CONGRESS
THE ELECTORAL CONNECTION

David R. Mayhew

New Haven and London, Yale University Press

1

THE ELECTORAL INCENTIVE

Congress has declined into a battle for individual survival. Each of the Congressmen and each of the Senators has the attitude: "I've got to look out for myself." If you remember the old best advice you ever had in the army, it wound up with: "Never volunteer." This applies to Congress, and so we have very few volunteers. Most of them are willing only to follow those things that will protect them and give them the coloration which allows them to blend into their respective districts or their respective states. If you don't stick your neck out, you don't get it chopped off.

—Senator William B. Saxbe (R., Ohio)

The discussion to come will hinge on the assumption that United States congressmen[1] are interested in getting reelected—indeed, in their role here as abstractions, interested in nothing else. Any such assumption necessarily does some violence to the facts, so it is important at the outset to root this one as firmly as possible in reality. A number of questions about that reality immediately arise.

First, is it true that the United States Congress is a place where members wish to stay once they get there? Clearly there are representative assemblies that do not hold their members for very long. Members of the Colombian parliament tend to serve single terms and then move on.[2] Voluntary turnover is quite high in some American state legislatures—for example, in Alabama. In his study of the unreformed Connecticut legislature, Barber labeled some of his subjects "reluctants"—people not very much interested in politics who were briefly pushed into it by others.[3] An ethic of

1. Where the context does not suggest otherwise, the term *congressmen* will refer to members of both House and Senate.

2. James L. Payne, *Patterns of Conflict in Colombia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 19–20.

3. James D. Barber, *The Lawmakers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), ch. 4.

"volunteerism" pervades the politics of California city councils.[4] And in the Congress itself voluntary turnover was high throughout most of the nineteenth century.

Yet in the modern Congress the "congressional career" is unmistakably upon us.[5] Turnover figures show that over the past century increasing proportions of members in any given Congress have been holdovers from previous Congresses—members who have both sought reelection and won it. Membership turnover noticeably declined among southern senators as early as the 1850s, among senators generally just after the Civil War.[6] The House followed close behind, with turnover dipping in the late nineteenth century and continuing to decline throughout the twentieth.[7] Average number of terms served has gone up and up, with the House in 1971 registering an all-time high of 20 percent of its members who had served at least ten terms.[8] It seems fair to characterize the modern

4. Kenneth Prewitt, "Political Ambitions, Volunteerism, and Electoral Accountability," 64 *American Political Science Review* 5–17 (1970).

5. H. Douglas Price, "The Congressional Career Then and Now," ch. 2 in Nelson W. Polsby (ed.), *Congressional Behavior* (New York: Random House, 1971).

6. Price, "Computer Simulation and Legislative 'Professionalism,' " pp. 14–16.

7. Nelson W. Polsby, "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives," 62 *American Political Science Review* 146 (1968).

8. Charles S. Bullock III, "House Careerists: Changing Patterns

Congress as an assembly of professional politicians spinning out political careers. The jobs offer good pay and high prestige. There is no want of applicants for them. Successful pursuit of a career requires continual reelection.[9]

A second question is this: even if congressmen seek reelection, does it make sense to attribute that goal to them to the exclusion of all other goals? Of course the answer is that a complete explanation (if one were possible) of a congressman's or any one else's behavior would require attention to more than just one goal. There are even occasional congressmen who intentionally do things that make their own electoral survival difficult or impossible. The late President Kennedy wrote of congressional "profiles in courage."[10] Former Senator Paul Douglas (D., Ill.) tells of how he tried to persuade Senator Frank Graham (D., N.C.) to tailor his issue positions in order to survive a 1950 primary. Graham, a liberal appointee to the office, refused to listen. He was a "saint," says Douglas.[11] He lost his

of Longevity and Attrition," 66 *American Political Science Review* 1296 (1972).

9. Indeed, it has been proposed that professional politicians could be gotten rid of by making reelection impossible. For a plan to select one-term legislators by random sampling of the population, see Dennis C. Mueller et al., "Representative Government via Random Selection," 12 *Public Choice* 57–68 (1972).

10. John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956).

11. Paul H. Douglas, *In the Fullness of Time* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), pp. 238–41.

primary. There are not many saints. But surely it is common for congressmen to seek other ends alongside the electoral one and not necessarily incompatible with it. Some try to get rich in office, a quest that may or may not interfere with reelection.[12] Fenno assigns three prime goals to congressmen—getting reelected but also achieving influence within Congress and making "good public policy."[13] These latter two will be given attention further on in this discussion. Anyone can point to contemporary congressmen whose public activities are not obviously reducible to the electoral explanation; Senator J. William Fulbright (D., Ark.) comes to mind. Yet, saints aside, the electoral goal has an attractive universality to it. It has to be the *proximate* goal of everyone, the goal that must be achieved over and over if other ends are to be entertained. One former congressman writes, "All members of Congress have a primary interest in getting re-elected. Some members have no other interest."[14] Reelection underlies everything else, as

12. In the case of the late Senator Thomas Dodd (D., Conn.) these two goals apparently conflicted. See James Boyd, *Above the Law* (New York: New American Library, 1968). Using office for financial profit is probably less common in Congress than in some of the state legislatures (e.g. Illinois and New Jersey).

13. Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*, p. 1.

14. Frank E. Smith (D., Miss.), *Congressman from Mississippi* (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 127. It will not be necessary here to reach the question of whether it is possible to detect the goals of congressmen by asking them what they are, or indeed the

indeed it should if we are to expect that the relation between politicians and public will be one of accountability.[15] What justifies a focus on the reelection goal is the juxtaposition of these two aspects of it—its putative empirical primacy and its importance as an accountability link. For analytic purposes, therefore, congressmen will be treated in the pages to come as if they were single-minded reelection seekers. Whatever else they may seek will be given passing attention, but the analysis will center on the electoral connection.

Yet another question arises. Even if congressmen are single-mindedly interested in reelection, are they in a position as individuals to do anything about it? If they

question of whether there are unconscious motives lurking behind conscious ones. In Lasswell's formulation "political types" are power seekers, with "private motives displaced on public objects rationalized in terms of public interest." Harold D. Lasswell, *Power and Personality* (New York: Viking, 1948), p. 38.

15. Of other kinds of relations we are entitled to be suspicious. "There can be no doubt, that if power is granted to a body of men, called Representatives, they, like any other men, will use their power, not for the advantage of the community, but for their own advantage, if they can. The only question is, therefore, how can they be prevented?" James Mill, "Government," in *Essays on Government, Jurisprudence, Liberty of the Press, and Law of Nations* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967), p. 18. Madison's view was that the United States House, by design the popular branch, "should have an immediate dependence on, and an intimate sympathy with, the people. Frequent elections are unquestionably the only policy by which this dependency and sympathy can be effectively secured." *The Federalist Papers*, selected and edited by Roy Fairfield (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1961), no. 52, p. 165.

are not, if they are inexorably shoved to and fro by forces in their political environments, then obviously it makes no sense to pay much attention to their individual activities. This question requires a complex answer, and it will be useful to begin reaching for one by pondering whether individual congressmen are the proper analytic units in an investigation of this sort. An important alternative view is that parties rather than lone politicians are the prime movers in electoral politics. The now classic account of what a competitive political universe will look like with parties as its analytic units is Downs's *Economic Theory of Democracy*.[16] In the familiar Downsian world parties are entirely selfish. They seek the rewards of office, but in order to achieve them they have to win office and keep it. They bid for favor before the public as highly cohesive point-source "teams." A party enjoys complete control over government during its term in office and uses its control solely to try to win the next election. In a two-party system a voter decides how to cast his ballot by examining the record and promises of the party in power and the previous record and current promises of the party out of power; he then calculates an "expected party differential" for the coming term, consults his own policy preferences, and votes accordingly. These are the essential lineaments of the theory.[17] Legislative representatives appear only as modest "intermediaries." If of the governing party they gather information on grassroots preferences and relay it to the government, and they try to persuade constituents back home that the government is doing a worthy job.[18]

16. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957). Downs gives a formal touch to a political science literature of both normative and empirical importance, extending from Woodrow Wilson through E. E. Schattschneider and V. O. Key, Jr.

How well a party model of this kind captures the reality of any given regime is an empirical question. One difficulty lies in the need for parties as cohesive teams (members whose "goals can be viewed as a simple, consistent preference-ordering").[19] In all nonautocratic regimes governments are made up of a plurality of elective officials—not just one man. How can a group of men be bound together so that it looks something like a Downsian team? Probably nowhere (in a nonautocratic regime) does a group achieve the ultimate fusion of preference-orderings needed to satisfy the model; party government in Britain, for

17. Ibid., chs. 2, 3.

18. Ibid., pp. 88–90. Because the information and opinions supplied by representatives are important in decision making, Downs says that in effect some decision power devolves to the representatives. But there is this constraint: "Theoretically, the government will continue to decentralize its power until the marginal gain in votes from greater conformity to popular desires is outweighed by the marginal cost in votes of lesser ability to co-ordinate its actions." Pp. 89–90.

19. Ibid., p. 26.

example, proceeds substantially by intraparty bargaining.[20] Nonetheless, it is plain that some regimes fit the model better than others. For some purposes it is quite useful to study British politics by using parties as analytic units. Britain, to start with, has a constitution that readily permits majoritarian government. But, beyond that, at the roll call stage British M.P.'s act as cohesive party blocs that look something like teams. It is not inevitable that they should do so, and indeed there was a good deal of individualistic voting in the Commons in the mid-nineteenth century.[21] Why do contemporary M.P.'s submit to party discipline? There are at least three reasons why they do so, and it will be profitable here to examine them in order to allow later contrasts with the American regime.

First of all, in both British parties the nominating systems are geared to produce candidates who will vote the party line if and when they reach Parliament. This happens not because nominations are centrally controlled, but because the local nominating outfits are small elite groups that serve in effect as nationally oriented cheerleaders for the Commons party leadership.[22]

20. See, for example, Richard E. Neustadt, "White House and Whitehall," *The Public Interest*, Winter 1966, pp. 55–69.

21. See William O. Aydelotte, "Voting Patterns in the British House of Commons in the 1840's," 5 *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 134–63 (1963).

