

# Strategic Timing, Position-Taking, and Impeachment in the House of Representatives

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We examine the timing of members' position-taking in the House of Representatives' decision to impeach President Clinton. Based on our understanding of the goals of members and leaders, we expect members whose constituencies, interest group influences, and partisanship are in alignment to make their positions known quickly, and those with conflicting or ambiguous signals to delay. We further expect members' electoral circumstances within their own party—the potential for a primary challenge—to condition the impact of interest-group connections on that timing. Our findings indicate that, while the influence of cross-pressure on timing was universal, Republicans who faced primaries in 1998 were more sensitive to the concerns of their political "base," and less susceptible to cross-pressure, than were those unopposed within their own party. We also show that, over and above the effects of ideology and partisanship, Republican members who delayed their announcements were more likely to split their votes between yeas and nays than those who took early positions.

**M**ore people watched the impeachment votes in the U.S. House on December 19th, 1998, than any other roll-calls in our history. From the beginning of the inquiry, partisanship had reigned; and passage on December 11th of four articles of impeachment in the Judiciary Committee, and their subsequent approval of two articles by the full House occurred on nearly unbroken party lines. Nevertheless, until the day of the votes, there was significant uncertainty about the outcome, and unprecedented public attention focused on undecided members' announcements of their positions.

Consistent with this uncertainty, organized interests engaged in high-profile efforts to sway legislators' votes in the two weeks prior to the floor vote. Some participants accused leaders, especially Republicans, of putting great pressure on members, threatening wavering representatives with primary challenges, reduced support from the party, and less influence in the House. In this highly partisan and politically-charged environment, the *timing* of members' announcements often was as problematic, if not more so, than the *direction* of their positions. We therefore ask: Why did some members announce positions earlier than others?

We begin with a brief overview of the events leading up to the House impeachment votes, and go on to theorize about how the confluence of organized pressure, party leadership, and electoral considerations shapes the timing of position-taking. We outline two general sets of expectations. First, we anticipate that members whose constituency, inter-

est-group connections, and partisanship are in alignment will make their positions known quickly; those with conflicting or ambiguous pressures will delay. Second, we consider the centrality of members' electoral circumstances in their decisions on timing, hypothesizing that representatives will vary in their receptivity to interest-group influences as a function of those circumstances. Cross-pressure influenced the timing of position-taking; representatives, particularly Republicans, timed their announcements with an eye toward the potential for primary challenges in 2000. In addition, over and above the effects of ideology, Republican members who delayed their announcements were more likely to split their impeachment votes between yeas and nays than those who took early positions.

The battle over impeachment in the House offers a number of analytic opportunities difficult or impossible to obtain in other contexts. In particular, the compressed time-frame, the close attention paid to members' positions, the importance of House leaders' decisions on how to frame the question, the strong pressure from organized interests before and during the battle, the considerable potential for future electoral consequences, and the high and relatively constant salience of the issue across districts provide a "unique opportunity for measurement of theoretically relevant phenomena" (Krehbiel 1996: 253)—here, the timing of representatives' position-taking. These qualities make President Clinton's impeachment in the House a particularly informative case for investigation.

## THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

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On October 8, 1998, the House voted 258-176 to allow the Judiciary Committee to conduct an inquiry into whether President Clinton's conduct in the Lewinsky matter justified impeachment, with 31 Democrats joining a unanimous Republican caucus. One month later, Democrats unexpectedly gained five House seats in the midterm election, an

event quickly interpreted as public backlash against the threatened impeachment. Some thought the Republican leadership, seeing the electoral damage and plummeting polls, would pull back and support censure of the President, but Republicans on the Judiciary Committee continued their inquiry and held hearings.

On December 3, Majority Whip DeLay ". . . discovered that there may be enough Republican votes to impeach President Clinton on perjury charges" (VanderHei and Keller 1998). He identified only five Republican members "dead set against" impeachment, four or five leaning against impeachment, and another ten or twenty potentially against it. Members of the Republican whip team said that "a straight up-or-down vote must take place in the next few weeks and that censure is not an option" (VanderHei and Keller 1998).

During the week of December 7, members of the Committee made statements and announced positions on the four articles, largely along partisan lines. On December 11, the Committee voted out four articles of impeachment: perjury before the grand jury, perjury in Paula Jones' lawsuit, obstruction of justice, and abuse of power. Over the weekend of December 12-13, many undecided Republicans announced in favor of impeachment. During the ensuing week, as members announced positions consistent with the dominant party positions, many spoke of "momentum" for impeachment (e.g., Keller 1998), and on December 19 the House approved two of the four articles on nearly-pure party-line votes.

From mid-November onward, the White House and House leaders attempted to mobilize support; and, as the Committee concluded, interest groups moved into action. Participants targeted two groups of legislators: (1) the 30 to 40 Republicans who represented districts in which Clinton ran ahead of Dole in 1996, many of whom had relatively moderate voting records, and (2) the 31 Democrats who had voted for the impeachment inquiry. By the end of November, only a handful of the latter set seemed like potential votes for impeachment and most of the attention focused on the "moderate" Republicans.

