

Do American Institutions Hinder Responsiveness to American Public Opinion?

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Teaching Agenda

- ① Recapping the Problem: Variation in Participation
- ② Linking Madison's Model & Democratic Institutions
- ③ What sort of model of representation do we have?
- ④ “Better” Model of Representation? Parliamentary & PR Case

How do citizens hold elites electorally accountable?



Motivating Question

Do you think politicians are responsive to mass public opinion in the United States? Why or why not?

Formalizing the Theory of Madison's *Republic*

Motivating Political Participation

“...By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”

Representing Faction (Primarily Federalist 10)

- ▶ Human Nature \rightarrow_1 Fractions \leftrightarrow_2 Representation
- ▶ Where: \rightarrow_1 = Self-interest & \leftrightarrow_2 = Elections
- ▶ Election & re-election (\leftrightarrow_2) critical to theory: protects against agency loss by principal faction (voters)

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Critical Assumption

- ▶ How does Madison conceptualize political participation?
- ▶ ***Political Participation:*** Any activity that citizens can undertake to influence government action
- ▶ What are some examples of political participation?
 - ▶ Writing/calling member of Congress
 - ▶ Giving to campaigns/political organizations
 - ▶ Attending rallies & getting out the vote
 - ▶ Running for office (from school board to U.S. Senate/President)
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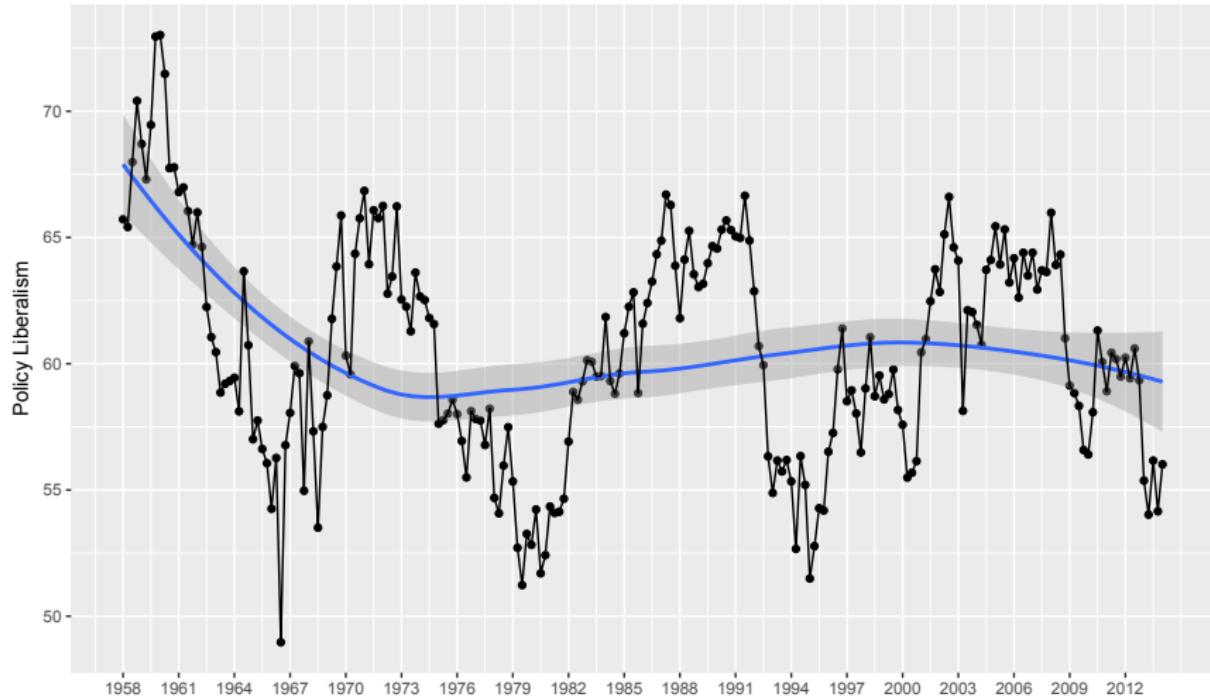
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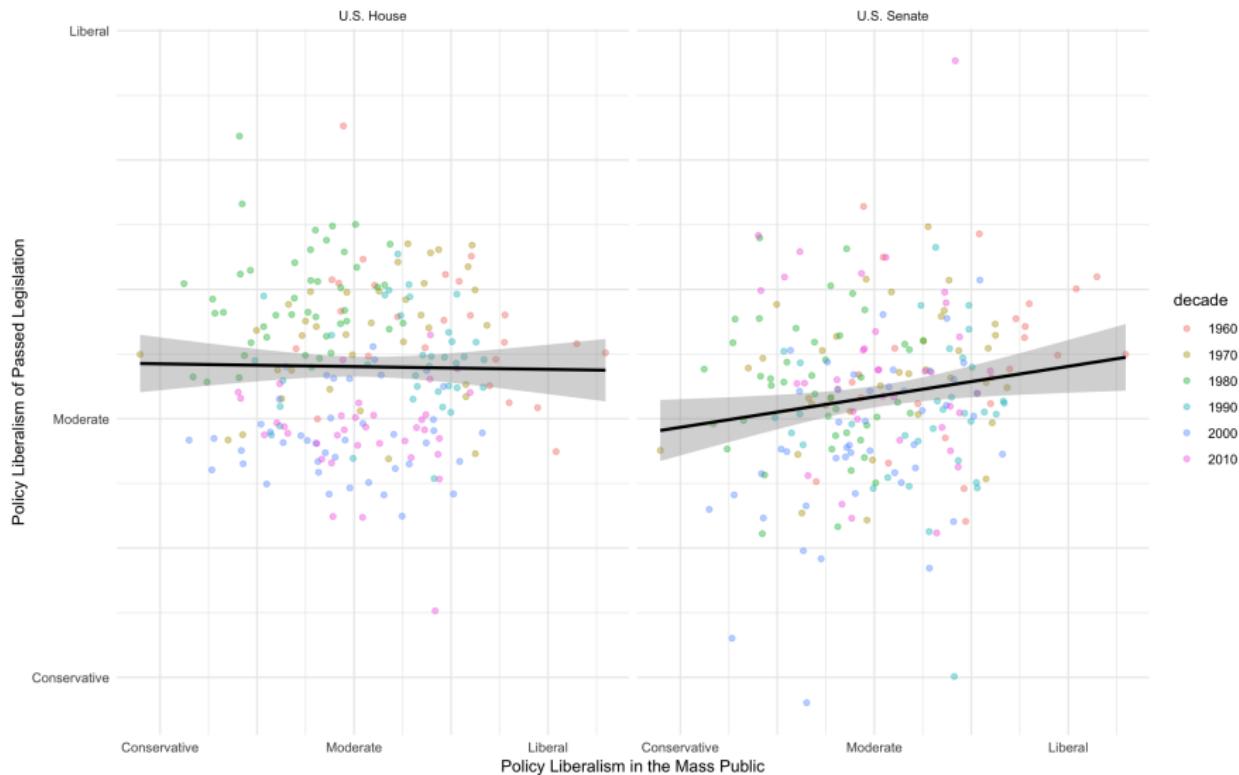
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Policy Mood of the General Public