22. Austin Ranney, *Pathways to Parliament: Candidate Selection in Britain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 281; Leon D. Epstein, "British M.P.'s and Their Local Parties: The Suez Case," 54 *American Political Science Review* 385–86 (1960).

Second, British M.P.'s lack the resources to set up shop as politicians with bases independent of party. Television time in campaigns goes to parties rather than to scattered independent politicians.[23] By custom or rule or both, the two parties sharply limit the funds that parliamentary candidates can spend on their own in campaigns.[24] Once elected, M.P.'s are not supplied the kinds of office resources—staff help, free mailing privileges, and the like—that can be used to achieve public salience.[25] These arguments should not be carried too far; M.P.'s are not ciphers, and obviously dissident leaders like Aneurin Bevan and Enoch Powell manage to build important independent fol-

23. Jay G. Blumler and Denis McQuail, *Television in Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. xi-xxviii.

24. R. T. McKenzie, *British Political Parties* (New York: St. Martin's, 1955), pp. 252–53, 555.

25. "An American Congressman, it is said, collapsed with shock on being shown the writing-rooms and the Library of the Commons full of men writing letters in longhand: members of Parliament answering the constituency mail." Bernard Crick, *The Reform of Parliament* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), p. 58; and, generally, Crick, pp. 58–59. Things have changed somewhat since Crick's account, but the contrast is still valid. See also Anthony Barker and Michael Rush, *The Member of Parliament and His Information* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970). Loewenberg reports that, in West Germany, "the average member of the Bundestag works under Spartan conditions." Gerhard Loewenberg, *Parliament in the German Political System* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 53.

lowings. But the average backbencher is constrained by lack of resources. It comes as no surprise that individual M.P.'s add little to (or subtract little from) core partisan electoral strength in their constituencies; the lion's share of the variance in vote change from election to election is chargeable to national swings rather than to local or regional fluctuations.[26]

Third, with the executive entrenched in Parliament the only posts worth holding in a Commons career are the ones doled out by party leaders. Up to a third of majority party M.P.'s are now included in the Ministry.[27] "For the ambitious backbencher, the task is to impress ministers and particularly the Prime Minister." [28] Party loyalty is rewarded; heresy is not.

The upshot of all this is that British M.P.'s are locked in. The arrangement of incentives and resources elevates parties over politicians. But the United States is very different. In America the underpinnings of "teamsmanship" are weak or absent, making it possible for politicians to triumph over

26. Donald E. Stokes, "Parties and the Nationalization of Electoral Forces," ch. 7 in William N. Chambers and Walter D. Burnham, *The American Party Systems* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 188–89.

27. Crick, *The Reform of Parliament*, pp. 30–31. Crick adds: "A modern Prime Minister has a patronage beyond the wildest dreams of political avarice of a Walpole or a Newcastle." P. 31.

28. John P. Mackintosh, "Reform of the House of Commons: The Case for Specialization," in Loewenberg (ed.), *Modern Parliaments*, p. 39.

parties. It should be said that Madisonian structure and Downsian teamsmanship are not necessarily incompatible.[29] Connecticut state government, in which party organizations exercise substantial control over nominations and political careers, comes close to the British model; governorship and state legislative parties are bound together by party organization.[30] But Connecticut is exceptional, or, more accurately, it is at one end of a spectrum toward the other end of which there are states in which parties have little binding effect at all.[31] In American politics the place

29. Indeed in city studies there is the standard functional case that cohesive parties may arise to deal with problems caused by constitutional diffusion. See, for example, on Chicago, Edward C. Banfield, *Political Influence* (New York: Free Press, 1961), ch. 8. American parties have traditionally been strongest at the municipal level. But something interesting happens to Downs on the way to the city. Where parties are held together by patronage, and where there are no geographically subsidiary governments that can serve as independent political bases, there is a strong tendency for party politics to become monopolistic rather than competitive. Ambitious politicians have little incentive to sustain an opposition party and every incentive to join the ruling party. The same argument generally holds for national politics in mid-eighteenth-century England.

30. See Duane Lockard, *New England State Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), chs. 9, 10; Joseph I. Lieberman, *The Power Broker* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966); James D. Barber, "Leadership Strategies for Legislative Party Cohesion," 28 *Journal of Politics* 347–67 (1966).

31. In the California Senate, for example, at least until recently, committee chairmanships were given out to the most senior

where Downsian logic really applies is in the election of individuals to executive posts—presidents, governors, and big city mayors. To choose among candidates for the presidency or the New York City mayoralty is to choose among "executive teams"—candidates with their retinues of future high administrators, financial supporters, ghost-writers, pollsters, student ideologues, journalistic flacks, hangers-on, occasionally burglars and spies. In executive elections the candidates are highly visible; they bid for favor in Downsian fashion; they substantially control government (or appear to) and can be charged with its accomplishments and derelictions (President Nixon for inflation, Mayor Lindsay for crime); elections are typically close (now even in most old machine cities); voters can traffic in "expected differentials" (between executive candidates rather than parties). When the late V. O. Key, Jr., wrote *The Responsible Electorate*,[32] a book in the Downsian spirit, he had the empirical good sense to focus on competition between incumbent and prospective presidential administrations rather than more broadly on competition between parties. Indeed, it can be argued that American representative assemblies have declined in power in the twentieth

members regardless of party. Alvin D. Sokolow and Richard W. Brandsma, "Partisanship and Seniority in Legislative Committee Assignments: California after Reapportionment," 24 *Western Political Quarterly* 741–47 (1971).

32. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966.

century (especially at the city council level) and executives have risen chiefly because it is the executives who offer electorates something like Downsian accountability.[33]

But at the congressional level the teamsmanship model breaks down. To hark back to the discussion of Britain, the specified resource and incentive arrangements conducive to party unity among M.P.'s are absent in the congressional environment: First, the way in which congressional candidates win party nominations is not, to say the least, one that fosters party cohesion in Congress. For one thing, 435 House members and 98 senators (all but the Indiana pair) are now nominated by direct primary (or can be, in the few states with challenge primaries) rather than by caucus or convention. There is no reason to expect large primary electorates to honor party loyalty. (An introduction of the direct primary system in Britain might in itself destroy party cohesion in the Commons.) For another, even where party organizations are still strong enough to control congressional primaries,[34] the parties are locally rather than

33. There is Huntington's point that sweeping turnover of a Jacksonian sort now occurs in national politics only at the top executive level. Samuel P. Huntington, "Congressional Responses to the Twentieth Century," ch. 1 in David B. Truman (ed.), *The Congress and America's Future* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 17.

34. In Chicago, for example. See Leo M. Snowiss, "Congres-

nationally oriented; local party unity is vital to them, national party unity is not. Apparently it never has been.[35]

Second, unlike the M.P. the typical American congressman has to mobilize his own resources initially to win a nomination and then to win election and reelection. He builds his own electoral coalition and sustains it. He raises and spends a great deal of money in doing so. He has at his command an elaborate set of electoral resources that the Congress bestows upon all its members. There will be more on these points later. The important point here is that a congressman can—indeed must—build a power base that is substantially independent of party.[36] In the words of a House member quoted by Clapp, "If we depended on

sional Recruitment and Representation," 60 *American Political Science Review* 627–39 (1966).

35. On the fluid behavior of machine congressmen back when there were a good many more of them, see Moisei Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*, vol. II, *The United States* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), pp. 286–89. Tammany Democrats broke party ranks to save Speaker Joseph G. Cannon from Insurgent and Democratic attack in the Sixtieth Congress, a year before his downfall. See Blair Bolles, *Tyrant from Illinois* (New York: Norton, 1951), p. 181.

36. See Charles L. Clapp, *The Congressman: His Work as He Sees It* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1963), pp. 30–31; Robert J. Huckshorn and Robert C. Spencer, *The Politics of Defeat* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971), pp. vii, 71–72; David A. Leuthold, *Electioneering in a Democracy* (New York: Wiley, 1968), passim.

the party organization to get elected, none of us would be here." [37]

Third, Congress does not have to sustain a cabinet and hence does not engage the ambitions of its members in cabinet formation in such a fashion as to induce party cohesion. It would be wrong to posit a general one-to-one relation here between party cohesion and cabinet sustenance. On the one hand, there is nothing preventing congressmen from building disciplined congressional parties anyway if they wanted to do so. On the other hand, as the records of the Third and Fourth French republics show, cabinet regimes can be anchored in relatively incohesive parties. Yet, to pose the proposition in statistical rather than deterministic form, the need for an assembly to sustain a cabinet probably raises the likelihood that it will spawn disciplined parties.[38]

The fact is that no theoretical treatment of the United States Congress that posits parties as analytic units will go very far. So we are left with individual congressmen, with 535 men and women rather than two parties, as units to be examined in the discussion to come. The style of argument will be somewhat like that of Downs, but the reality more like that of Namier.[39] Whether the choice of units is propitious

37. Clapp, *The Congressman*, p. 351.

38. See the argument in Leon D. Epstein, "A Comparative Study of Canadian Parties," 58 *American Political Science Review* 46–59 (1964).

39. Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George*

can be shown only in the facts marshaled and the arguments embellished around them. With the units nailed down, still left unanswered is the question of whether congressmen in search of reelection are in a position to do anything about it.

Here it will be useful to deal first with the minority subset of congressmen who serve marginal districts or states—constituencies fairly evenly balanced between the parties. The reason for taking up the marginals separately is to consider whether their electoral precariousness ought to induce them to engage in distinctive electoral activities. Marginals have an obvious problem; to a substantial degree they are at the mercy of national partisan electoral swings. But general voter awareness of congressional legislative activities is low.[40] Hence national swings in the congressional vote are normally judgments on what the president is doing (or is thought to be doing) rather than on what Congress is doing. In the familiar case where parties controlling the presidency lose House seats in the midterm, swings seem to be not judgments on anything at all but rather artifacts of the election cycle.[41] More along a judgmen-

III (London: Macmillan, 1960). For a Namier passage on assemblies without disciplined parties see p. 17.