On December 9, 70 conservative activists, including representatives from the Christian Coalition (Stone 1998), met with DeLay's representative for a briefing on which members to target and how to approach them. DeLay consistently denied pressuring members, but he did not need to do so; conservative activists carried the message that any moderate Republican could expect the flow of campaign contributions to dry up and a primary challenge to emerge if he or she crossed party lines on impeachment (Keller and Walliston 1998). DeLay's associates also told some members that a "vote to impeach the President is the perfect inoculation for moderate Republicans under assault from conservatives in their CDs. If, as all assume, Clinton will survive in the Senate, moderates who vote to impeach won't have to worry about a backlash" (*The Hotline* 1998).

Groups from the left also mobilized. People for the American Way organized phone banks and e-mails and

purchased radio ads in four cities with 11 undecided Republicans (Zitner 1998). Lobbyists from the AFL-CIO called moderate Republicans and Democrats, arguing that a drawn-out impeachment would bog down matters important to working people; and women's groups organized a rally against impeachment, held press conferences, and encouraged members to contact members of the House. Thus, House leaders, especially Republicans, sought to hold their caucuses together, in some cases using threats of primary challenges to bring members into line. Organized interests not only mobilized the citizenry but also were critical to these electoral signals, in some cases conveying them to rank-and-file members of Congress. Overall, members of the House faced strong pressure from a range of sources—constituents, party leaders, and mobilized interests on both extremes—in a highly electorally charged atmosphere.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *The Politics of Timing and Position-Taking*

Previous work has shown that the timing of position-taking is calculated and strategic (e.g., Box-Steffensmeier et al. 1997; Glazer et al. 1995). Timing is often critical in politics (e.g., Fenno 1986)—in some situations, it makes sense to commit to a position quickly; in others, watching and waiting is a better posture. Delay in position-taking can reflect a legislator's uncertainty about the salience of the issue or the electoral or policy consequences of the outcome: he or she might want to gather information about how constituents will react, or how the vote might affect other matters of public policy (Gomez 1999). Thus, for example, waiting permitted Republicans to observe the relative intensity of responses from conservatives, moderates, and Democrats in their congressional district, and determine which threats to regard as credible.

Delay can also demonstrate to constituents that a representative is seriously weighing conflicting viewpoints. Legislators who commit later can adopt a pose of "listening carefully" to constituents, some of whom they must disappoint; during the impeachment battle, many moderate Republicans took this approach. Hesitation also buys time for a representative to work through the contending interests and frame an explanation to his or her primary and general election constituencies. Those who preferred censure to impeachment, both Democrats and Republicans, could hold out the hope that the House would permit a vote on censure, making it unnecessary to vote on impeachment. The longer a member waited, but then remained in the fold, the more difficult and costly it made the decision appear, and the more credit it presumably earned with the leadership. In contrast, speed in position-taking can indicate certainty about the electoral and policy consequences of the vote. Conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats in harmony with their districts could take a position with little doubt about its electoral consequences. By moving quickly to stake out a position, a representative could convey his or

her resoluteness on the issue, signal to other members,<sup>1</sup> or help to mobilize support for his or her position among organized interests.

We expect the timing of position-taking to vary as a function of cross-pressure: consistent and inconsistent signals from organized and unorganized constituents, party leaders, and rank-and-file and party activists. We expect representatives who face a clear set of signals to announce their positions earlier; those with ambiguous or mixed signals, later (e.g., Bailey and Brady 1998; Fiorina 1974; Matthews and Stimson 1975).

### *Goals and Motivations*

We animate our model from a simple assumption about the motivations of members and leaders of the House: re-election is the dominant goal (Mayhew 1974). Re-election requires financial and other support from core activists and national, state, and local parties; but it also requires members to extend their constituency in the general election (e.g., Jacobson 1996: 20). For defeated or retiring members, motivations are not so clear. Some sought higher office in 1998, or will seek it in the future, and thus required the continued good will of both core partisans and the general electorate. Defeat or retirement, together with lack of ambition, might have freed some from the pressures of organized and unorganized constituents.

Party leaders in the House engage in "party maintenance" (e.g., Rohde 1991), protecting the electoral security of caucus members, which in turn requires support from financial and ideological supporters as well as structuring the agenda to keep the party together. Impeachment posed potentially high electoral stakes; and, with our emphasis on the electoral calculations of leaders and rank-and-file, we expect party leaders on both sides to take a keen interest in structuring the situation to the maximum advantage of their respective caucuses. To maintain support among rank-and-file members and stave off intra-party challenges in the House, party leaders generally will seek to accommodate the views of the majority within their caucuses (Aldrich 1995: 211; Cox and McCubbins 1993).

It is likely that a strong majority of Republicans favored impeachment over censure, and nearly all Democrats censure over impeachment. Thus, impeachment for the Republicans and censure for the Democrats solidified the positions of the leaders within the caucuses, particularly among the more intense. Removing the option of censure was critical

for Republican leaders. DeLay probably calculated that, without censure, his party would stay together; and, together, moderate Republicans would avoid threats of future primary challenges from the right. Republican leaders therefore sought to make impeachment a safe haven: a vote for impeachment would inoculate them from conservative challenge, and, since Clinton would survive the Senate, no backlash would occur.

Moderate Republicans sought to deter challengers in the next primary by pleasing conservatives, especially the religious Right, the likeliest source of a challenge, and to keep their general-election constituency intact by satisfying Democrats, moderates, and often organized labor (see, e.g., Burden 2000). These competing goals spelled cross-pressure. Censure would have permitted moderate Republicans to resolve this cross-pressure by punishing Clinton but voting to keep him in office. Impeachment forced moderate Republicans to choose between core constituents in primaries and general elections.