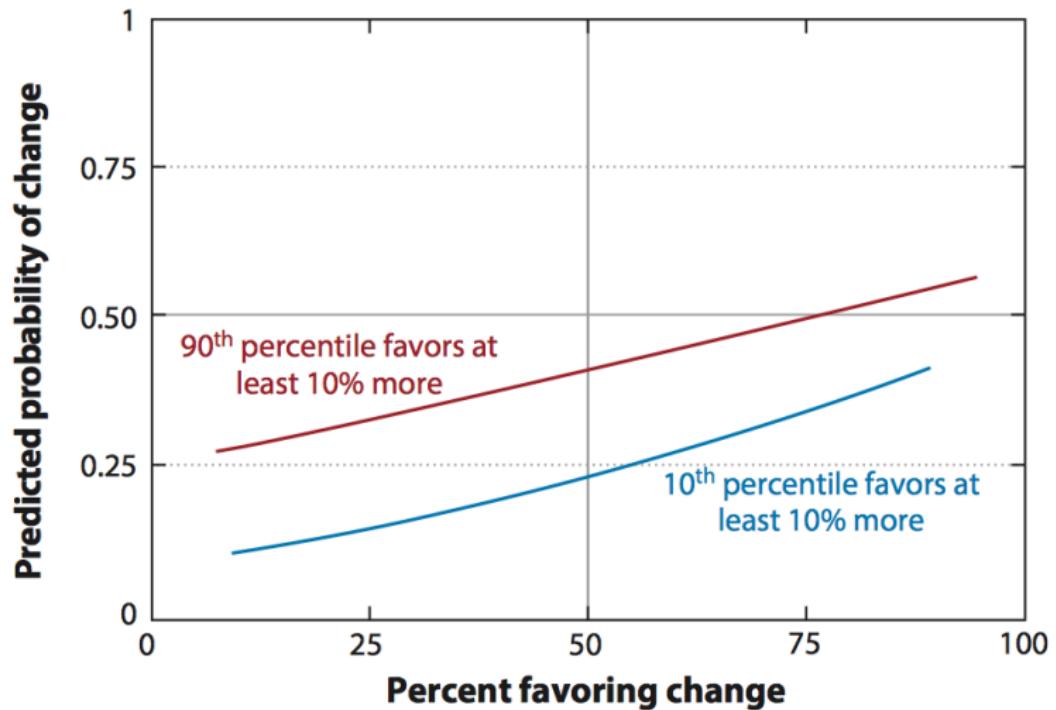
Quarterly Policy Mood, 1958-2014



Does Congress Respond to the Public?



Responsiveness to Whom?