40. Donald E. Stokes and Warren E. Miller, "Party Government and the Saliency of Congress," ch. 11 in Angus Campbell et al., *Elections and the Political Order* (New York: Wiley, 1966), p. 199.

41. Angus Campbell, "Surge and Decline: A Study of Electoral Change," ch. 3 in ibid.; Barbara Hinckley, "Interpreting House

tal line, there has been an impressive relation over the years between partisan voting for the House and ups and downs in real income among voters. The national electorate rewards the congressional party of a president who reigns during economic prosperity and punishes the party of one who reigns during adversity.[42] Rewards and penalties may be given by the same circuitous route for other states of affairs, including national involvement in wars.[43] With voters behaving the way they do, it is in the electoral interest of a marginal congressman to help insure that a presidential administration of his own party is a popular success or that one of the opposite party is a failure. (Purely from the standpoint of electoral interest there is no reason why a congressman with a safe seat should care one way or another.)

But what can a marginal congressman do to affect the fortunes of a presidency? One shorthand course a marginal serving under a president of his own party can take is to support him diligently in roll call voting; there is ambiguous evidence that relevant marginals

Midterm Elections: Toward a Measurement of the In-Party's 'Expected' Loss of Seats," 61 *American Political Science Review* 694–700 (1967).

42. Gerald H. Kramer, "Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896–1964," 65 *American Political Science Review* 131–43 (1971). See also the symposium on the Kramer findings in 63 *American Economic Review* 160–80 (May 1973).

43. Kramer, "U.S. Voting Behavior," p. 140. Wars seem to earn penalties.

do behave disproportionately in this fashion.[44] This strategy may not always be the best one. During the 1958 recession, for example, it may have been wise for marginal Republicans to support Democratic deficit-spending bills over the opposition of President Eisenhower; in the 1958 election Eisenhower's policies seem to have been ruinous for members of his own party. How about marginals of the opposition party? By the same logic it might be advantageous for opposition marginals to try to wreck the economy; if it were done unobtrusively the voters would probably blame the president, not them.

There are a number of intriguing theoretical possibilities here for marginals of parties both in and out of power. Yet marginals seem not to pay much attention to strategies of this sort, whether ingenuous or ingenious. What we are pondering is whether individual marginals can realistically hope to do anything to affect the national component of the variance over time in congressional partisan election percentages.[45] And the answer seems to be no—or at least extraordinarily little. Leaving aside the problem of generating collective congressional action, there is the root problem of knowing what to try to do. It is hard to point to an instance in recent decades in which any group of

44. David B. Truman, *The Congressional Party* (New York: Wiley, 1959), pp. 213–18.

45. As in Stokes, "Parties and the Nationalization of Electoral Forces."

congressmen (marginals or not) has done something that has clearly changed the national congressional electoral percentage in a direction in which the group intended to change it (or to keep it stationary if that was the intention). There are too many imponderables. Most importantly, presidents follow their own logic. So do events. Not even economists can have a clear idea about what the effects of economic measures will be. The election cycle adds its own kind of perversity; the vigorous enactment of President Johnson's Great Society legislation (by all the survey evidence popular) was followed in 1966 by the largest Republican gain in House popular vote percentage of the last quarter century. Hence there is a lack of usable lore among congressmen on what legislative actions will produce what national electoral effects.[46]

46. Nonetheless there are interesting questions here that have never been explored. Do marginal congressmen—or members generally—of the party not in control of the presidency try to sabotage the economy? Of course they must not appear to do so, but there are "respectable" ways of acting. How about Republicans in the Eightieth Congress with their tax cutting in time of inflation? Or Democrats with their spending programs under President Nixon—also in a time of inflation? The answer is probably no. It would have to be shown that the same congressmen's actions differ under presidencies of different parties, and they probably do not. Strategies like this not only require duplicity, they require a vigorous consciousness of distant effects of a sort that is foreign to the congressional mentality.

And there is after all the problem of generating collective action—especially action among nonmarginal congressmen who can watch national election percentages oscillate and presidents come and go with relative equanimity. All in all the rational way for marginal congressmen to deal with national trends is to ignore them, to treat them as acts of God over which they can exercise no control. It makes much more sense to devote resources to things over which they think they can have some control. There is evidence that marginals do think and act distinctively. House marginals are more likely than nonmarginals to turn up as "district-oriented" and "delegates" in role studies;[47] they introduce more floor amendments;[48] in general marginals of both houses display more frenzy in their election-oriented activities. But these activities are not directed toward affecting national election percentages. And although they may differ in intensity, they do not differ in kind from the activities engaged in by everybody else.

Are, then, congressmen in a position to do anything about getting reelected? If an answer is sought in their ability to affect national partisan percentages, the answer is no. But if an answer is sought in their ability to affect the percentages in their own primary and

47. Davidson, *Role of the Congressman*, p. 128.

48. David M. Olson and Cynthia T. Nonidez, "Measures of Legislative Performance in the U.S. House of Representatives," 16 *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 273–74 (1972).

general elections, the answer is yes. Or at least so the case will be presented here. More specifically, it will be argued that they think that they can affect their own percentages, that in fact they can affect their own percentages, and furthermore that there is reason for them to try to do so. This last is obvious for the marginals, but perhaps not so obvious for the nonmarginals. Are they not, after all, occupants of "safe seats"? It is easy to form an image of congressmen who inherit lush party pastures and then graze their way through careers without ever having to worry about elections. But this image is misconceived, and it is important to show why.

First, when looked at from the standpoint of a career, congressional seats are not as safe as they may seem. Of House members serving in the Ninety-third Congress 58 percent had at least one time in their careers won general elections with less than 55 percent of the total vote, 77 percent with less than 60 percent of the vote. For senators the figures were 70 percent and 86 percent (the last figure including fifteen of the twenty-two southerners). And aside from these November results there is competition in the primaries. The fact is that the typical congressman at least occasionally has won a narrow victory.[49]

49. Over the long haul the proportion of seats switching from party to party is quite surprising. Of senators serving in the Ninety-third Congress, 56 had succeeded members of the opposite party in initially coming to the Senate, 43 had succeeded members

Second—to look at the election figures from a different angle—in United States House elections only about a third of the variance in partisan percentages over time is attributable to national swings. About half the variance is local (or, more properly, residual, the variance not explained by national and state components).[50] The local component is probably at least as high in Senate elections. Hence vote variation over which congressmen have reason to think they can exercise some control (i.e. the primary vote and the local component of the November vote) is substantial. What this comes down to in general elections is that district vote fluctuations beyond or in opposition to national trends can be quite striking. For example,

of the same party, and 1 (Hiram Fong: R., Hawaii) had come into the Senate at the same time his state entered the union. (Predecessors here are taken to be the last elected predecessors; i.e. interim appointees are ignored.) Of House members serving in the same Congress, 157 had originally succeeded members of the opposite party; 223 members of the same party; and 55 had originally taken newly created seats. (District continuity at the time of member transition is assumed here if a new district took in substantially the same territory as an old one.)

50. Stokes, "Parties and the Nationalization of Electoral Forces," p. 186. Thus the American ranking of vote components in order of importance differs from the British ranking. Richard S. Katz has recently introduced a measurement technique that yields higher national components. Katz, "The Attribution of Variance in Electoral Returns: An Alternative Measurement Technique," 67 *American Political Science Review* 817–28 (1973). But the British-American disparity presumably remains. There is a Stokes rejoinder at pp. 829–34.

between 1968 and 1970 the Republican share of the national House vote fell 3.3 percent, but the share of Congressman Chester L. Mize (R., Kans.) fell from 67.6 percent to 45.0 percent, and he lost his seat. In 1972 four incumbent Republican senators lost their seats; in general 1972 was not a bad year for congressional Republicans, and all four senators had won in 1966 with at least 58 percent of the vote. And so it goes. In addition, there are the primaries.[51] It is hard for anyone to feel absolutely secure in an electoral environment of this sort. In Kingdon's interview study of candidates who had just run for office in Wisconsin (about a third of them running for Congress) the proportion who recalled having been "uncertain" about electoral outcome during their campaigns was high, and the incidence of uncertainty was only modestly related to actual electoral outcome.[52]

51. In the 1964–72 period ten House committee chairmen lost their primaries.

52. John W. Kingdon, *Candidates for Office: Beliefs and Strategies* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 86–89. Richard F. Fenno, Jr., who has recently been traveling with incumbent congressmen in their districts—some of them very "safe" districts indeed—detects a pervasive feeling of electoral insecurity: "One of the dominant impressions of my travels is the terrific sense of *uncertainty* which animates these congressmen. They perceive electoral troubles where the most imaginative outside observer could not possibly perceive, conjure up or hallucinate them." Fenno, "Congressmen in Their Constituencies," unpublished manuscript, pp. 6–7.

But the local vote component cuts two ways; if losses are possible, so presumably are gains. In particular, it seems to be possible for some incumbents to beef up their November percentages beyond normal party levels in their constituencies. In the House (but apparently not in the Senate) the overall electoral value of incumbency seems to have risen in the last decade[53]—although of course some House incumbents still do lose their seats.