Conservative or moderate Democrats faced similar cross-pressure: deterring a primary challenge from the left by pleasing liberals, versus keeping the general election constituency together by satisfying Republicans, moderates, and social conservatives. Thus, many conservative and moderate Democrats favored censure as a way of reconciling competing demands. For most swing Democrats, however, the problem was not as severe as for swing Republicans, in large part because the preferences of their party and their general election constituency were in accord. Although a few conservative Democrats generally came from districts in which Clinton fared poorly in 1996, moderate Democrats typically represented districts in which he had done well.

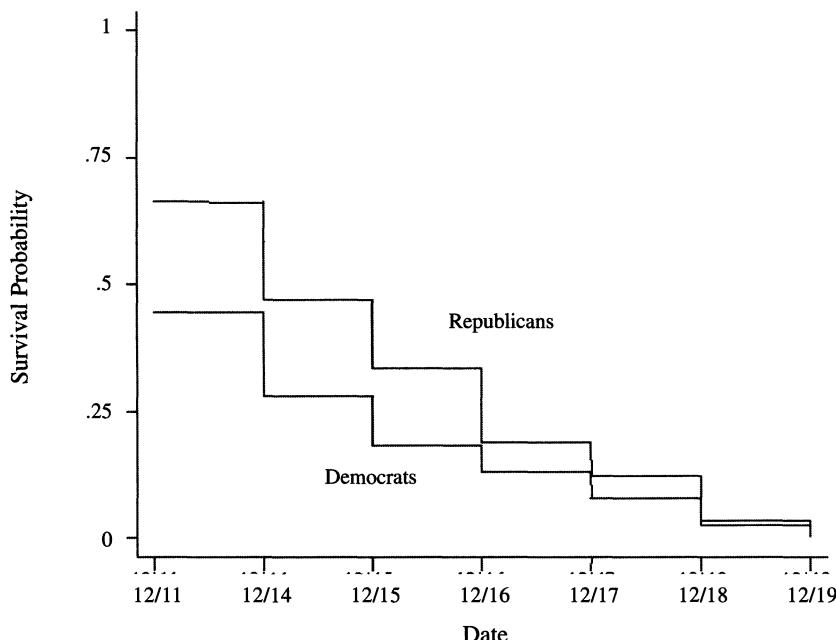
Groups on the right pressured Republican leaders to meet impeachment head on and, we believe, contributed to a calculation that the threat from the right in primaries was more serious than the potential for difficulties in general elections in 2000. For more than a year, right-wing organizations worked at the grass-roots for impeachment. "This is probably the most important thing we have done," proclaimed Paul Weyrich of the Free Congress Foundation (Tyson 1998). Conservatives included the Christian Coalition, the Family Research Council, and Concerned Women for America. From the left, the AFL-CIO, People for the American Way, and women's groups pushed in the opposite direction, targeting moderate Republicans, many of whom had received money and votes from their memberships.

### DATA AND SPECIFICATION

To examine the timing of members' position-taking on impeachment, we collected data on the day on which each representative announced his or her position on impeachment. Our data came from the Associated Press, which conducted 27 head counts from December 11 through 18. The AP began calling members' offices after the vote in committee and asked how the representative intended to vote. On the weekend of December 12–13, the AP did not conduct polls;

<sup>1</sup> On issues of longer duration and differential salience across districts, other members may constitute important variables or cues in the calculus of members. Kingdon (1989: 247), for example, notes that "If none of the goals is important enough to the congressman in a given decision to be relevant, he proceeds to follow trusted colleagues within the House." On impeachment, however, decisions occurred over a short period of time and the glare of publicity made salience both relatively constant and high across districts. Thus, we do not believe that inter-member cue-giving played an important role in the timing of position-taking here.

≡ FIGURE 1  
SURVIVAL PROBABILITIES: HOUSE POSITION TAKING ON IMPEACHMENT, BY POLITICAL PARTY



Note: Figure plots the cumulative probability of survival (i.e., the probability of *not* taking a position on impeachment) by political party. See text for details.

but, toward the end of the week, it posted polls many times each day, usually with only marginal changes. The AP did not make calls at equal intervals of time and, during the first few days, it conducted only a single poll each day, so we have taken as our dependent variable whether on each day a particular legislator had by the end of the day declared a position. This variable ranges from 1 (for members who declared a position on December 11, the day on which the Committee voted out the four articles of impeachment) through 7 (December 19, the day on which the full House voted).<sup>2</sup>

The “survival rate” (i.e., the estimated probability a member would not have taken a position by a particular date) for the timing of members’ positions, by party, appears in Figure 1. Republicans generally announced their positions later than did Democrats: over half of the Democrats indicated a position on the day the Committee reported the four articles; only a third of Republicans took comparably early positions; and, for every day after the first, the percentage of Republicans taking a position is greater than for Democrats. Moreover, a log-rank test (Hosmer and Lemeshow 1999: 60-61) allows us to reject the hypothesis

that the survival functions for the two parties are equal ( $\chi^2(1) = 12.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

We operationalize four categories of variables to account for the timing of position-taking—constituency and electoral forces, institutional effects, interest-group influences, and members’ personal preferences—and discuss the mediating effects of primary contests on members’ responsiveness to interest groups.