The Republic Theory in Practice

Institutional Logic of “Separation of Powers”

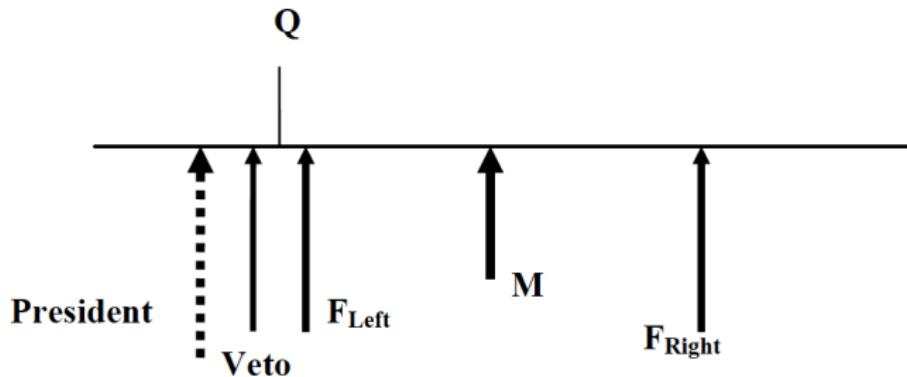
Legislature

	House	Senate	President
Incentive			
Term of Office	2 yrs	6 yrs	4 yrs
Apportionment	Propor.	Federal	Federal + Prop
Constituency	[District]	State	National
Size	[435]	100	1
Selection	Elected	[Elected]	[Elected]
Resources			
Action	Legislate, raise army, tax, interstate commerce, purse, impeach impeachment, declare war		Appointment, pardon, Commander-in-chief, Executive
Reaction: v. Congress/Pres	Veto override, Senate confirmation, treaties		Veto, Execute the law
Reaction: v. Courts	Set jurisdiction, initiate const. amend., confirmation, purse impeach, lower courts		Nomination
Note: [brackets] denotes non-constitutional requirement.			

System Defined by *High Transaction Costs*

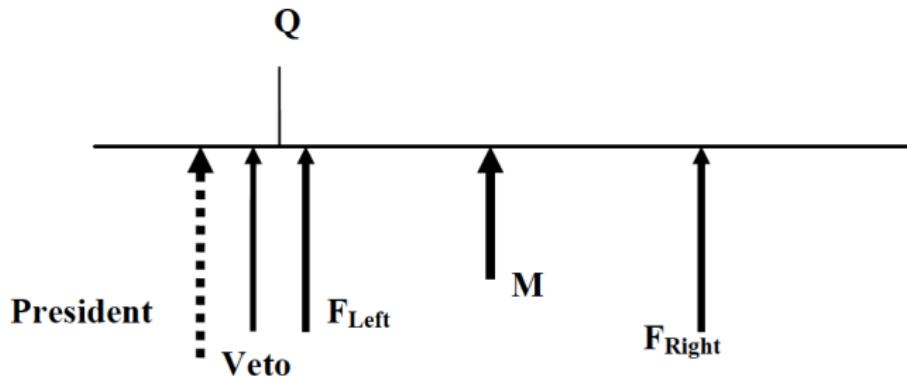
- ▶ To make policy, one must pay transaction costs to entice relevant pivotal players
 - ▶ Median Voter in U.S. House (w/ veto: veto pivot)
 - ▶ Filibuster Pivots in U.S. Senate (w/ veto: veto pivot)
 - ▶ Presidential approval of policy change
- ▶ Madison's Theory of Representation insures that politicians have strong rational self-interest to represent their districts faithfully (Faction → Representatives)
- ▶ Principal-agent relationship between representatives & their districts require long coalitions to change policy
- ▶ Congress becoming more *partisan-centered*, lowering transaction costs if one party can control all institutional *veto gates* (House, Senate, Presidency) given intra-party bargaining

Institutions & Extraordinary Majorities in Policymaking



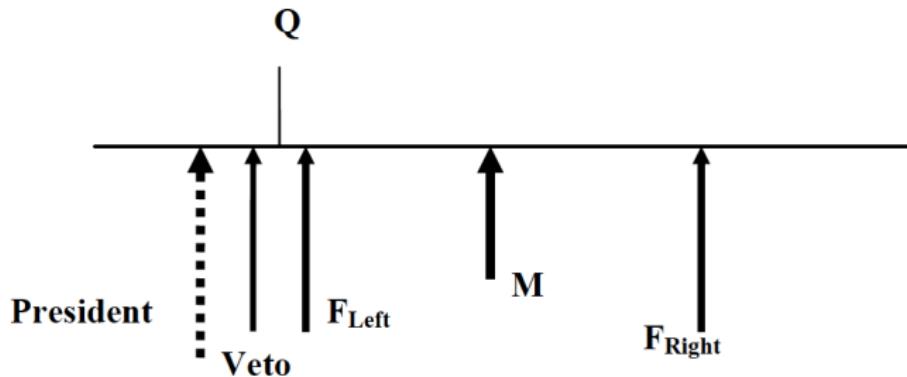
- ▶ Presidential Veto Pivot
- ▶ Filibuster “Zone” in the U.S. Senate
- ▶ House Majority
- ▶ Insuring conflict with district-centered origins & incentives!