Third, there is a more basic point. The ultimate

53. From about 2 percent in the 1950s to about 5 percent in 1966 and maybe higher in 1970–72. See Robert S. Erikson, "The Advantage of Incumbency in Congressional Elections," 3 *Polity* 395–405 (1971); Erikson, "Malapportionment, Gerrymandering, and Party Fortunes in Congressional Elections," 66 *American Political Science Review* 1240 (1972); David R. Mayhew, "Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals," forthcoming in *Polity*, Spring 1974. It is not clear what accounts for the rise in incumbency value, not even certain that it is attributable to the election-oriented activities of incumbents. But some of the electoral sagas of recent years are truly startling. There is the case of the Wisconsin seventh district, strongly Republican for years in the hands of Melvin R. Laird. Laird's last percentages were 65.1 percent in 1966 and 64.1 percent in 1968. When Laird went to the cabinet, David R. Obey took the seat for the Democrats with 51.6 percent in a 1969 by-election. Obey won with 67.6 percent in 1970 and then with 63.5 percent in a 1972 election in which he was forced to run against an incumbent Republican in a merged district. On Obey's election-oriented activities see Norman C. Miller, "Privileges of Rank: New Congressman Finds Campaigning Is Easier Now That He's in Office," *Wall Street Journal*, August 4, 1969, p. 1.

concern here is not how probable it is that legislators will lose their seats but whether there is a connection between what they do in office and their need to be reelected. It is possible to conceive of an assembly in which no member ever comes close to losing a seat but in which the need to be reelected is what inspires members' behavior. It would be an assembly with no saints or fools in it, an assembly packed with skilled politicians going about their business. When we say "Congressman Smith is unbeatable," we do not mean that there is nothing he could do that would lose him his seat. Rather we mean, "Congressman Smith is unbeatable as long as he continues to do the things he is doing." If he stopped answering his mail, or stopped visiting his district, or began voting randomly on roll calls, or shifted his vote record eighty points on the ADA scale, he would bring on primary or November election troubles in a hurry. It is difficult to offer conclusive proof that this last statement is true, for there is no congressman willing to make the experiment. But normal political activity among politicians with healthy electoral margins should not be confused with inactivity. What characterizes "safe" congressmen is not that they are beyond electoral reach, but that their efforts are very likely to bring them uninterrupted electoral success.

Whether congressmen think their activities have electoral impact, and whether in fact they have impact, are of course two separate questions. Of the

former there can be little doubt that the answer is yes. In fact in their own minds successful politicians probably overestimate the impact they are having. Kingdon found in his Wisconsin candidates a "congratulation-rationalization effect," a tendency for winners to take personal credit for their victories and for losers to assign their losses to forces beyond their control.[54] The actual impact of politicians' activities is more difficult to assess. The evidence on the point is soft and scattered. It is hard to find variance in activities undertaken, for there are no politicians who consciously try to lose. There is no doubt that the electorate's general awareness of what is going on in Congress is something less than robust.[55] Yet the argument here will be that congressmen's activities in fact do have electoral impact. Pieces of evidence will be brought in as the discussion proceeds.[56]

54. Kingdon, *Candidates for Office*, p. 31. Charles S. Bullock III has recently found the same effect in a study of United States House incumbents and challengers in the 1972 election. Bullock, "Candidate Perceptions of Causes of Election Outcome," paper presented to the annual convention of the American Political Science Association, 1973.

55. Stokes and Miller, "Party Government."

56. The most sophisticated treatment of this subject is in Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, "Constituency Influence in Congress," ch. 16 in Campbell et al., *Elections and the Political Order*, pp. 366–70. Note that a weird but important kind of accountability relationship would exist if congressmen thought their activities had impact even if in fact they had none at all.

The next step here is to offer a brief conceptual treatment of the relation between congressmen and their electorates. In the Downsian analysis what national party leaders must worry about is voters' "expected party differential."[57] But to congressmen this is in practice irrelevant, for reasons specified earlier. A congressman's attention must rather be devoted to what can be called an "expected incumbent differential." Let us define this "expected incumbent differential" as any difference perceived by a relevant political actor between what an incumbent congressman is likely to do if returned to office and what any possible challenger (in primary or general election) would be likely to do. And let us define "relevant political actor" here as anyone who has a resource that might be used in the election in question. At the ballot box the only usable resources are votes, but there are resources that can be translated into votes: money, the ability to make persuasive endorsements, organizational skills, and so on. By this definition a "relevant political actor" need not be a constituent; one of the most important resources, money, flows all over the country in congressional campaign years.[58]

57. Downs, *Economic Theory of Democracy*, pp. 38–45.

58. To give an extreme example, in the North Dakota Senate campaign of 1970 an estimated 85 to 90 percent of the money spent by candidates of both parties came from out of state. Philip M. Stern, *The Rape of the Taxpayer* (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 384.

It must be emphasized that the average voter has only the haziest awareness of what an incumbent congressman is actually doing in office.[59] But an incumbent has to be concerned about actors who do form impressions about him, and especially about actors who can marshal resources other than their own votes. Senator Robert C. Byrd (D., W.Va.) has a "little list" of 2,545 West Virginians he regularly keeps in touch with.[60] A congressman's assistant interviewed for a Nader profile in 1972 refers to the "thought leadership" back in the district.[61] Of campaign re-

59. For thousands of November voters totally unaware of candidate particularities the commonest election criterion is no doubt the party label on the ballot. These voters are normally left undisturbed in their ignorance, although candidates may find it useful to deply resources to get the right ones to the polls. But it must not be assumed that there are no circumstances under which such voters can be aroused into vigorous candidate awareness.

60. Robert Sherrill, "The Embodiment of Poor White Power," *New York Times Magazine*, February 28, 1971, p. 51.

61. Ellen Szita, Ralph Nader Congress Project profile on Garner E. Shriver (R., Kans.) (Washington, D.C.: Grossman, 1972), p. 14. Shriver's administrative assistant was asked about the district value of the congressman's Appropriations Committee membership. His answer: "Projectwise, it's been valuable. . . . I wouldn't say the majority of his constituents recognize that the Appropriations Committee is one of the most important—just those I would term the 'thought leadership' in the district." The interviewer adds that it must be the "community leadership in Wichita" the assistant was referring to, for, when asked, "with few exceptions . . . the leaders listed more than ten different federally-subsidized projects that Representative Shriver had brought to the

sources one of the most vital is money. An incumbent not only has to assure that his own election funds are adequate, he has to try to minimize the probability that actors will bankroll an expensive campaign against him. There is the story that during the first Nixon term Senator James B. Pearson (R., Kans.) was told he would face a well-financed opponent in his 1972 primary if he did not display more party regularity in his voting.[62] Availability of money can affect strength of opposition candidacy in both primary and general elections.[63]

fourth district." (Congress Project profiles referred to in future footnotes will be called "Nader profiles" for short. For all of them the more complete citation is the one given here.)

62. Dennis Harvey, "How GOP Sen. Pearson Went from Sure Loser to Sure Winner in 1972," *Wall Street Journal*, September 29, 1972, p. 1.

63. There is the following report of an election problem suffered by Congressman Torbert H. Macdonald (D., Mass.), chairman of the Communications and Power Subcommittee of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee: "His fear of opposition from some of these industries is so overwhelming that they have succeeded in immobilizing him with regard to regulatory legislation. For example several years ago he received a political scare when the electric companies bankrolled his opponent in the general election. Since then, according to [Congressman Robert O.] Tiernan [D., R.I.], 'Macdonald will not touch them.' That interpretation is confirmed by Macdonald's former aid, Marty Kuhn, who states that 'Even though Torby easily defeated his opponent, the experience made him sort of paranoid. He is now reluctant to do anything that would offend the power people.' " John Paris's chapter on "Communications" in David E.

Another resource of significance is organizational expertise, probably more important than money among labor union offerings. Simple ability to do electioneering footwork is a resource the invoking of which may give campaigns an interesting twist. Leuthold found in studying ten 1962 House elections in the San Francisco area that 50 percent of campaign workers held college degrees (as against 12 percent of the Bay area population), and that the workers were more issue oriented than the general population.[64] The need to attract workers may induce candidates to traffic in issues more than they otherwise would. Former Congressman Allard K. Lowenstein (D., N.Y.) has as his key invokable resource a corps of student volunteers who will follow him from district to district, making him an unusually mobile candidate.

Still another highly important resource is the ability to make persuasive endorsements. Manhattan candidates angle for the imprimatur of the *New York Times.* New Hampshire politics rotates around endorsements of the *Manchester Union Leader.* Labor union committees circulate their approved lists. Chicago Democratic politicians seek the endorsement of the mayor. In the San Francisco area and elsewhere House candidates

Price (ed.), "The House and Senate Committees on Commerce" (unpublished manuscript), p. 161. The reference is apparently to the election of 1968, when Macdonald's percentage fell to 62.5. It is normally well over 65.

64. Leuthold, *Electioneering in a Democracy*, pp. 92–94.

try to score points by winning endorsements from officials of the opposite party.[65] As Neustadt argues, the influence of the president over congressmen (of both parties) varies with his public prestige and with his perceived ability to punish and reward.[66] One presidential tool is the endorsement, which can be carefully calibrated according to level of fervor, and which can be given to congressmen or to challengers running against congressmen. In the 1970 election Senator Charles Goodell (R., N.Y.), who had achieved public salience by attacking the Nixon administration, was apparently done in by the resources called forth by that attack; the vice president implicitly endorsed his Conservative opponent, and the administration acted to channel normally Republican money away from Goodell.[67]

What a congressman has to try to do is to insure that in primary and general elections the resource balance (with all other deployed resources finally translated into votes) favors himself rather than somebody else. To maneuver successfully he must remain

65. Ibid., p. 44.

66. Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York: New American Library, 1964), chs. 4, 5.