#### Clinton’s Vote in 1996

Presidential standing in the public sometimes plays a role in the success of his program or specific measures in Congress (e.g., Rivers and Rose 1985; but see Bond and Fleisher 1990). Central to the discussion of impeachment was Clinton’s electoral success and the public’s high regard for his performance. Thus, the public’s opinion of Clinton may well have influenced members’ behavior. To tap the effect of constituents’ views of Clinton on members’ decisions, we include in our model a variable measuring Clinton’s percentage of the total presidential vote in each member’s district in the 1996 election. We expect Clinton’s vote in the district to operate differentially on timing as a function of members’ party. As Clinton’s margin increases, Democrats should be more secure in their (anti-impeachment) position and come to an announcement more readily. For Republicans, Clinton’s success is a source of ambivalence; as Clinton’s margin increases, Republicans should be less secure in their (pro-impeachment) position and so make their announcements more slowly.

<sup>2</sup> Nearly all of the members moved from undecided or no position to a position in favor of or against impeachment. Two Republican members, Riggs of California and Souder of Indiana, moved from opposition, to undecided, to favoring impeachment. To simplify our analysis, we code a member as having taken a position when he or she announces a final position; until a representative reached his or her final resting place, we treated him or her as undecided. In practical terms, this makes little difference, since only two members switched.

### *Primary Challenge in 1998*

Surviving a primary challenge is often a prerequisite to re-election to the House. Even weak challenges represent a distraction, and in some cases primaries are a real electoral threat (Kenney and Rice 1987). Moreover, the mere presence of a challenge indicates some level of intraparty dissatisfaction. Consequently, members who have faced a primary challenge *in the past* will be more sensitive than others to the possibility of a *future* challenge from within their party, and will be particularly sensitive to taking the "right position" on impeachment because of their concern about the 2000 elections. We posit that representatives who faced a primary challenge in 1998 will take positions on impeachment more readily, where the partisan cue was clear and intense. We include a variable coded 0 for members who faced no such challenge in 1998, and 1 for those who did. Over the 1998 electoral cycle, 52 Republicans and 53 Democrats faced a primary challenger. We revisit the mediating effects of primary challenges below.

### *Lame Duck Status*

Nearly 10 percent (40) of the members of the 105th House were "lame ducks"—of this subset, 6 lost in the November election, 1 lost a primary, and the remainder retired. Some of the latter had ambition for higher office, and 13 sought or won seats in the Senate or other state-wide office.<sup>3</sup> Few lame ducks will face the electorate in their congressional districts in 2000 and therefore lack the same electoral incentives as representatives who went on to serve in the 106th House. If our claims about the nature of timing are correct, representatives free of electoral discipline have no reason to engage in strategic position-taking prior to the vote. The implications for their behavior, however, are unclear. On the one hand, independence from electoral sanction permits a member the luxury of waiting for others to commit. We therefore might expect representatives, absent electoral pressure, to take longer to announce positions than those who will face the district's electorate again. On the other hand, such members also lack incentives to delay announcement of their positions; lame duck status potentially frees members to announce their positions immediately, without considering electoral consequences. Without specifying a directional hypothesis, we include a variable indicating whether a member was returning to Congress for the 106th House (1 = lame duck; 0 = member will serve in the 106th Congress).

### *Committee Membership*

Members of the Judiciary Committee spent weeks on the Starr Report and therefore had ample opportunity to reach

a conclusion; and, of course, the rank-and-file in the House expect members of committees to signal them about the electoral and policy consequences of measures bound for the floor. Accordingly, we expect members of the Committee to have taken a position earlier than did others. We code a variable 1 if a representative sat on the Committee in the 105th Congress, and 0 if not.<sup>4</sup>

### *Party Leadership*

If an issue has become partisan, party leaders should, on average, adopt public positions earlier than others. Yet, if we conceive leadership to include members of the whip organizations, which may be ideologically heterogeneous to reach all segments of the party, leaders actually may take longer. Republican leaders, as it turns out, are more ideologically diverse than Democratic leaders; a dummy for leadership has a larger impact on D-NOMINATE scores (Poole and Rosenthal 1997) among Democratic than among Republican leaders.<sup>5</sup> Thus, we expect status as a party leader to have a somewhat different effect on Democrats and Republicans, with Democratic leaders staking out positions more quickly than Republican leaders. We code a variable 1 if a member was part of the House leadership, Democratic or Republican, and 0 if not.<sup>6</sup>

### *Organized Interests*

A representative's connection to organized interests in his or her district clearly will affect the decision to take a position (e.g., Kingdon 1989: ch. 5; Wright 1990). On this issue, labor on the left and socially conservative lobbies on the right figured most prominently in the amount of organized pressure and in electoral stakes for members. We therefore take as our measure of connection to organized constituents voting scores from two important and active groups on this issue, the Christian Coalition and the

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<sup>4</sup> Whether committee members in the House in general are composed of preference outliers is, of course, a matter of some dispute (see Krehbiel 1990; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Groseclose 1994). For the 105th Congress, members of the House Judiciary Committee clearly are preference outliers vis-à-vis the House floor. In difference of means tests, the D-NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal 1997) scores of Democrats and Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee are significantly different from colleagues in their respective party caucuses. We nonetheless expect an independent effect for committee membership, over and above those members' general predisposition for or against impeachment.