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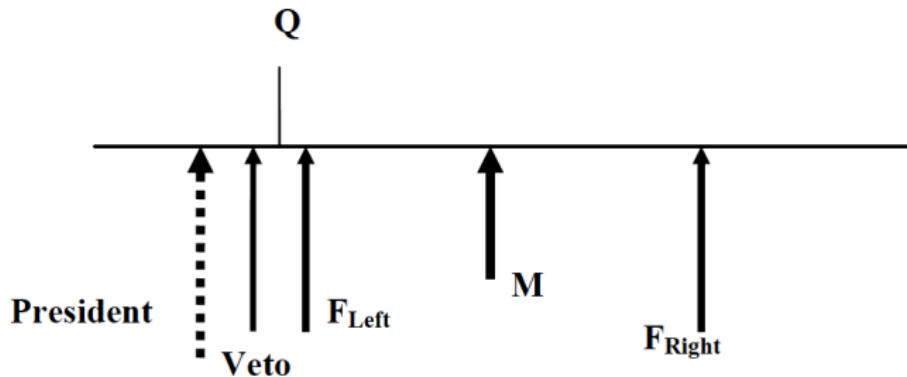
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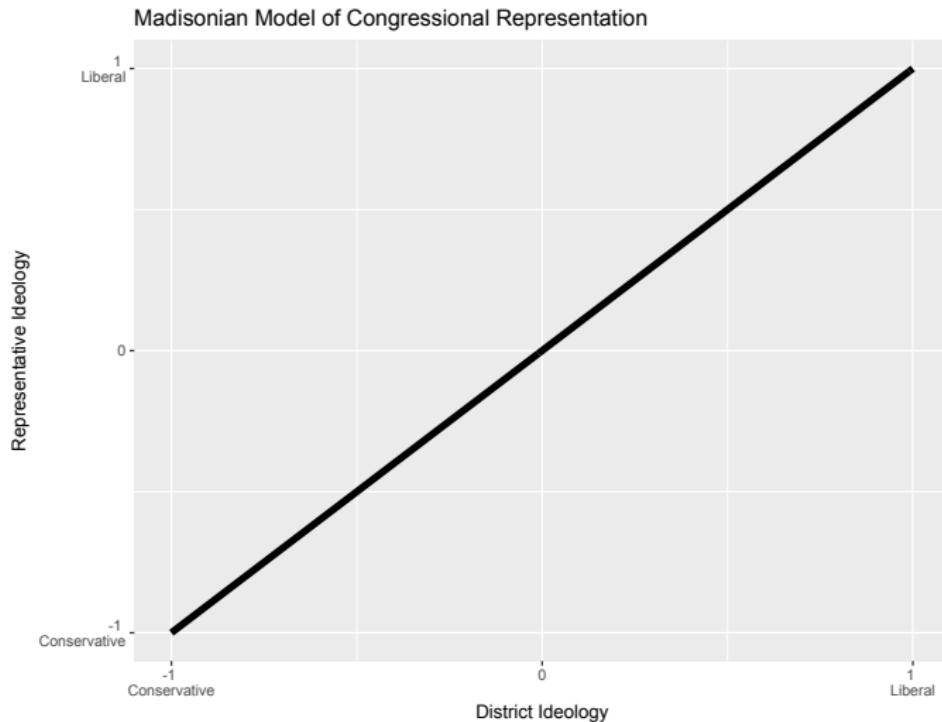
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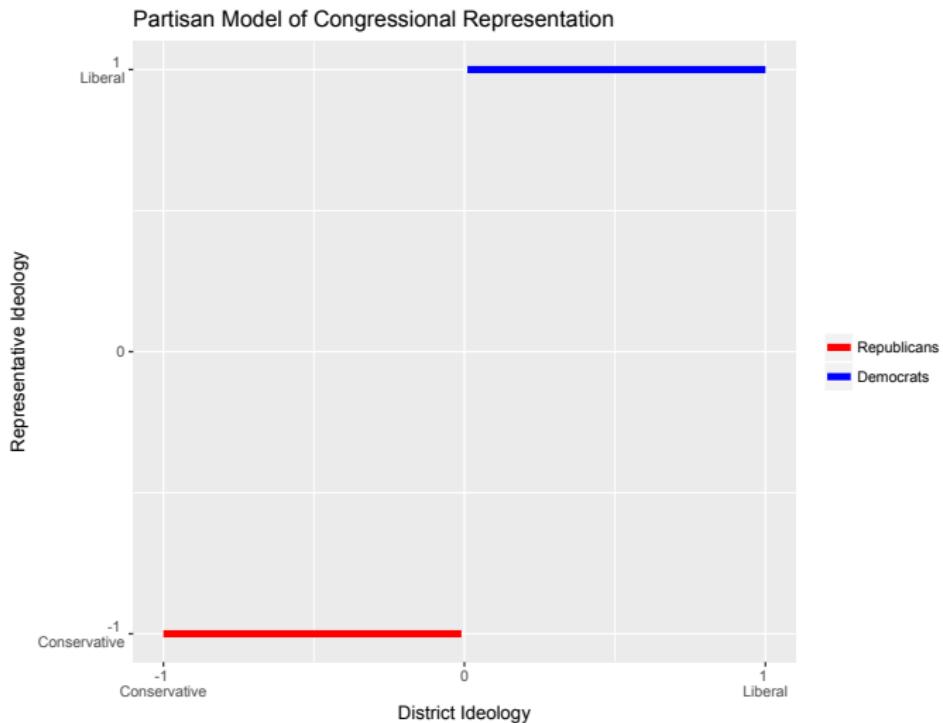
Madisonian Model of Representation

- ▶ What does district-centered representation look like with respect to congruence between constituent & member ideology?