67. Of course when the president's poll ratings drop, so do his ability to punish and reward and his influence over congressmen. When they drop very low, it becomes politically profitable for congressmen of his own party to attack him—as with Democrats in 1951–52 and Republicans in 1973–74.

constantly aware of what political actors' incumbent differential readings are, and he must act in a fashion to inspire readings that favor himself. Complicating his task is the problem of slack resources. That is, only a very small proportion of the resources (other than votes) that are conceivably deployable in congressional campaigns are ever in fact deployed. But there is no sure way of telling who will suddenly become aroused and with what consequence. For example, just after the 1948 election the American Medical Association, unnerved by the medical program of the Attlee Government in Britain and by Democratic campaign promises here to institute national health insurance, decided to venture into politics. By 1950 congressmen on record as supporters of health insurance found themselves confronted by a million-dollar AMA advertising drive, local "healing arts committees" making candidate endorsements, and even doctors sending out campaign literature with their monthly bills. By 1952 it was widely believed that the AMA had decided some elections, and few congressmen were still mentioning health insurance.[68]

In all his calculations the congressman must keep in

68. "The American Medical Association: Power, Purpose, and Politics in Organized Medicine," 63 *Yale Law Journal* 1011–18 (1954). Senator Douglas's recollection: "Legislators accepted the conclusion that the voters were opposed to all forms of health insurance and that they should avoid an open conflict with the AMA." Douglas, *In the Fullness of Time*, p. 390.

mind that he is serving two electorates rather than one—a November electorate and a primary electorate nested inside it but not a representative sample of it. From the standpoint of the politician a primary is just another election to be survived.[69] A typical scientific poll of a constituency yields a congressman information on the public standing of possible challengers in the other party but also in his own party. A threat is a threat. For an incumbent with a firm "supporting coalition" [70] of elite groups in his party the primary electorate is normally quiescent. But there can be sudden turbulence. And it sometimes happens that the median views of primary and November electorates are so divergent on salient issues that a congressman finds it difficult to hold both electorates at once. This has been a recurrent problem among California Republicans.[71]

69. The convention system of the late nineteenth century offered comparable perils. Bryce comments that House seats were highly prized and that there was an ethic that they should be rotated. "An ambitious Congressman is therefore forced to think day and night of his re-nomination, and to secure it not only by procuring, if he can, grants from the Federal Treasury for local purposes, and places for the relatives and friends of the local wire-pullers who control the nominating conventions, but also by sedulously 'nursing' the constituency during the vacations." James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (New York: Putnam's, 1959), I: 40–41.

70. The term is Kingdon's. *Candidates for Office*, p. 45.

71. Although the direct primary system is uniquely American, there are variants that pose similar problems for politicians. In

A final conceptual point has to do with whether congressmen's behavior should be characterized as "maximizing" behavior. Does it make sense to visualize the congressman as a maximizer of vote percentage in elections—November or primary or, with some complex trade-off, both? For two reasons the answer is probably no. The first has to do with his goal itself, which is to stay in office rather than to win all the popular vote. More precisely his goal is to stay in office over a number of future elections, which does mean that "winning comfortably" in any one of them (except the last) is more desirable than winning by a narrow plurality. The logic here is that a narrow victory (in primary or general election) is a sign of weakness that can inspire hostile political actors to deploy resources intensively the next time around. By this reasoning the higher the election percentages the better. No doubt any congressman would engage in an act to raise his November figure from 80 percent to 90

Italian parliamentary elections each voter registers a vote for a favored party's candidate list, but then can also cast preference votes for individual candidates on that list. Whether a given candidate gets elected depends both on how well his party does against other parties and how well he does against nominees of his own party. Mass organizations (e.g. labor and farm groups) capable of mobilizing preference votes reap benefits in the parliament, "where nothing seems to count so much as the ability to deliver the required number of preference votes." Joseph LaPalombara, *Interest Groups in Italian Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 248–49.

percent if he could be absolutely sure that the act would accomplish the end (without affecting his primary percentage) and if it could be undertaken at low personal cost. But still, trying to "win comfortably" is not the same as trying to win all the popular vote. As the personal cost (e.g. expenditure of personal energy) of a hypothetical "sure gain" rises, the congressman at the 55 percent November level is more likely to be willing to pay it than his colleague at the 80 percent level.

The second and more decisive reason why a pure maximization model is inappropriate is that congressmen act in an environment of high uncertainty. An assumption of minimax behavior therefore gives a better fit. Behavior of an innovative sort can yield vote gains, but it can also bring disaster (as in Senator Goodell's case). For the most part it makes sense for congressmen to follow conservative strategies. Each member, after all, is a recent victor of two elections (primary and general), and it is only reasonable for him to believe that whatever it was that won for him the last time is good enough to win the next time. When a congressman has a contented primary electorate and a comfortable November percentage, it makes sense to sit tight, to try to keep the coalition together. Where November constituencies are polarized in the conventional fashion—labor and liberals on one side, business on the other—there is hardly any alternative. Yet simply repeating the activities of the past is of

course impossible, for the world changes. There are always new voters, new events, new issues. Congressmen therefore need conservative strategies for dealing with change. And they have some. For members with conventional supporting coalitions it can be useful to accept party cues in deciding how to cast roll call votes;[72] a Republican House member from Indiana can hardly go wrong in following the party line (though for an Alabama Democrat or a Massachusetts Republican it would be madness to do so). It may be useful to build a voting record that blends in with the records of party colleagues in one's state delegation.[73] It is surely useful to watch other members' primary and general elections to try to gain clues on voter temperament. But conservatism can be carried only so

72. On cues generally see Donald R. Matthews and James A. Stimson, "Cue-Taking by Congressmen: A Model and a Computer Simulation," paper presented at Conference on the Use of Quantitative Methods in the Study of the History of Legislative Behavior, 1972; and John E. Jackson, "Statistical Models of Senate Roll Call Voting," 65 *American Political Science Review* 451–70 (1971).

73. See Aage Clausen, *How Congressmen Decide: A Policy Focus* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), ch. 7. Fiellin writes on the New York delegation: "Most important of all, perhaps, is that the member in taking cues from the New York group cannot get into electoral difficulties as a result of deviation. There is security in numbers." Alan Fiellin, "The Functions of Informal Groups: A State Delegation," ch. 3 in Robert L. Peabody and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.), *New Perspectives on the House of Representatives* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), p. 113.

far. It requires a modest degree of venturesomeness just to hold an old coalition together. And for members in great electoral danger (again, Goodell) it may on balance be wise to resort to ostentatious innovation.

Whether they are safe or marginal, cautious or audacious, congressmen must constantly engage in activities related to reelection. There will be differences in emphasis, but all members share the root need to do things—indeed, to do things day in and day out during their terms. The next step here is to present a typology, a short list of the *kinds* of activities congressmen find it electorally useful to engage in. The case will be that there are three basic kinds of activities. It will be important to lay them out with some care, for arguments in part 2 will be built on them.

One activity is *advertising,* defined here as any effort to disseminate one's name among constituents in such a fashion as to create a favorable image but in messages having little or no issue content. A successful congressman builds what amounts to a brand name, which may have a generalized electoral value for other politicians in the same family. The personal qualities to emphasize are experience, knowledge, responsiveness, concern, sincerity, independence, and the like. Just getting one's name across is difficult enough; only about half the electorate, if asked, can supply their House members' names. It helps a congressman to be known. "In the main, recognition carries a positive

valence; to be perceived at all is to be perceived favorably." [74] A vital advantage enjoyed by House incumbents is that they are much better known among voters than their November challengers.[75] They are better known because they spend a great deal of time, energy, and money trying to make themselves better known.[76] There are standard routines—frequent visits to the constituency, nonpolitical speeches to home audiences,[77] the sending out of infant care booklets and letters of condolence and congratulation. Of 158 House members questioned in the mid-1960s, 121 said that they regularly sent newsletters to their constituents;[78] 48 wrote separate news or opinion columns for newspapers; 82 regularly reported to their constituencies by radio or television;[79] 89 regularly sent out mail questionnaires.[80] Some routines are less standard. Congressman George E. Shipley (D., Ill.) claims to have met personally about half his constituents (i.e. some 200,000 people).[81] For over twenty years Congressman Charles C. Diggs, Jr. (D., Mich.) has run a radio program featuring himself as a "combination disc jockey–commentator and minister." [82] Congressman Daniel J. Flood (D., Pa.) is "famous for appearing unannounced and often uninvited at wedding anniversaries and other events." [83] Anniversaries and other events aside, congressional advertising is done

74. Stokes and Miller, "Party Government," p. 205. The same may not be true among, say, mayors.

75. Ibid., p. 204. The likelihood is that senators are also better known than their challengers, but that the gap is not so wide as it is on the House side. There is no hard evidence on the point.

76. In Clapp's interview study, "Conversations with more than fifty House members uncovered only one who seemed to place little emphasis on strategies designed to increase communications with the voter." *The Congressman*, p. 88. The exception was an innocent freshman.

77. A statement by one of Clapp's congressmen: "The best speech is a non-political speech. I think a commencement speech is the best of all. X says he has never lost a precinct in a town where he has made a commencement speech." *The Congressman*, p. 96.

78. These and the following figures on member activity are from Donald G. Tacheron and Morris K. Udall, *The Job of the Congressman* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), pp. 281–88.

79. Another Clapp congressman: "I was looking at my TV film today—I have done one every week since I have been here—and who was behind me but Congressman X. I'll swear he had never done a TV show before in his life but he only won by a few hundred votes last time. Now he has a weekly television show. If he had done that before he wouldn't have had any trouble." *The Congressman*, p. 92.

80. On questionnaires generally see Walter Wilcox, "The Congressional Poll—and Non-Poll," in Edward C. Dreyer and Walter A. Rosenbaum (eds.), *Political Opinion and Electoral Behavior* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1966), pp. 390–400.

81. Szita, Nader profile on Shipley, p. 12. The congressman is also a certified diver. "When Shipley is home in his district and a drowning occurs, he is sometimes asked to dive down for the body. 'It gets in the papers and actually, it's pretty good publicity for me,' he admitted." P. 3. Whether this should be classified under "casework" rather than "advertising" is difficult to say.

82. Lenore Cooley, Nader profile on Diggs, p. 2.

83. Anne Zandman and Arthur Magida, Nader profile on Flood, p. 2.

largely at public expense. Use of the franking privilege has mushroomed in recent years; in early 1973 one estimate predicted that House and Senate members would send out about 476 million pieces of mail in the year 1974, at a public cost of $38.1 million—or about 900,000 pieces per member with a subsidy of $70,000 per member.[84] By far the heaviest mailroom traffic comes in Octobers of even-numbered years.[85] There are some differences between House and Senate members in the ways they go about getting their names across. House members are free to blanket their constituencies with mailings for all boxholders; senators are not. But senators find it easier to appear on national television—for example, in short reaction statements on the nightly news shows. Advertising is a staple congressional activity, and there is no end to it. For each member there are always new voters to be apprised of his worthiness and old voters to be reminded of it.[86]

A second activity may be called *credit claiming*, defined here as acting so as to generate a belief in a

84. Norman C. Miller, "Yes, You Are Getting More Politico Mail: And It Will Get Worse," *Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 1973, p. 1.