<sup>5</sup> For Democrats, a difference of means test between leaders and rank and file generates a *t*-score of 2.4; for Republicans, *t* = 1.95.

<sup>6</sup> For our purposes, we code as "leaders" the following individuals: for Republicans, Speaker of the House, Majority Leader, Majority Whip, Chief Deputy Majority Whip, and the Deputy Whips; for Democrats, Minority Leader, Minority Whip, the Chief Deputy Whips, and Deputy Whips. We thus omit regional Deputy Whips, Assistant Whips, and various party operatives (e.g., the chairs of the campaign committees) from our definition. Using more expansive definitions of leaders, however, has no substantive impact on our findings.

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<sup>3</sup> Theoretically we might expect those who retired or lost to behave differently from those seeking higher office; in practice, however, the small numbers of representatives in each of these categories precludes such an analysis.

AFL-CIO.<sup>7</sup> Voting scores indicate the extent to which a representative has agreed with an interest group on a set of issues important to the organization over the course of a session, congress, or career. In practice, such scores congeal many forces, including the legislator's own preferences, unorganized opinion in the district, and responsiveness to pressure from organized constituents. Nevertheless, we believe these scores are a good proxy for the degree to which a member is open to these groups' messages, and, absent superior measures, can serve as indicators of members' affiliation with, and receptivity to, those interests.

Because we consider Democrats and Republicans separately, we expect a monotonic relationship between timing and interest-group scores. In both cases, the notion of cross-pressure is critical: high interest group scores inconsistent with the party's favored position ought to cause members to delay announcing a position. Thus, for Democrats, we hypothesize a positive relationship between the timing of position-taking and a member's Christian Coalition score and a negative relationship between timing and their AFL-CIO score. Conversely, for Republicans, we expect a monotonic, negative relationship between the timing of position-taking and the Christian Coalition score, and a positive relationship between timing and the score from the AFL-CIO.

Additionally, the presence of a primary challenge should mediate the relationship between the timing of position-taking and scores on the Christian Coalition and AFL-CIO indices. The threat of a primary challenge undergirded many of the lobbying efforts, with organized interests often acting as vehicles for those messages. Jacobson's (1996) statement is particularly apt here: representatives who are electorally vulnerable within their own party will be particularly concerned with mollifying their core constituencies; those who lack such in-party pressure will focus more on the general-election constituency. Thus, members who were electorally vulnerable within their own parties should have been more responsive to interests advocating their party's preferred position on impeachment; and that responsiveness, in turn, should have been reflected in those members' timing decisions.

The effect of higher Christian Coalition scores in prompting more rapid Republican announcements ought to have operated with particular force for members who faced a

primary challenge in 1998, as those members sought to prevent a future challenge from the Right. Conversely, for Republicans, the cross-pressure of higher AFL-CIO scores ought to have delayed such members' announcements. The mediating presence of a primary challenge, however, should largely nullify the impact of organized labor, since such members, concerned with their core constituency, will be unlikely to respond to labor's entreaties. We anticipate a similar dynamic for Democratic members, albeit in the opposite direction. For Democrats, higher AFL-CIO scores should correspond to more rapid position-taking; the presence of a recent primary challenge should exacerbate this effect, such that increases in AFL-CIO responsiveness quickened the pace. Likewise, the cross-pressure of higher Christian Coalition scores, expected for members who are electorally safe within their own party, should all but disappear for those members in more competitive Democratic districts.

#### *Preferences on Impeachment*

Members also varied in their predisposition to vote for impeachment. This predisposition was itself a function of partisanship, personal preferences, opinion in the district, and organized pressure. *Ceteris paribus*, those on the extremes in predisposition toward impeachment should proceed quickly to a public position. To test this proposition, we need to create a general measure of a member's likely position on impeachment. We consider the predicted probabilities generated by a probit equation of whether a member voted for any article of impeachment (1) or not (0) on the member's D-NOMINATE score (Poole and Rosenthal 1997) and a dummy variable coded 0 for Democrats and 1 for Republicans. The results are:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Pr(Vote)} = & [-1.274 + 6.146 \times \text{D-NOMINATE} + 0.250 \\ & (0.296) (1.366) (0.691) \\ & \times \text{PARTY} + u] \end{aligned}$$

where standard errors appear in parentheses. This model has a pseudo- $R^2$  of 0.93 and correctly predicts 429 of the 435 votes on impeachment (Poole 1998). For the entire House, we expect members who are either very likely or very unlikely to vote for impeachment to make those positions known earlier, and those who are more moderate to take longer to do so. We include the predicted probabilities, along with their quadratic term, in the timing model.

#### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Our dependent variable is an ordinal indicator of the date (1 to 7) on which each member announced a position, so we use ordered probit.<sup>8</sup> As we note above, the intensely

<sup>7</sup> Organizational membership in the district also might indicate the connection between members of Congress and interests in their district. Unfortunately, although union membership is available for congressional districts, membership in the Christian Coalition, or other conservative organizations, is not. We think our approach is superior because the voting scores go more directly to the question of whether each member of Congress and the interest group in question have been on the same wavelength in the past.

