatively accurate picture of the changes in Supreme Court ideology over the period of study. This is important, since a key element in theories of judicial oversight (e.g., Cameron et al. 2000; Vanberg 2005) is forward- (or, more accurately, upward-)looking behavior on the part of lower court judges.

# Coding

The coding protocol outlines the variables to be coded for each case in the data. The relevant descriptive fields are:

- 1. Variable Name: The alphanumeric variable name.
  - Description: A description of the variable.
  - Format: The coding format of the data contained in the variable.
  - Coding: A detailed description of the coding itself.
  - *Notes*: Any other relevant information about that variable.

Notes on naming conventions and abbreviations:

- In general, the prefix D denotes variables relevant to the federal district court judge who decided the case. In those rare instances where the initial decision was made by a three-judge district court, additional variables (designated with the prefix D2 and D3) will also be coded; but in the vast majority of cases, the D2 and D3 variables will be missing.
- Similarly, the prefix A# denotes the judges of the three-judge federal Court of Appeals panel who heard the case; A1 denotes the first judge, A2 the second, etc.
- The prefix E# indicates the judges of the en banc Court of Appeals that reheard the case following the three-judge appellate decision, if any; E1 denotes the first judge, E2 the second, etc., up to a maximum of E28.
- The "order" of the judges on a particular court is immaterial; that is, it does not matter which judge is designated (e.g.) A1, A2, or A3.

- "Natural" coding indicates that the field contains the information implied by the variable name/description in its natural form (e.g., Dname contains the name of the district court judge who initially decided the case).
- strXX denotes a string (alphanumeric) variable of length XX (e.g., str6 denotes a six-character string variable).
- float denotes a floating-point variable (that is, one that is more-or-less continuous).
- int denotes an integer-coded variable.
- binary denotes a dichotomous  $(\{0,1\})$  variable.

The data broadly consist of seven variables coded about the judge in question: the *name* of the judge in question, the identity of the *president* who appointed him or her, the judge's political party identification, the judge's home state, the judge's ideology score, the judge's vote in the case at issue, and the sort of opinion s/he wrote in the case. In addition, at each level, the database includes two variables related to the case: the case citation, and whether or not it was published.

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## Variables and Protocols

#### 1. Dcite

- Description: District Court case citation.
- Format: str24
- Coding: Natural.
- Notes: This variable records the citation of the district court decision in the Federal Reporter. If the case is unpublished, this field is left blank.

### 2. Dpublish

- Description: Publication status of the Federal District Court decision.
- *Format*: binary
- Coding:
  - $\cdot 0 = Unpublished$
  - $\cdot$  1 = Published
- Notes: This variable indicates whether or not the district court case was published in the Federal Reporter.

#### 3. Dname

• Description: Federal District Court judge's name.

Format: str80 Coding: Natural.

• Notes: This variable records the name of the federal district court judge that decided the case. As a general rule, record the name as <lastname>, <firstname> <middle initial>. (e.g., Presley, Elvis A.). When in doubt, use the name format used by the Federal Judges Biographical Database, available at (http://www.fjc.gov/public/home.nsf/hisj).

In the majority of cases in which the initial decision was by a single district court judge, this variable corresponds to him/her. In few those cases in which the initial decision was decided by a three-judge district court, this variable corresponds to D1name, per the conventions outlined above.

### 4. Dapptpres

• Description: Federal District Court judge's appointing president.

• Format: int

• Coding:

- $\cdot 1 = Wilson$
- $\cdot 2 = \text{Harding}$
- $\cdot$  3 = Coolidge
- $\cdot 4 = \text{Hoover}$
- $\cdot$  5 = FDR
- $\cdot$  6 = Truman
- $\cdot$  7 = Eisenhower
- $\cdot$  8 = Kennedy
- $\cdot 9 = Johnson$
- $\cdot$  10 = Nixon
- $\cdot$  11 = Ford
- $\cdot$  12 = Carter
- $\cdot$  13 = Reagan
- $\cdot 14 = \text{Bush} (41)$
- $\cdot$  15 = Clinton
- $\cdot 16 = Bush (43)$

• Notes: This variable indicates the identity of the president that appointed the federal district court judge that decided the case in question. In the majority of cases in which the initial decision was by a single district court judge, this variable corresponds to him/her. In few those cases in which the initial decision was decided by a three-judge district court, this variable corresponds to D1apptpres, per the conventions outlined above.