85. Monthly data compiled by Albert Cover.

86. After serving his two terms, the late President Eisenhower had this conclusion: "There is nothing a Congressman likes better than to get his name in the headlines and for it to be published all over the United States." From a 1961 speech quoted in the *New York Times*, June 20, 1971.

relevant political actor (or actors) that one is personally responsible for causing the government, or some unit thereof, to do something that the actor (or actors) considers desirable. The political logic of this, from the congressman's point of view, is that an actor who believes that a member can make pleasing things happen will no doubt wish to keep him in office so that he can make pleasing things happen in the future. The emphasis here is on individual accomplishment (rather than, say, party or governmental accomplishment) and on the congressman as doer (rather than as, say, expounder of constituency views). Credit claiming is highly important to congressmen, with the consequence that much of congressional life is a relentless search for opportunities to engage in it.

Where can credit be found? If there were only one congressman rather than 535, the answer would in principle be simple enough.[87] Credit (or blame) would attach in Downsian fashion to the doings of the government as a whole. But there are 535. Hence it becomes necessary for each congressman to try to peel off pieces of governmental accomplishment for which he can believably generate a sense of responsibility. For the average congressman the staple way of doing this is to traffic in what may be called "particularized benefits."[88] Particularized governmental benefits, as

87. In practice the one might call out the army and suspend the Constitution.

88. These have some of the properties of what Lowi calls

the term will be used here, have two properties: (1) Each benefit is given out to a specific individual, group, or geographical constituency, the recipient unit being of a scale that allows a single congressman to be recognized (by relevant political actors and other congressmen) as the claimant for the benefit (other congressmen being perceived as indifferent or hostile). (2) Each benefit is given out in apparently ad hoc fashion (unlike, say, social security checks) with a congressman apparently having a hand in the allocation. A particularized benefit can normally be regarded as a member of a class. That is, a benefit given out to an individual, group, or constituency can normally be looked upon by congressmen as one of a class of similar benefits given out to sizable numbers of individuals, groups, or constituencies. Hence the impression can arise that a congressman is getting "his share" of whatever it is the government is offering. (The classes may be vaguely defined. Some state legislatures deal in what their members call "local legislation.")

In sheer volume the bulk of particularized benefits come under the heading of "casework"—the thousands of favors congressional offices perform for supplicants in ways that normally do not require legislative

"distributive" benefits. Theodore J. Lowi, "American Business, Public Policy, Case-Studies, and Political Theory," 16 *World Politics* 690 (1964).

action. High school students ask for essay materials, soldiers for emergency leaves, pensioners for location of missing checks, local governments for grant information, and on and on. Each office has skilled professionals who can play the bureaucracy like an organ—pushing the right pedals to produce the desired effects.[89] But many benefits require new legislation, or at least they require important allocative decisions on matters covered by existent legislation. Here the congressman fills the traditional role of supplier of goods to the home district. It is a believable role; when a member claims credit for a benefit on the order of a dam, he may well receive it.[90] Shiny construction projects seem especially useful.[91] In the decades before

89. On casework generally see Kenneth G. Olson, "The Service Function of the United States Congress," pp. 337–74 in American Enterprise Institute, *Congress: The First Branch of Government* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1966).

90. Sometimes without justification. Thus this comment by a Republican member of the House Public Works Committee: "The announcements for projects are an important part of this. . . . And the folks back home are funny about this—if your name is associated with it, you get all the credit whether you got it through or not." James T. Murphy, "Partisanship and the House Public Works Committee," paper presented to the annual convention of the American Political Science Association, 1968, p. 10.

91. "They've got to *see* something; it's the bread and butter issues that count—the dams, the post offices and the other public buildings, the highways. They want to know what you've been doing." A comment by a Democratic member of the House Public Works Committee. Ibid.

1934, tariff duties for local industries were a major commodity.[92] In recent years awards given under grant-in-aid programs have become more useful as they have become more numerous. Some quests for credit are ingenious; in 1971 the story broke that congressmen had been earmarking foreign aid money for specific projects in Israel in order to win favor with home constituents.[93] It should be said of constituency benefits that congressmen are quite capable of taking the initiative in drumming them up; that is, there can be no automatic assumption that a congressman's activity is the result of pressures brought to bear by organized interests. Fenno shows the importance of member initiative in his discussion of the House Interior Committee.[94]

A final point here has to do with geography. The examples given so far are all of benefits conferred upon home constituencies or recipients therein (the latter including the home residents who applauded the Israeli projects). But the properties of particularized benefits were carefully specified so as not to exclude

92. The classic account is in E. E. Schattschneider, *Politics, Pressures, and the Tariff* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1935).

93. "Israeli Schools and Hospitals Seek Funds in Foreign-Aid Bill," *New York Times*, October 4, 1971, p. 10.

94. Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*, p. 40. Cf. this statement on initiative in the French Third Republic: "Most deputies ardently championed the cause of interest groups in their district without waiting to be asked." Bernard E. Brown, "Pressure Politics in France," 18 *Journal of Politics* 718 (1956).

the possibility that some benefits may be given to recipients outside the home constituencies. Some probably are. Narrowly drawn tax loopholes qualify as particularized benefits, and some of them are probably conferred upon recipients outside the home districts.[95] (It is difficult to find solid evidence on the point.) Campaign contributions flow into districts from the outside, so it would not be surprising to find that benefits go where the resources are.[96]

How much particularized benefits count for at the polls is extraordinarily difficult to say. But it would be hard to find a congressman who thinks he can afford to wait around until precise information is available. The lore is that they count—furthermore, given home expectations, that they must be supplied in regular quantities for a member to stay electorally even with the board. Awareness of favors may spread beyond their recipients,[97] building for a member a general

95. For a discussion of the politics of tax loopholes see Stanley S. Surrey, "The Congress and the Tax Lobbyist—How Special Tax Provisions Get Enacted," 70 *Harvard Law Review* 1145–82 (1957).

96. A possible example of a transaction of this sort: During passage of the 1966 "Christmas tree" tax bill, Senator Vance Hartke (D., Ind.) won inclusion of an amendment giving a tax credit to a California aluminum firm with a plant in the Virgin Islands. George Lardner, Jr., "The Day Congress Played Santa," *Washington Post*, December 10, 1966, p. 10. Whether Hartke was getting campaign funds from the firm is not wholly clear, but Lardner's account allows the inference that he was.

97. Thus this comment of a Senate aide, "The world's greatest publicity organ is still the human mouth. . . . When you get

reputation as a good provider. "Rivers Delivers." "He Can Do More For Massachusetts." [98] A good example of Capitol Hill lore on electoral impact is given in this account of the activities of Congressman Frank Thompson, Jr. (D., N.J., 4th district):

> In 1966, the 4th was altered drastically by redistricting; it lost Burlington County and gained Hunterdon, Warren, and Sussex. Thompson's performance at the polls since 1966 is a case study of how an incumbent congressman, out of line with his district's ideological persuasions, can become unbeatable. In 1966, Thompson carried Mercer by 23,000 votes and lost the three new counties by 4,600, winning reelection with 56% of the votes. He then survived a district-wide drop in his vote two years later. In 1970, the Congressman carried Mercer County by 20,000 votes and the rest of the district by 6,000, finishing with 58%. The drop in Mercer resulted from the attempt of his hard-line conservative opponent to exploit the racial unrest which had developed in Trenton. But for four years Thompson had been making friends in Hunterdon, Warren, and Sussex, busy doing the kind of chores that congressmen do. In this case, Thompson concerned himself with the interests of dairy farmers at the Department of Agriculture. The results of his efforts were clear when the results came in from the 4th's northern counties.[99]

somebody $25.00 from the Social Security Administration, he talks to his friends and neighbors about it. After a while the story grows until you've single-handedly obtained $2,500 for a constituent who was on the brink of starvation." Matthews, *U.S. Senators*, p. 226.

98. For some examples of particularistically oriented congressmen see the Nader profiles by Sven Holmes on James A. Haley (D., Fla.), Newton Koltz on Joseph P. Addabbo (D., N.Y.), Alex Berlow on Kenneth J. Gray (D., Ill.), and Sarah Glazer on John Young (D., Tex.). For a fascinating picture of the things House members were expected to do half a century ago see Joe Martin, *My First Fifty Years in Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), pp. 55–59.

So much for particularized benefits. But is credit available elsewhere? For governmental accomplishments beyond the scale of those already discussed? The general answer is that the prime mover role is a hard one to play on larger matters—at least before broad electorates. A claim, after all, has to be credible. If a congressman goes before an audience and says, "I am responsible for passing a bill to curb inflation," or "I am responsible for the highway program," hardly anyone will believe him. There are two reasons why people may be skeptical of such claims. First, there is a numbers problem. On an accomplishment of a sort that probably engaged the supportive interest of more than one member it is reasonable to suppose that credit should be apportioned among them. But second, there is an overwhelming problem of information costs.

99. Michael Barone, Grant Ujifusa, and Douglas Matthews, *The Almanac of American Politics* (Boston: Gambit, 1972), pp. 479–80.