For the Christian Coalition, we could find scores for only the 1998 session of the 105th Congress. For the AFL-CIO, we could obtain scores for the 1997 but not the 1998 session of the 105th. A number of the scores for the 1997 session were out of character for members, and we decided to use lifetime scores as a better indication of connection to organized labor.

<sup>8</sup> One could argue that, since the quantity of interest is a duration, some form of survival model would be appropriate (e.g., Lancaster 1990). We opt for ordered probit due to the discrete, ordinal nature of the

partisan nature of the impeachment vote makes it highly likely that Republicans and Democrats responded differently to the various stimuli in their timing decisions. Consequently, we consider separate statistical analyses for Democrats and Republicans. Particularly among Republicans, impeachment's partisan character resulted in threats to House members, from both constituents and other representatives, within their own party. Consequently, members viewed their electoral vulnerability on impeachment through a partisan lens, and this view, in turn, shaped their behavior. Our separate consideration of Democrats and Republicans permits us to examine the hypothesis that intraparty electoral vulnerability conditioned the responsiveness of members to pressure by organized interests. We assess this hypothesis by interacting primary challenge with the variables measuring interest-group pressure.<sup>9</sup>

Results of our analysis are presented in Table 1. For Democrats, Clinton's performance in the district in 1996 dominates the timing of position-taking: the stronger Clinton's performance in a Democrat's district, the earlier that member announced. The effect of Judiciary Committee membership is also important to Democrats' timing, but none of the other variables exert any meaningful effect on the timing of their positions. In particular, Democrats' timing decisions do not seem to be directly affected by primary challenges; nor do either Christian Coalition or AFL-CIO scores affect Democratic timing, either directly or mediated through primary challenges.

The sole other important influence on Democrat's timing of their announcements is each member's predisposition on the issue of impeachment. The predicted probability of voting in favor of impeachment has the expected, quadratic effect on members' timing decisions. Democrats at the "extremes" of this scale, both conservatives and liberals, took positions earlier, while those in the "middle" hesitated before announcing their vote. Taking the first derivative, we see that Democrats with probabilities of a pro-impeachment vote of around 0.35 are expected to announce the latest. Only four Democratic members fell above this threshold, but this value is very near the median probability of voting for impeachment of the entire House. Importantly, the null results for other variables in this equation are not a function of co-linearity with our measure of predispositions; omitting this pair of variables leaves all of the other results in place.

For Republicans, the estimates in column two of Table 1 reveal the importance of group-connections, electoral

vulnerability, and members' predispositions. Unlike Democrats, Republicans were not substantially affected by Clinton's success in their district. Republicans on the Judiciary Committee also announced earlier than non-members; their probability of taking a position on the first day, for example, is 0.13 greater than non-members. In addition, Republican leaders as a group took positions significantly later than rank-and-file members. Leadership increases the probability of not announcing until the day of the vote by 0.11 relative to that of non-leaders; this accords with our earlier discussion about the heterogeneity of the House GOP leadership.

Among Republicans, both Christian Coalition and AFL-CIO scores interact with primary challenges to influence the timing decision. For Republican members who faced no primary challenge, Christian Coalition and AFL-CIO scores work, as expected, at cross-purposes: such members take positions earlier as their Christian Coalition score increases and defer announcement of their position as their AFL-CIO score rises. These findings clearly reflect the cross-pressure moderate Republican members faced.

For Republicans who faced a primary challenge, the picture is somewhat different: an increase in their Christian Coalition score prompted them to take earlier positions to a greater degree than for members not so challenged. With respect to AFL-CIO scores, however, the effect for such vulnerable members is the opposite: primary-challenged Republicans take positions earlier as their AFL-CIO score increases. For these members, concern for their intra-party electoral vulnerability trumps cross-pressure: economically moderate Republicans who faced primary challenges during 1998 took early positions on impeachment.

If members typically face primary challenges from the wing of the party they do not occupy, these findings make a good deal of sense. Consider a moderate Republican member, whose AFL-CIO score may be relatively high and whose Christian Coalition score is comparatively low, and who fended off a challenge from the right in the 1998 primary. Such a member, wary of the potentially negative effects of appearing "weak" on Clinton, has a strong incentive to take a position early. Conversely, a more conservative member, having put down a (presumably moderate) primary challenge, has fewer such incentives than the moderate, since his or her position vis-à-vis impeachment is likely already to be both widely known and highly credible.

These effects are illustrated graphically in Figures 2 and 3, which plot the predicted probabilities of Republican members announcing their positions on specific dates based on the estimates in column three of Table 1. The vertical axis denotes the probability of a particular date of decision, while the horizontal axis indicates the member's voting score. We hold all other variables at mean levels for continuous variables, or at medians for discrete ones. For clarity, we illustrate probabilities for two dates: December 11th, the earliest date on which members are recorded as announcing positions, and December 19th, the date of the floor votes. Additionally, dotted lines are predictions for members who faced a primary challenge in 1998; smooth lines, those

dependent variable, but note that no substantive conclusions change if the results are estimated using a Weibull model. For an alternative justification of ordered probit in the context of duration models, see Han and Hausman (1990).

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, one might expect the influence of Clinton's performance in the district also to vary according to a member's electoral vulnerability. In fact, in auxiliary analyses we find no such interaction in either of the two models here; accordingly, we include only the interactions for the interest group variables in Table 1.