#### 5. DGOP

• Description: Federal District Court judge's political party identification.

• Format: binary

• Coding:

 $\cdot 0 = Democratic$ 

 $\cdot 1 = \text{Republican}$ 

• Notes: This variable indicates the political party identification of the federal district court judge that decided the case in question. In the majority of cases in which the initial decision was by a single district court judge, this variable corresponds to him/her. In few those cases in which the initial decision was decided by a three-judge district court, this variable corresponds to D1GOP, per the conventions outlined above.

#### 6. Dstate

• Description: Federal District Court judge's home state.

• Format: str2

• Coding: Natural (see below).

Notes: This variable indicates the home state of the federal district court judge
that decided the case in question. In the majority of cases in which the initial
decision was by a single district court judge, this variable corresponds to him/her.
In few those cases in which the initial decision was decided by a three-judge district court, this variable corresponds to D1state, per the conventions outlined
above.

The variable codes the two-letter postal code (e.g. AL, AK, AR, etc.) for the state from which the judge was appointed. For district court judges, this will (almost) invariably be the state of the district court to which they were appointed; one likely exception will be in the District Court for the District of Columbia.

#### 7. DGHP

• Description: Federal District Court judge's Giles/Hettinger/Peppers (GHP) score.

- Format: float
- Coding: Natural (see below).
- Notes: This variable indicates the Giles/Hettinger/Peppers (GHP) score of the federal district court judge that decided the case in question (cf. Giles et al. 2001, 2002). In the majority of cases in which the initial decision was by a single district court judge, this variable corresponds to him/her. In few those cases in which the initial decision was decided by a three-judge district court, this variable corresponds to D1GHP, per the conventions outlined above.

As noted in Epstein et al. (2006):

"(T)he state-of-the-art measure for the preferences of U.S. Court of Appeals judges (and, for that matter, federal District Court judges) too relies on the Common Space scores but exploits the norm of senatorial courtesy. If a judge is appointed from a state where the President and at least one home-state Senator are of the same party, the nominee is assigned the NOMINATE Common Space score of the home-state Senator (or the average of the home-state Senators if both members of the delegation are from the President's party). If neither home-state Senator is of the President's party, the nominee receives the NOMINATE Common Space score of the appointing President."

Accordingly, this variable is coded according to the following process:

Q: At the time of his or her appointment, did the state from which the judge was appointed have at least one senator who was of the appointing president's party?

(If **yes**): Were there one or two senators from that state of the same party as the president?

- (a) (If **one**): Assign that senator's NOMINATE Common Space score (cf. Poole 1998; 2005) to that judge.
- (b) (If **two**): Assign the average of the two home-state senators' NOMINATE Common Space scores to that judge.

(If **no**): Assign the appointing president's NOMINATE Common Space scores to that judge.

#### 8. Dvote

- Description: Federal District Court judge's vote in the case.
- Format: integer
- Coding:

- $\cdot 0 = Liberal$
- $\cdot$  1 = Conservative
- $\cdot$  8 = Mixed
- Notes: This variable indicates the ideological directionality of the vote cast by the federal district court judge in the case in question. In the majority of cases in which the initial decision was by a single district court judge, this variable corresponds to him/her. In few those cases in which the initial decision was decided by a three-judge district court, this variable corresponds to D1vote, per the conventions outlined above.

To the extent possible, this coding should follow the protocols used to measure the directionality of a decision (that is, the dir variable) in the SCJD (Spaeth 2006). Cases in which the directionality is mixed or indeterminate should be given a value of "8."