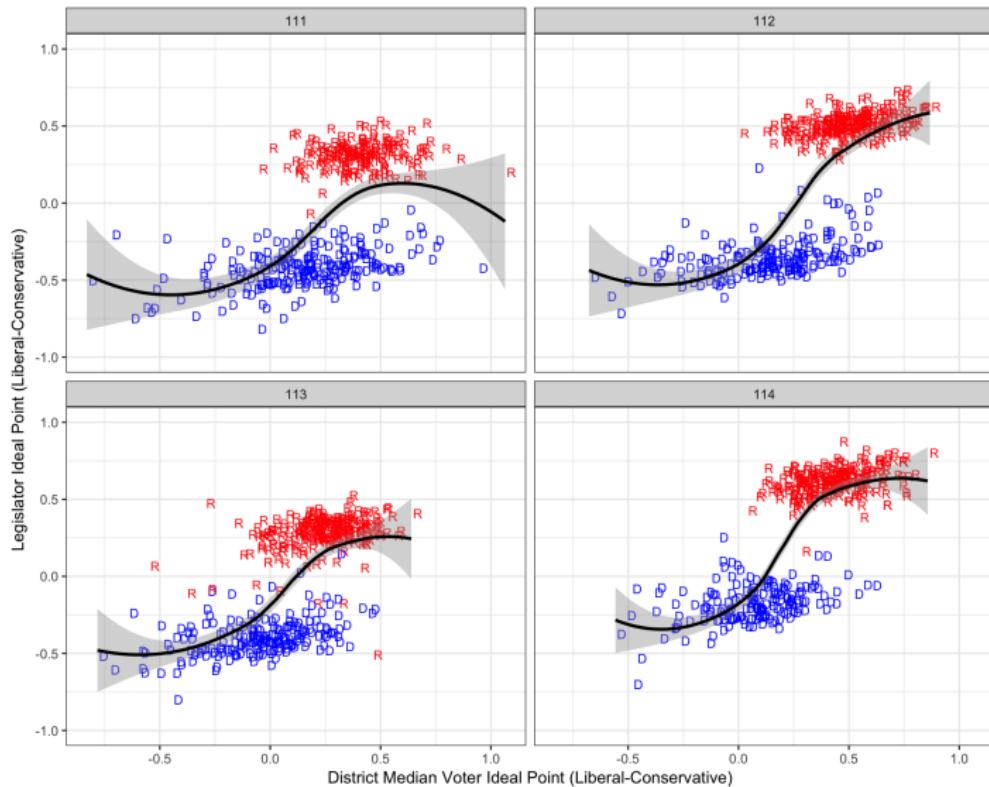
Partisan-Centered Model of Representation

- ▶ What does representation look like with respect to congruence between constituent & member ideology during a polarized system?



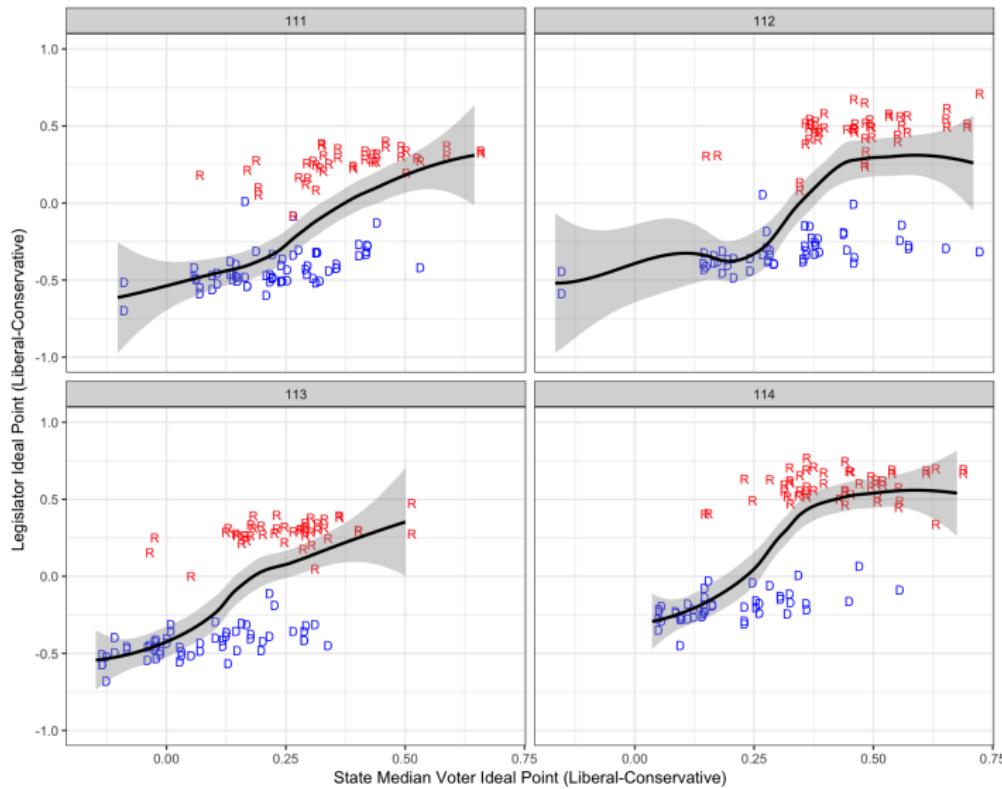
Leap-Frog Representation!