≡ TABLE 1  
DETERMINANTS OF HOUSE TIMING OF IMPEACHMENT POSITIONS

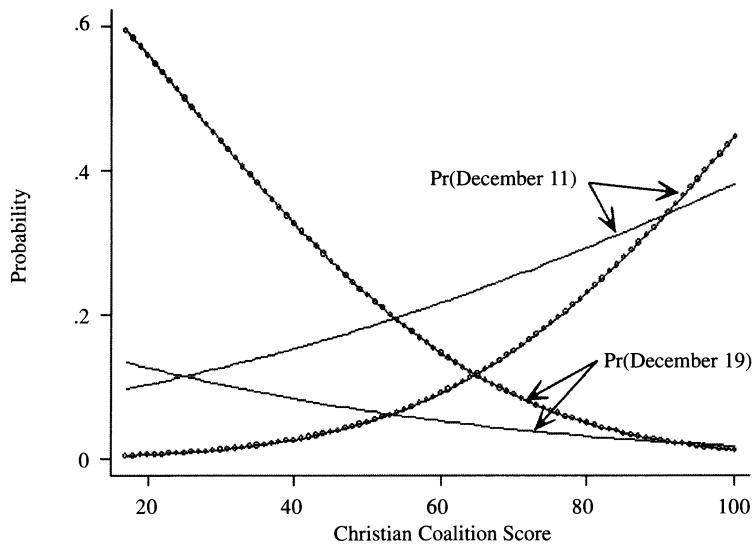
Variable	Hypothesized Influence†	Model Estimates	
		Democrats	Republicans
Clinton Vote in District 1996	-/+	-0.025* (-2.97)	0.015 (1.17)
Member, Judiciary Committee	-	-0.642* (-1.69)	-0.446* (-1.72)
Member of the Leadership	-/+	0.127 (0.42)	0.586* (2.33)
Lame Duck	n/a	0.248 (0.78)	0.690** (2.49)
Primary Challenge in 1998	-	-1.153 (-0.63)	2.201* (2.02)
Probability of Pro-Impeachment Vote	+	10.096* (2.18)	-15.456 (-1.09)
Christian Coalition Score	+/-	-0.003 (-0.37)	-0.011 (-1.31)
AFL-CIO Score	-/+	0.003 (0.31)	0.019** (2.75)
Pro-Impeachment Vote Squared	-	-14.150* (-2.45)	11.415 (1.21)
Christian Coalition Score × Primary Challenge	+/-	0.006 (0.52)	-0.019* (-1.75)
AFL-CIO Score × Primary Challenge	+/-	0.016 (0.84)	-0.028* (-2.22)
Intercept 1		0.370	-5.337
Intercept 2		0.865	-4.784
Intercept 3		1.229	-4.367
Intercept 4		1.485	-3.835
Intercept 5		1.825	-3.537
Intercept 6		2.478	-2.862
lnL		-272.63	-372.27
N		207	225

Note: Outcome is the number of days until a member announced his or her position on impeachment. Coefficients are ordered probit estimates; numbers in parentheses are *t*-statistics. One asterisk indicates  $p < .05$ , two indicate  $p < .01$  (one-tailed, except for the *Lame Duck* variable). †Where they differ, expected effects are listed for Democrats, then for Republicans. See text for details.

unopposed in the primary. Generally, the least likely to declare early (and, conversely, most likely to declare later) are Republicans with low Christian Coalition scores. Increases in those scores make members more likely to take positions earlier, but this effect is much more pronounced for members who faced primary opposition in 1998. Going from the lowest observed Christian Coalition score (17) to the highest (100) increases the probability of an early (December 11) announcement by 0.28 (from 0.10 to 0.38) for members who faced no primary opposition; the corresponding change for members challenged in a primary is roughly 0.44 (from less than 0.01 to 0.45).

Figure 3 is essentially the same as Figure 2, but with the X-axis indicating the member's lifetime AFL-CIO score; again, all other variables are held at mean/median levels. Two clear differences from the results in Figure 2 emerge. First, the magnitudes of the effects are almost exactly reversed: timing among members who did not face primary challenges is more responsive to AFL-CIO scores than for those who did. The effect of a change from lowest to highest AFL-CIO score (0 to 74) on the probability that a member declared late (i.e., on December 19) is 0.44 for non-primary members, but only 0.29 for members who had primaries. In other words, "safe" Republicans exhibit greater