### 9. Dopinion

- Description: Federal District Court judge's opinion.
- Format: int
- Coding:
  - $\cdot$  0 = The district court judge in question wrote **no opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  1 = The district court judge in question wrote the **majority opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  2 = The district court judge in question wrote a **concurring opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  3 = The district court judge in question wrote a **dissenting opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  4 = The district court judge in question wrote an opinion **concurring in** part and dissenting in part in the district court decision.
- Notes: This variable indicates the type of opinion that the district court judge wrote in the decision made by the district court. In the majority of cases in which the initial decision was by a single district court judge, this variable will be coded as equal to one. In those few cases in which the initial decision was decided by a three-judge district court, this variable corresponds to D1opinion, per the conventions outlined above.

#### 10. D2name

• Description: Second federal District Court judge's name.

• Format: str80

• Coding: As in Dname.

• *Notes*: This variable records the name of the second federal district court judge that decided the case. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

### 11. D2apptpres

• Description: Second federal District Court judge's appointing president.

• Format: int

• *Coding*: As in Dapptpres.

• *Notes*: This variable indicates the identity of the president that appointed the second federal district court judge that decided the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

#### 12. D2G0P

• Description: Second federal District Court judge's political party identification.

• Format: binary

• *Coding*: As in DGOP.

• *Notes*: This variable indicates the political party identification of the second federal district court judge that decided the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

#### 13. D2state

• Description: Second federal District Court judge's home state.

• Format: str2

• *Coding*: As in Dstate.

• *Notes*: This variable indicates the home state of the second federal district court judge that decided the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three—judge district court.

#### 14. D2GHP

• Description: Second federal District Court judge's GHP score.

• Format: float

• Coding: As in DGHP.

• *Notes*: This variable indicates the Giles/Hettinger/Peppers (GHP) score of the second federal district court judge that decided the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

#### 15. D2vote

- Description: Second federal District Court judge's vote in the case.
- Format: integer
- Coding: As in Dvote.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the ideological directionality of the vote cast by the second federal district court judge in the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

### 16. D2opinion

- Description: Second federal District Court judge's opinion in the case.
- Format: int
- Coding:
  - $\cdot$  0 = The district court judge in question wrote **no opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  1 = The district court judge in question wrote the **majority opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  2 = The district court judge in question wrote a **concurring opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  3 = The district court judge in question wrote a **dissenting opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  4 = The district court judge in question wrote an opinion concurring in part and dissenting in part in the district court decision.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the type of opinion that the second district court judge wrote in the decision made by the district court. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

#### 17. D3name

- Description: Third federal District Court judge's name.
- Format: str80
- Coding: As in Dname.
- *Notes*: This variable records the name of the third federal district court judge that decided the case. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

### 18. D3apptpres

- Description: Third federal District Court judge's appointing president.
- Format: int
- Coding: As in Dapptpres.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the identity of the president that appointed the third federal district court judge that decided the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

#### 19. D3G0P

- Description: Third federal District Court judge's political party identification.
- Format: binary
- *Coding*: As in DGOP.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the political party identification of the third federal district court judge that decided the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

#### 20. D3state

- Description: Third federal District Court judge's home state.
- Format: str2
- *Coding*: As in Dstate.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the home state of the third federal district court judge that decided the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three—judge district court.

#### 21. D3GHP

- Description: Third federal District Court judge's GHP score.
- Format: float
- Coding: As in DGHP.
- Notes: This variable indicates the Giles/Hettinger/Peppers (GHP) score of the third federal district court judge that decided the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

#### 22. D3vote

- Description: Third federal District Court judge's vote in the case.
- Format: integer

- *Coding*: As in Dvote.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the ideological directionality of the vote cast by the third federal district court judge in the case in question. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

### 23. D3opinion

- Description: Third federal District Court judge's opinion in the case.
- Format: int
- Coding:
  - $\cdot$  0 = The district court judge in question wrote **no opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  1 = The district court judge in question wrote the **majority opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  2 = The district court judge in question wrote a **concurring opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  3 = The district court judge in question wrote a **dissenting opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  4 = The district court judge in question wrote an opinion **concurring in** part and dissenting in part in the district court decision.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the type of opinion that the third district court judge wrote in the decision made by the district court. It is only coded in cases initially decided by a three–judge district court.