Legislative Representation in the U.S. House, 2008-2014



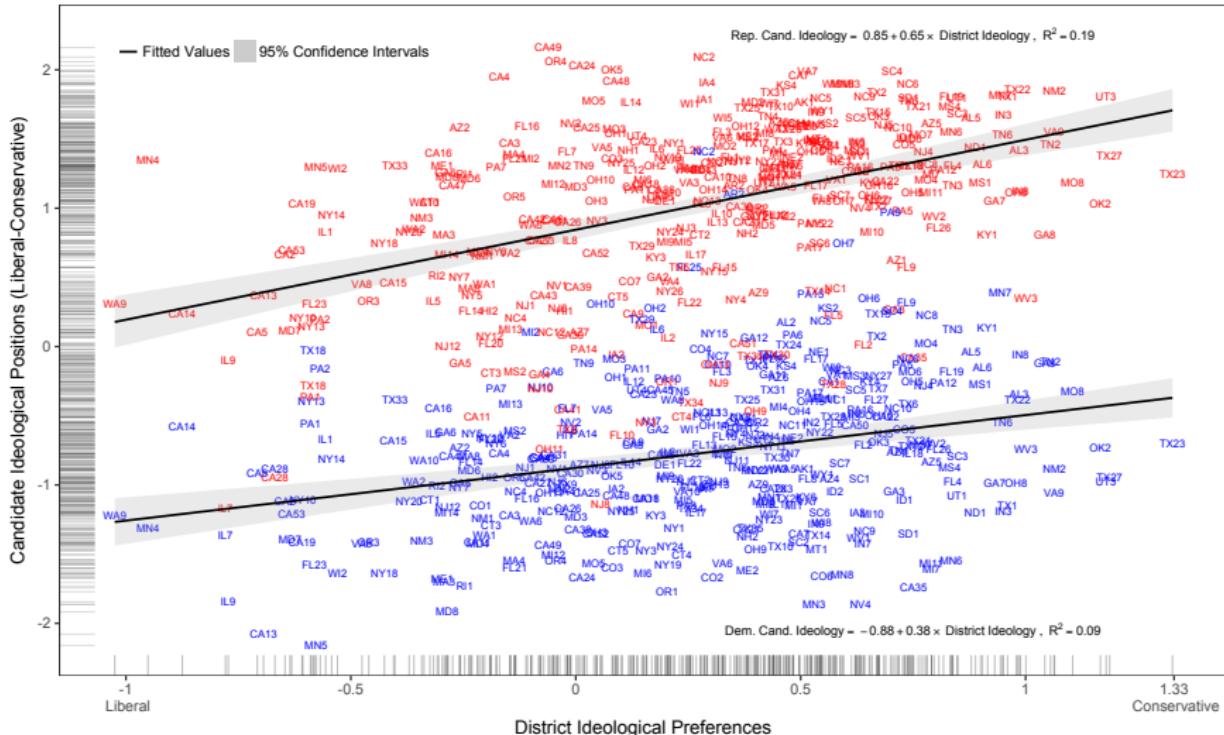
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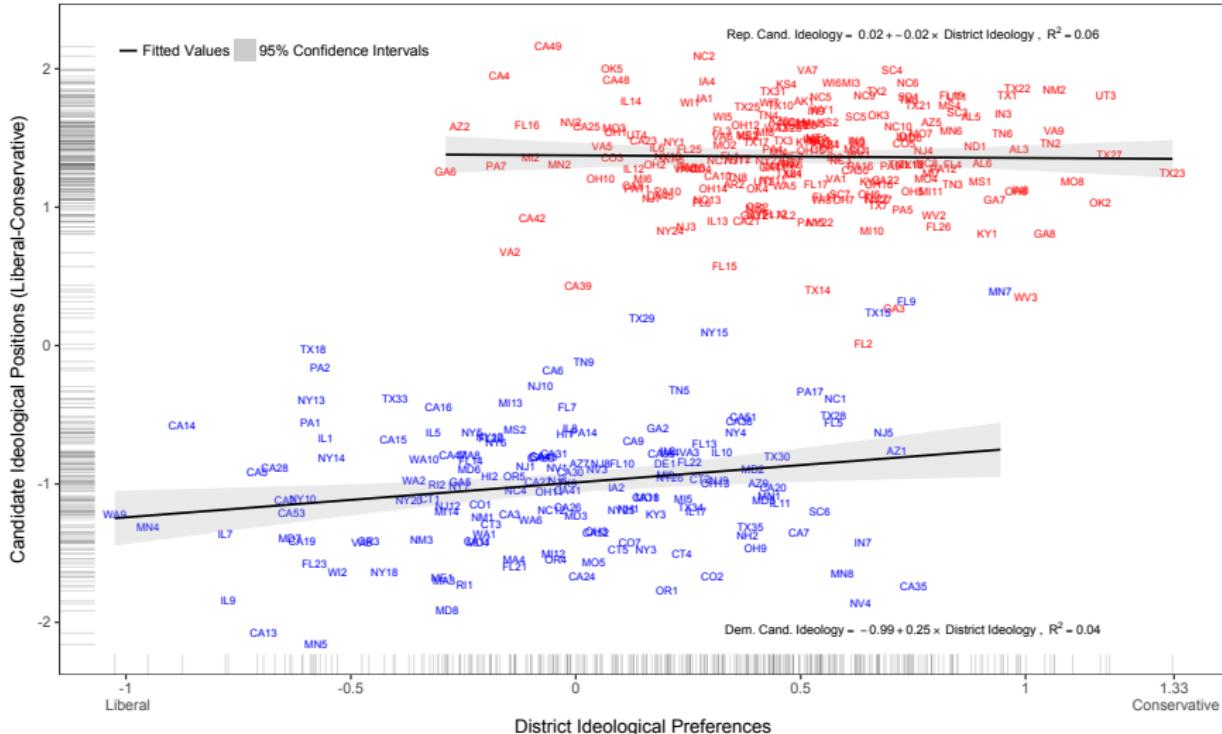
Do Candidates Try to Represent their District?