≡ FIGURE 2  
PREDICTED PROBABILITIES OF REPUBLICAN HOUSE MEMBER DECISION TIMING, BY CHRISTIAN COALITION VOTING SCORE



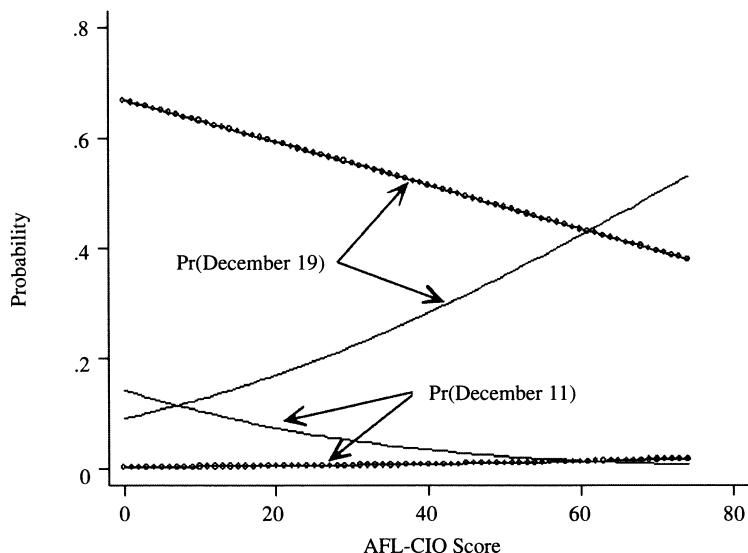
Note: Figure presents predicted probabilities for members making a decision on the indicated date, with other independent variables held constant. Dotted lines are probabilities for members who faced primary challenges in 1998; smooth lines are for members without such challenges. See text for details.

(positive) responsiveness to the AFL-CIO variable than do those who are less electorally secure within their own party. Second, the direction of the effect changes depending on whether members faced primary challenges or not: increasing AFL-CIO scores lead members to take positions later if they did not face a primary challenge, but less likely to do so if they did face such a challenge. This pattern is also consistent with our understanding of the forces motivating

timing: "safe" members with high AFL-CIO scores will be truly cross-pressured, while insecure members will feel the need to get out in front of the issue to establish credibility among conservatives within the party.

For a final cut at the issue of strategic timing of position-taking, we turn to an examination of the members' votes on the four articles of impeachment. If it was primarily cross-pressed members who delayed their announcements on

≡ FIGURE 3  
PREDICTED PROBABILITIES OF REPUBLICAN HOUSE MEMBER DECISION TIMING, BY AFL-CIO VOTING SCORE



Note: Figure illustrates predicted probabilities for members making a decision on the indicated date, with other independent variables held constant. Dotted lines are probabilities for members who faced primary challenges in 1998; smooth lines are for members without such challenges. See text for details.

≡ TABLE 2  
DETERMINANTS OF HOUSE VOTING ON  
IMPEACHMENT RESOLUTIONS

Variable	Estimates
Member's D-NOMINATE Score	4.739** (8.60)
Republican Representative	1.119* (2.00)
Timing of Position Announcement	0.051 (0.49)
Republican × Timing	-0.249* (-2.19)
Intercept 1	1.180
Intercept 2	1.399
Intercept 3	2.138
Intercept 4	3.253
lnL	-203.858

Note: N = 433. Coefficients are ordered probit estimates; numbers in parentheses are *t*-statistics. One asterisk indicates  $p < .05$ , two indicate  $p < .01$  (one-tailed). See text for details.

impeachment, we would expect that support for all four articles of impeachment would be lower (for Republicans) or higher (for Democrats) who delayed their statements than for members who declared their positions earlier.

Our dependent variable is an index consisting of the sum of each member's votes on the four articles of impeachment (coded 1 if in favor, 0 if against). Thus, members who voted for none of the articles receive a score of zero, one article receive a 1, etc., up to a value of four. The four votes scale well (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.945$ ), suggesting that this additive index satisfactorily captures variations in member's predisposition to impeach. We again use ordered probit (see, e.g., Bailey and Brady 1998).

Our intention here is not to elaborate a fully specified model of House members' impeachment votes, but to confirm our results regarding the timing of members' announcements. Table 2 examines the impact of a member's ideology (captured by a D-NOMINATE score), partisan identification, and the interaction of the timing of each member's announcement with party identification. Consistent with previous results, we see that, among members declaring their positions early, Republicans voted for a greater number of articles than did Democrats—over and above the effects of ideology. Similarly, the effects of timing interact with partisanship. For Democrats, when a member stated his or her position had no impact on how he or she voted; for Republicans, however, members who announced later also voted for significantly fewer articles of impeachment than did those who made their position known early. These results provide further support for the supposition that moderates in general, and moderate Republicans in particular, delayed announcements.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ultimately, the 105th House's votes on impeachment broke along partisan lines. Yet, within the parties, especially among Republicans, we observed a great deal of variation in the timing of position-taking on those votes. Segments of both parties faced strong cross-pressure, and these made a difference in the speed with which members took a stand. We found that members whose field of forces—constituency, interest group connections, and partisanship—was in alignment quickly announced their positions on impeachment; members who faced conflicting or ambiguous signals engaged in delay. Consistent with our theoretical account and reaffirming the potency of the electoral connection in shaping legislative outcomes, members' electoral circumstances, and particularly the presence or absence of a likely primary challenge, conditioned the responsiveness of members to these forces influencing the timing decision.

An important lesson from our work is the need to go beyond studies of votes alone in investigating congressional behavior, for two reasons. First, even in instances of party-line roll-calls, the apparent homogeneity of representatives' decisions can, as it does here, mask substantial amounts of variability in members' predispositions towards the bill. To the extent that position-taking represents a very public act on the part of a legislator, the decision of when to engage in such behavior assumes strategic importance. More broadly, our results suggest that the influence of such variables as constituency opinion, party leadership, and electoral fortunes extends beyond votes, affecting the whole range of members' decisions within the Congress. Our work thus complements recent studies of congressional speechmaking (e.g., Maltzman and Sigelman 1996), sponsorship (e.g., Schiller 1995) and other work that focuses on legislative behavior beyond simple roll-call voting.

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