#### 24. Acite

- Description: Three-Judge Court of Appeals case citation.
- Format: str24
- Coding: Natural.
- Notes: This variable records the citation of the decision by the three-judge federal court of appeals in the Federal Reporter. If the case is unpublished, this field is left blank.

#### 25. Apublish

- Description: Publication status of the Three-Judge Federal Court of Appeals decision.
- Format: binary
- Coding:

- $\cdot 0 = Unpublished$
- $\cdot 1 = Published$
- *Notes*: This variable indicates whether or not the decision of the three-judge court of appeals panel was published in the *Federal Reporter*.

#### 26. Alname

- Description: First federal Three-Judge Court of Appeals judge's name.
- Format: str80
- Coding: Natural.
- *Notes*: This variable records the name of the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in the three-judge panel. Coding is as in Dname.

### 27. Alapptpres

- Description: First federal Three-Judge Court of Appeals judge's appointing president.
- Format: int
- *Coding*: As in Dapptpres.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the identity of the president that appointed the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in question in the three-judge panel.

#### 28. A1GOP

- Description: First federal Three-Judge Court of Appeals judge's political party identification.
- Format: binary
- *Coding*: As in DGOP.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the political party identification of the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in question in the three-judge panel.

#### 29. Alstate

- Description: First federal Three-Judge Court of Appeals judge's home state.
- Format: str2
- *Coding*: As in Dstate.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the home state of the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in question in the three-judge panel.

#### 30. A1GHP

- Description: First federal Three-Judge Court of Appeals judge's GHP score.
- Format: float
- Coding: As in DGHP.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the Giles/Hettinger/Peppers (GHP) score of the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in question in the three-judge panel.

#### 31. Alvote

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's vote in the three-judge panel's decision.
- Format: integer
- *Coding*: As in Dvote.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the ideological directionality of the vote cast by the first federal court of appeals judge in the case in question in the three-judge panel.

### 32. Alopinion

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's opinion in the three-judge panel's decision.
- Format: int
- Coding:
  - $\cdot$  0 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote **no opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  1 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote the **majority opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  2 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote a **concurring opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  3 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote a **dissenting opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  4 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote an opinion **concurring in** part and dissenting in part in the district court decision.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the type of opinion that the first federal court of appeals judge wrote in the decision made by the three-judge appellate court.

#### 33. A2name – as A1name (second judge).

- 34. A2apptpres as A1apptpres (second judge).
- 35. A2GOP as A1GOP (second judge).
- 36. A2state as A1state (second judge).
- 37. A2GHP as A1GHP (second judge).
- 38. A2vote as A1vote (second judge).
- 39. A2opinion as A1opinion (second judge).
- 40. A3name as A1name (third judge).
- 41. A3apptpres as A1apptpres (third judge).
- 42. A3GOP as A1GOP (third judge).
- 43. A3state as A1state (third judge).
- 44. A3GHP as A1GHP (third judge).
- 45. A3vote as A1vote (third judge).
- 46. A3opinion as A1opinion (third judge).
- 47. Ecite
  - Description: En Banc Court of Appeals case citation.
  - Format: str24
  - Coding: Natural.
  - Notes: This variable records the citation of the decision by the en banc federal court of appeals in the Federal Reporter. If the case is unpublished, this field is left blank.

### 48. Epublish

- Description: Publication status of the en banc federal Court of Appeals decision.
- Format: binary
- Coding:
  - $\cdot 0 = Unpublished$
  - $\cdot 1 = Published$
- *Notes*: This variable indicates whether or not the decision of the en banc court of appeals panel was published in the *Federal Reporter*.