House Candidates' Ideological Positions by District Ideology Preferences in the 2016 Elections



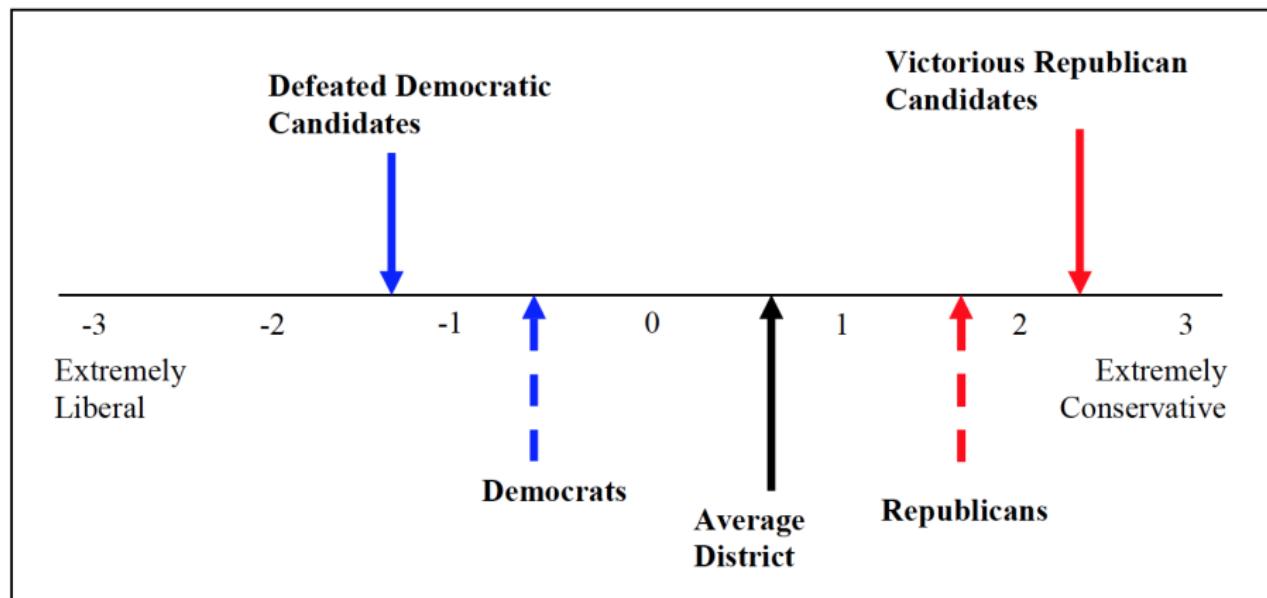
Doesn't Matter

House Winning Candidates' Ideological Positions by District Ideology Preferences in the 2016 Elections



How does Leap-Frog Work?

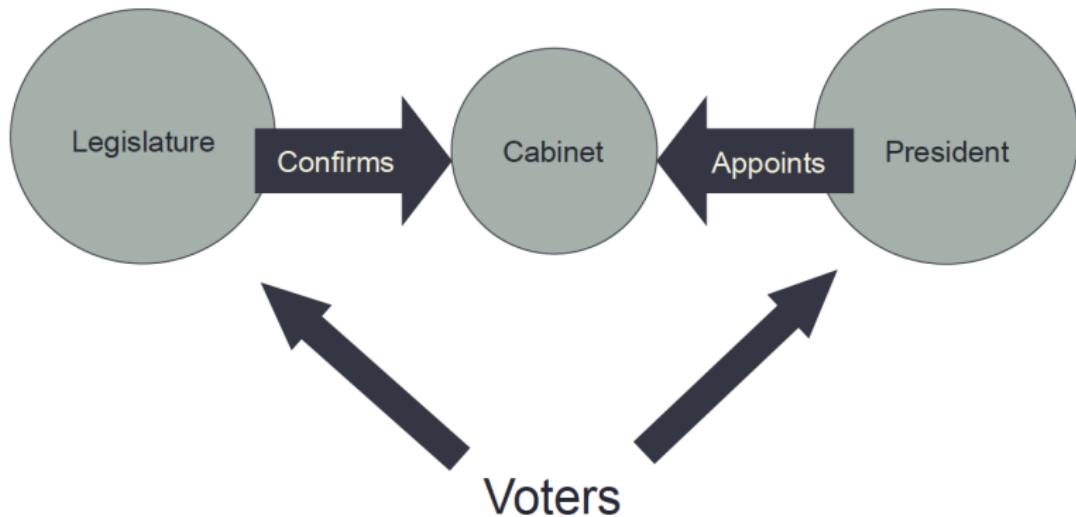
Leapfrog Representation: Change in Representation among Swing Districts, 2010