For typical voters Capitol Hill is a distant and mysterious place; few have anything like a working knowledge of its maneuverings. Hence there is no easy way of knowing whether a congressman is staking a valid claim or not. The odds are that the information problem cuts in different ways on different kinds of issues. On particularized benefits it may work in a congressman's favor; he may get credit for the dam he had nothing to do with building. Sprinkling a district with dams, after all, is something a congressman is supposed to be able to do. But on larger matters it may work against him. For a voter lacking an easy way to sort out valid from invalid claims the sensible recourse is skepticism. Hence it is unlikely that congressmen get much mileage out of credit claiming on larger matters before broad electorates.[100]

Yet there is an obvious and important qualification here. For many congressmen credit claiming on non-particularized matters is possible in specialized subject areas because of the congressional division of labor. The term "governmental unit" in the original definition of credit claiming is broad enough to include committees, subcommittees, and the two houses of Congress itself. Thus many congressmen can believably claim credit for blocking bills in subcommittee,

100. Any teacher of American politics has had students ask about senators running for the presidency (Goldwater, McGovern, McCarthy, any of the Kennedys), "But what bills has he passed?" There is no unembarrassing answer.

adding on amendments in committee, and so on. The audience for transactions of this sort is usually small. But it may include important political actors (e.g. an interest group, the president, the *New York Times*, Ralph Nader) who are capable of both paying Capitol Hill information costs and deploying electoral resources. There is a well-documented example of this in Fenno's treatment of post office politics in the 1960s. The postal employee unions used to watch very closely the activities of the House and Senate Post Office Committees and supply valuable electoral resources (money, volunteer work) to members who did their bidding on salary bills.[101] Of course there are many examples of this kind of undertaking, and there is more to be said about it. The subject will be covered more exhaustively in part 2.

The third activity congressmen engage in may be called *position taking,* defined here as the public enunciation of a judgmental statement on anything likely to be of interest to political actors. The statement may take the form of a roll call vote. The most important classes of judgmental statements are those prescribing American governmental ends (a vote cast against the war; a statement that "the war should be ended immediately") or governmental means (a statement that "the way to end the war is to take it to the United Nations"). The judgments may be implicit rather than

101. Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees,* pp. 242–55.

explicit, as in: "I will support the president on this matter." But judgments may range far beyond these classes to take in implicit or explicit statements on what almost anybody should do or how he should do it: "The great Polish scientist Copernicus has been unjustly neglected"; "The way for Israel to achieve peace is to give up the Sinai." [102] The congressman as position taker is a speaker rather than a doer. The electoral requirement is not that he make pleasing things happen but that he make pleasing judgmental statements. The position itself is the political commodity. Especially on matters where governmental responsibility is widely diffused it is not surprising that political actors should fall back on positions as tests of incumbent virtue. For voters ignorant of congressional processes the recourse is an easy one. The following comment by one of Clapp's House interviewees is highly revealing: "Recently, I went home and began to talk about the ——— act. I was pleased to have sponsored that bill, but it soon dawned on me that the point wasn't getting through at all. What was getting through was that the act might be a help to people. I changed the emphasis: I didn't mention my role particularly, but stressed my support of the legislation." [103]

102. In the terminology of Stokes, statements may be on either "position issues" or "valence issues." Donald E. Stokes, "Spatial Models of Party Competition," ch. 9 in Campbell et al., *Elections and the Political Order*, pp. 170–74.

103. Clapp, *The Congressman*, p. 108. A difficult borderline question here is whether introduction of bills in Congress should be

The ways in which positions can be registered are numerous and often imaginative. There are floor addresses ranging from weighty orations to mass-produced "nationality day statements." [104] There are speeches before home groups, television appearances, letters, newsletters, press releases, ghostwritten books, *Playboy* articles, even interviews with political scientists. On occasion congressmen generate what amount to petitions; whether or not to sign the 1956 Southern Manifesto defying school desegregation rulings was an important decision for southern members.[105] Outside

counted under position taking or credit claiming. On balance probably under the former. Yet another Clapp congressman addresses the point: "I introduce about sixty bills a year, about 120 a Congress. I try to introduce bills that illustrate, by and large, my ideas—legislative, economic, and social. I do like being able to say when I get cornered, 'yes, boys, I introduced a bill to try to do that in 1954.' To me it is the perfect answer." Ibid., p. 141. But voters probably give claims like this about the value they deserve.

104. On floor speeches generally see Matthews, *U.S. Senators*, p. 247. On statements celebrating holidays cherished by ethnic groups, Hearings on the Organization of Congress before the Joint Committee on the Organization of the Congress, 89th Cong., 1st sess., 1965, p. 1127; and Arlen J. Large, "And Now Let's Toast Nicolaus Copernicus, the Famous German," *Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 1973, p. 1.

105. Sometimes members of the Senate ostentatiously line up as "cosponsors" of measures—an activity that may attract more attention than roll call voting itself. Thus in early 1973, seventy-six senators backed a provision to block trade concessions to the U.S.S.R. until the Soviet government allowed Jews to emigrate without paying high exit fees. " 'Why did so many people sign the

the roll call process the congressman is usually able to tailor his positions to suit his audiences. A solid consensus in the constituency calls for ringing declarations; for years the late Senator James K. Vardaman (D., Miss.) campaigned on a proposal to repeal the Fifteenth Amendment.[106] Division or uncertainty in the constituency calls for waffling; in the late 1960s a congressman had to be a poor politician indeed not to be able to come up with an inoffensive statement on Vietnam ("We must have peace with honor at the earliest possible moment consistent with the national interest"). On a controversial issue a Capitol Hill office normally prepares two form letters to send out to constituent letter writers—one for the pros and one (not directly contradictory) for the antis.[107] Handling discrete audiences in person requires simple agility, a talent well demonstrated in this selection from a Nader profile:

> "You may find this difficult to understand," said Democrat Edward R. Roybal, the Mexican-American representative from California's thirtieth district, "but sometimes I wind up making a patriotic speech one afternoon and later on that same day an anti-war speech. In the patriotic speech I speak of past wars but I also speak of the need to prevent more wars. My positions are not inconsistent; I just approach different people differently." Roybal went on to depict the diversity of crowds he speaks to: one afternoon he is surrounded by balding men wearing Veterans' caps and holding American flags; a few hours later he speaks to a crowd of Chicano youths, angry over American involvement in Vietnam. Such a diverse constituency, Roybal believes, calls for different methods of expressing one's convictions.[108]

Indeed it does. Versatility of this sort is occasionally possible in roll call voting. For example a congressman may vote one way on recommittal and the other on final passage, leaving it unclear just how he stands on a bill.[109] Members who cast identical votes on a measure may give different reasons for having done so. Yet it is on roll calls that the crunch comes; there is no way for a member to avoid making a record on

amendment?' a Northern Senator asked rhetorically. 'Because there is no political advantage in not signing. If you do sign, you don't offend anyone. If you don't sign, you might offend some Jews in your state.' " David E. Rosenbaum, "Firm Congress Stand on Jews in Soviet Is Traced to Efforts by Those in U.S.," *New York Times*, April 6, 1973, p. 14.

106. ". . . an utterly hopeless proposal and for that reason an ideal campaign issue." V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1949), p. 232.

107. Instructions on how to do this are given in Tacheron and Udall, *Job of the Congressman*, pp. 73–74.

108. William Lazarus, Nader profile on Edward R. Roybal (D., Cal.), p. 1.

109. On obfuscation in congressional position taking see Raymond A. Bauer, Ithiel de Sola Pool, and Lewis A. Dexter, *American Business and Public Policy* (New York: Atherton, 1964), pp. 431–32.

hundreds of issues, some of which are controversial in the home constituencies. Of course, most roll call positions considered in isolation are not likely to cause much of a ripple at home. But broad voting patterns can and do; member "ratings" calculated by the Americans for Democratic Action, Americans for Constitutional Action, and other outfits are used as guidelines in the deploying of electoral resources. And particular issues often have their alert publics. Some national interest groups watch the votes of all congressmen on single issues and ostentatiously try to reward or punish members for their positions; over the years some notable examples of such interest groups have been the Anti-Saloon League,[110] the early Farm Bureau,[111] the American Legion,[112] the American Medical Association,[113] and the National Rifle Associ-

110. "Elaborate indexes of politicians and their records were kept at Washington and in most of the states, and professions of sympathy were matched with deeds. The voters were constantly apprised of the doings of their representatives." Peter H. Odegard, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti-Saloon League* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 21.

111. On Farm Bureau dealings with congressmen in the 1920s see Orville M. Kile, *The Farm Bureau through Three Decades* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1948), ch. 7.

112. V. O. Key, Jr., "The Veterans and the House of Representatives: A Study of a Pressure Group and Electoral Mortality," 5 *Journal of Politics* 27–40 (1943).

113. "The American Medical Association," pp. 1011–18. See also Richard Harris, *A Sacred Trust* (New York: New American Library, 1966).

ation.[114] On rare occasions single roll calls achieve a rather high salience among the public generally. This seems especially true of the Senate, which every now and then winds up for what might be called a "showdown vote," with pressures on all sides, presidential involvement, media attention given to individual senators' positions, and suspense about the outcome. Examples are the votes on the nuclear test-ban treaty in 1963, civil rights cloture in 1964, civil rights cloture again in 1965, the Haynsworth appointment in 1969, the Carswell appointment in 1970, and the ABM in 1970. Controversies on roll calls like these are often relived in subsequent campaigns, the southern Senate elections of 1970 with their Haynsworth and Carswell issues being cases in point.

Probably the best position-taking strategy for most congressmen at most times is to be conservative—to cling to their own positions of the past where possible and to reach for new ones with great caution where necessary. Yet in an earlier discussion of strategy the suggestion was made that it might be rational for

114. On the NRA generally see Stanford N. Sesser, "The Gun: Kingpin of 'Gun Lobby' Has a Million Members, Much Clout in Congress," *Wall Street Journal*, May 24, 1972, p. 1. On the defeat of Senator Joseph Tydings (D., Md.) in 1970: "Tydings himself tended to blame the gun lobby, which in turn was quite willing to take the credit. 'Nobody in his right mind is going to take on that issue again [i.e. gun control],' one Tydings strategist admitted." John F. Bibby and Roger H. Davidson, *On Capitol Hill: Studies in the Legislative Process* (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden, 1972), p. 50.

members in electoral danger to resort to innovation. The form of innovation available is entrepreneurial position taking, its logic being that for a member facing defeat with his old array of positions it makes good sense to gamble on some new ones. It may be that congressional marginals fulfill an important function here as issue pioneers—experimenters who test out new issues and thereby show other politicians which ones are usable.[115] An example of such a pioneer is Senator Warren Magnuson (D., Wash.), who responded to a surprisingly narrow victory in 1962 by reaching for a reputation in the area of consumer affairs.[116] Another example is Senator Ernest Hollings (D., S.C.), a servant of a shaky and racially heterogeneous southern constituency who launched "hunger" as an issue in 1969—at once pointing to a problem and giving it a useful nonracial definition.[117] One of the

115. A cautious politician will not be sure of an issue until it has been tested in a campaign. Polling evidence is suggestive, but it can never be conclusive.