#### 49. Elname

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's name.
- Format: str80
- Coding: As in Dname.
- *Notes*: This variable records the name of the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case en banc. This variable is only coded for cases that were reheard *en banc*.

### 50. Elapptpres

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's appointing president.
- Format: int
- Coding: As in Dapptpres.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the identity of the president that appointed the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in question *en banc*. This variable is only coded for cases that were reheard *en banc*.

#### 51. E1GOP

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's political party identification.
- Format: binary
- *Coding*: As in DGOP.
- Notes: This variable indicates the political party identification of the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in question en banc. This variable is only coded for cases that were reheard en banc.

#### 52. Elstate

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's home state.
- Format: str2
- *Coding*: As in Dstate.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the home state of the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in question *en banc*. This variable is only coded for cases that were reheard *en banc*.

#### 53. E1GHP

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's GHP score.
- Format: float

- Coding: As in DGHP.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the Giles/Hettinger/Peppers (GHP) score of the first federal court of appeals judge that decided the case in question *en banc*. This variable is only coded for cases that were reheard *en banc*.

#### 54. Elvote

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's vote in the en banc decision.
- Format: integer
- *Coding*: As in Dvote.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the ideological directionality of the vote cast by the first federal court of appeals judge in the case in question *en banc*. This variable is only coded for cases that were reheard *en banc*.

### 55. Elopinion

- Description: First federal Court of Appeals judge's opinion in the en banc decision.
- Format: int
- Coding:
  - $\cdot$  0 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote **no opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  1 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote the **majority opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  2 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote a **concurring opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  3 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote a **dissenting opinion** in the district court decision.
  - $\cdot$  4 = The court of appeals judge in question wrote an opinion **concurring in** part and dissenting in part in the district court decision.
- *Notes*: This variable indicates the type of opinion that the first federal court of appeals judge wrote in the decision made by the en banc Court.
- 56. E2name as E1name (second judge).
- 57. E2apptpres as E1apptpres (second judge).
- 58. E2GOP as E1GOP (second judge).
- 59. E2state as E1state (second judge).
- 60. E2GHP as E1GHP (second judge).

- 61. E2vote as E1vote (second judge).
- 62. E2opinion as E1opinion (second judge).
- 63. E3name as E1name (third judge).
- 64. E3apptpres as E1apptpres (third judge).
- 65. E3GOP as E1GOP (third judge).
- 66. E3state as E1state (third judge).
- 67. E3GHP as E1GHP (third judge).
- 68. E3vote as E1vote (third judge).
- 69. E3opinion as E3opinion (third judge).
- 70. E4name as E1name (fourth judge).
- 71. E4apptpres as E1apptpres (fourth judge).
- 72. E4GOP as E1GOP (fourth judge).
- 73. E4state as E1state (fourth judge).
- 74. E4GHP as E1GHP (fourth judge).
- 75. E4vote as E1vote (fourth judge).
- 76. E4opinion as E1opinion (fourth judge).
- 77. E5name as E1name (fifth judge).
- 78. E5apptpres as E1apptpres (fifth judge).
- 79. E5GOP as E1GOP (fifth judge).
- 80. E5state as E1state (fifth judge).
- 81. E5GHP as E1GHP (fifth judge).
- 82. E5vote as E1vote (fifth judge).
- 83. E5opinion as E1opinion (fifth judge).

227. E28name – as E1name (twenty-eighth judge).

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- 228. E28apptpres as E1apptpres (twenty-eighth judge).
- 229. E28GOP as E1GOP (twenty-eighth judge).
- 230. E28state as E1state (twenty-eighth judge).
- 231. E28GHP as E1GHP (twenty-eighth judge).
- 232. E28vote as E1vote (twenty-eighth judge).
- 233. E28opinion as E1opinion (twenty-eighth judge).