American Model of Presidentialism

Presidential System

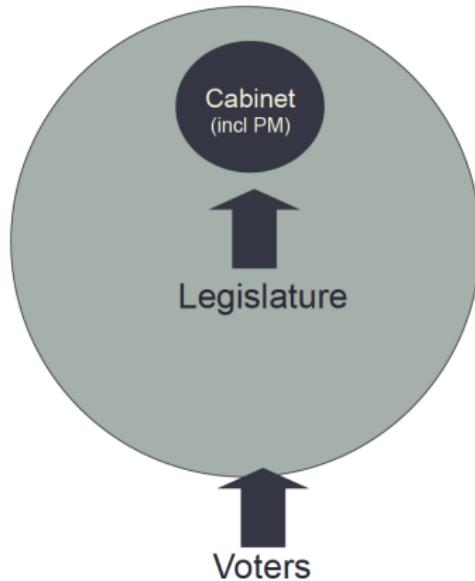
Fixed Term of Office for
Legislators and President



Parliamentary System: Institutional Model

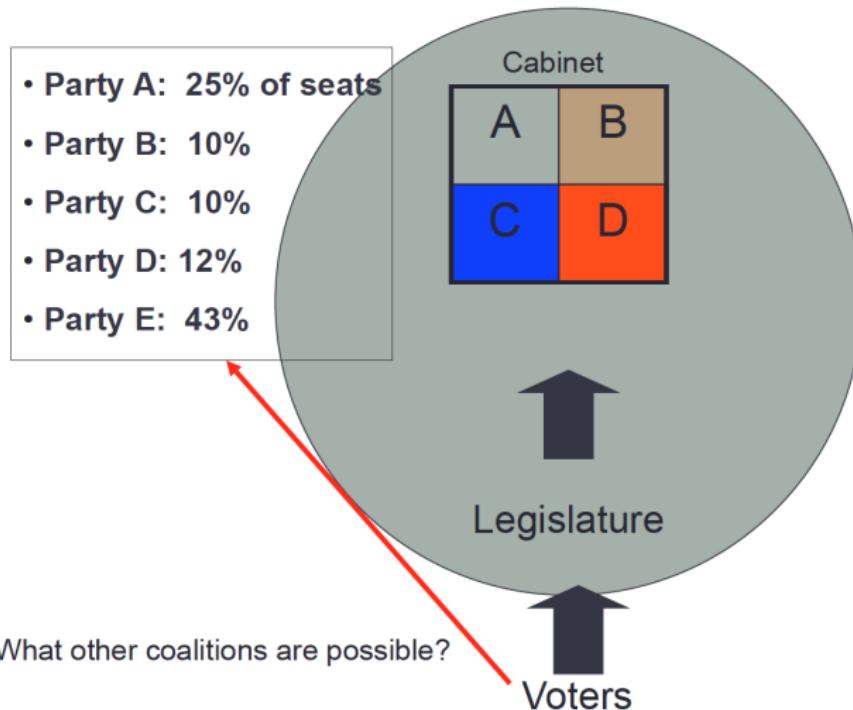
Parliamentary System

Can Hold Elections Whenever PM/Cabinet in as long as Parliament



Parliamentary System & Proportional Representation

Coalition Governments



Proportional Representation in America?

WHAT IF THE UNITED STATES HAD A PARLIAMENT?

PREDICTED PARLIAMENT*

TOTAL SEATS 435



113

LEFT

"Social
Democratic Party"

BERNIE SANDERS

26% of vote



124

CENTRE-LEFT

"Liberal
Party"

HILLARY CLINTON

28%



37

CENTRE-RIGHT

"Conservative
Party"

JOHN KASICH

8%



49

RIGHT

"Christian
Coalition"

TED CRUZ

11%



112

POPULIST

"People's
Party"

DONALD

TRUMP 26%

Sources: YouGov; CPS; *The Economist*
Pic credits: AP; AFP; Getty Images; Reuters

*based on April 22-26th 2016 polling; seats allocated
proportionally by census region (North, Midwest, South, West)

The
Economist

Key Points

- ① Evidence to suggest variation in mass public opinion over time (policy liberalism)
- ② However, little evidence to suggest that national legislative institutions are responsive to the national public mood
- ③ Some evidence to suggest that they are responsive to the preferences of the 90th percentile
- ④ Lack of responsiveness can be due to **high** transaction costs in institutional design
- ⑤ Moreover, prevalence in leap-frog representation also inhibits legislative representation of American public opinion
- ⑥ Perhaps there's a better comparative model for translating American public opinion into mass preferences?