116. David Price, *Who Makes the Laws?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1972), p. 29. Magnuson was chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. "Onto the old Magnuson, interested in fishing, shipping, and Boeing Aircraft, and running a rather sleepy committee, was grafted a new one: the champion of the consumer, the national legislative leader, and the patron of an energetic and innovative legislative staff." P. 78.

117. Marjorie Hunter, "Hollings Fight on Hunger Is Stirring the South," *New York Times*, March 8, 1969, p. 14. The local reaction was favorable. "Already Senator Herman E. Talmadge, Democrat of Georgia, has indicated he will begin a hunger crusade

most successful issue entrepreneurs of recent decades was the late Senator Joseph McCarthy (R., Wis.); it was all there—the close primary in 1946, the fear of defeat in 1952, the desperate casting about for an issue, the famous 1950 dinner at the Colony Restaurant where suggestions were tendered, the decision that "Communism" might just do the trick.[118]

The effect of position taking on electoral behavior is about as hard to measure as the effect of credit claiming. Once again there is a variance problem; congressmen do not differ very much among themselves in the methods they use or the skills they display in attuning themselves to their diverse constituencies. All of them, after all, are professional politicians. There is intriguing hard evidence on some matters where variance can be captured. Schoenberger has found that House Republicans who signed an early pro-Goldwater petition plummeted significantly farther in their 1964 percentages than their colleagues who did not sign.[119] (The signers appeared genuinely

in his own state. Other Senators have hinted that they may do the same."

118. Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (New York: Hayden, 1970), p. 29. Rovere's conclusion: "McCarthy took up the Communist menace in 1950 not with any expectation that it would make him a sovereign of the assemblies, but with the single hope that it would help him hold his job in 1952." Richard Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (Cleveland: World, 1961), p. 120.

119. Robert A. Schoenberger, "Campaign Strategy and Party Loyalty: The Electoral Relevance of Candidate Decision-Making

to believe that identification with Goldwater was an electoral plus.) Erikson has found that roll call records are interestingly related to election percentages: "[A] reasonable estimate is that an unusually liberal Republican Representative gets at least 6 per cent more of the two-party vote . . . than his extreme conservative counterpart would in the same district." [120] In other words, taking some roll call positions that please voters of the opposite party can be electorally helpful. (More specifically, it can help in November; some primary electorates will be more tolerant of it than others.) Sometimes an inspection of deviant cases offers clues. There is the ideological odyssey of former Congressman Walter Baring (D., Nev.), who entered Congress as a more or less regular Democrat in the mid-1950s but who moved over to a point where he was the most conservative House Democrat outside the South by the late 1960s. The Nevada electorate reacted predictably; Baring's November percentages rose astoundingly high (82.5 percent in 1970), but he encountered guerrilla warfare in the primaries which finally cost him his nomination in 1972—whereupon the seat turned Republican.

There can be no doubt that congressmen believe positions make a difference. An important conse-

in the 1964 Congressional Elections," 63 *American Political Science Review* 515–20 (1969).

120. Robert S. Erikson, "The Electoral Impact of Congressional Roll Call Voting," 65 *American Political Science Review* 1023 (1971).

quence of this belief is their custom of watching each other's elections to try to figure out what positions are salable. Nothing is more important in Capitol Hill politics than the shared conviction that election returns have proven a point. Thus the 1950 returns were read not only as a rejection of health insurance but as a ratification of McCarthyism.[121] When two North Carolina nonsigners of the 1956 Southern Manifesto immediately lost their primaries, the message was clear to southern members that there could be no straying from a hard line on the school desegregation issue. Any breath of life left in the cause of school bussing was squeezed out by House returns from the Detroit area in 1972. Senator Douglas gives an interesting report on the passage of the first minimum wage bill in the Seventy-fifth Congress. In 1937 the bill was tied up in the House Rules Committee, and there was an effort to get it to the floor through use of a discharge petition. Then two primary elections broke the jam. Claude Pepper (D., Fla.) and Lister Hill (D., Ala.) won nominations to fill vacant Senate seats. "Both campaigned on behalf of the Wages and Hours

121. Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*, pp. 122–31. The defeat of Senator Millard Tydings (D., Md.) was attributed to resources (money, endorsements, volunteer work) conferred or mobilized by McCarthy. "And if Tydings can be defeated, then who was safe? Even the most conservative and entrenched Democrats began to fear for their seats, and in the months that followed, the legend of McCarthy's political power grew." P. 123.

bill, and both won smashing victories. . . . Immediately after the results of the Florida and Alabama primaries became known, there was a stampede to sign the petition, and the necessary 218 signatures were quickly obtained." [122] The bill later passed. It may be useful to close this section on position taking with a piece of political lore on electoral impact that can stand beside the piece on the impact of credit claiming offered earlier. The discussion is of the pre-1972 sixth California House district:

> Since 1952 the district's congressman has been Republican William S. Mailliard, a wealthy member of an old California family. For many years Mailliard had a generally liberal voting record. He had no trouble at the polls, winning elections by large majorities in what is, by a small margin at least, a Democratic district. More recently, Mailliard seems caught between the increasing conservatism of the state's Republican party and the increasing liberalism of his constituency.
>
> After [Governor Ronald] Reagan's victory [in 1966], Mailliard's voting record became noticeably more conservative. Because of this, he has been spared the tough conservative primary opposition that Paul McCloskey has confronted in the 11th. But Mailliard's move to the right has not gone unnoticed in the 6th district. In 1968 he received 73% of the vote, but in 1970 he won only 53%—a highly unusual drop for an incumbent of such long standing. Much of the difference must be attributed to the war issue. San Francisco and Marin are both antiwar strongholds; but Mailliard, who is the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has supported the Nixon Administration's war policy. In the 6th district, at least, that position is a sure vote-loser.[123]

122. Douglas, *In the Fullness of Time*, p. 140.

These, then, are the three kinds of electorally oriented activities congressmen engage in—advertising, credit claiming, and position taking. It remains only to offer some brief comments on the emphases different members give to the different activities. No deterministic statements can be made; within limits each member has freedom to build his own electoral coalition and hence freedom to choose the means of doing it.[124] Yet there are broad patterns. For one thing senators, with their access to the media, seem to put more emphasis on position taking than House members; probably House members rely more heavily on particularized benefits. But there are important differences among House members. Congressmen from

123. Barone et al., *Almanac of American Politics*, p. 53. Mailliard was given a safer district in the 1972 line drawing.

124. On member freedom see Bauer et al., *American Business and Public Policy*, pp. 406–07.

the traditional parts of old machine cities rarely advertise and seldom take positions on anything (except on roll calls), but devote a great deal of time and energy to the distribution of benefits. In fact they use their office resources to plug themselves into their local party organizations. Congressman William A. Barrett (D., downtown Philadelphia), chairman of the Housing Subcommittee of the House Banking and Currency Committee, claimed in 1971 to have spent only three nights in Washington in the preceding six years. He meets constituents each night from 9:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M. in the home district; "Folks line up to tell Bill Barrett their problems." [125] On the other hand congressmen with upper-middle-class bases (suburban, city reform, or academic) tend to deal in positions. In New York City the switch from regular to reform Democrats is a switch from members who emphasize benefits to members who emphasize positions; it reflects a shift in consumer taste.[126] The same difference appears geographically rather than temporally as one goes from the inner wards to the outer suburbs of Chicago.[127]

125. Linda M. Kupferstein, Nader profile on William A. Barrett (D., Pa.), p. 1. This profile gives a very useful account of a machine congressman's activities.

126. One commentator on New York detects "a tendency for the media to promote what may be termed 'press release politicians.'" A result is that "younger members tend to gravitate towards House committees that have high rhetorical and perhaps symbolic importance, like Foreign Affairs and Government Operations, rather than those with bread-and-butter payoffs." Donald Haider, "The New York City Congressional Delegation," *City Almanac* (published bimonthly by the Center for New York City Affairs of the New School for Social Research), vol. 7, no. 6, April 1973, p. 11.

Another kind of difference appears if the initial assumption of a reelection quest is relaxed to take into account the "progressive" ambitions of some members —the aspirations of some to move up to higher electoral offices rather than keep the ones they have.[128] There are two important subsets of climbers in the Congress—House members who would like to be senators (over the years about a quarter of the senators have come up directly from the House),[129] and senators who would like to be presidents or vice presidents (in the Ninety-third Congress about a quarter of the senators had at one time or another run for these offices or been seriously "mentioned" for them). In both cases higher aspirations seem to produce the same distinctive mix of activities. For one thing credit claiming is all but useless. It does little good to talk

127. Snowiss, "Congressional Recruitment and Representation."

128. The term is from Joseph A. Schlesinger, *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), p. 10.

129. Ibid., p. 92; Matthews, *U.S. Senators*, p. 55. In the years 1953–72 three House members were appointed to the Senate, and eighty-five gave up their seats to run for the Senate. Thirty-five of the latter made it, giving a success rate of 41 percent.

about the bacon you have brought back to a district you are trying to abandon. And, as Lyndon Johnson found in 1960, claiming credit on legislative maneuvers is no way to reach a new mass audience; it baffles rather than persuades. Office advancement seems to require a judicious mixture of advertising and position taking. Thus a House member aiming for the Senate heralds his quest with press releases; there must be a new "image," sometimes an ideological overhaul to make ready for the new constituency.[130] Senators aiming for the White House do more or less the same thing—advertising to get the name across, position taking ("We can do better"). In recent years presidential aspirants have sought Foreign Relations Committee membership as a platform for making statements on foreign policy.[131]

There are these distinctions, but it would be a mistake to elevate them over the commonalities. For most congressmen most of the time all three activities are essential. This closing vignette of Senator Strom Thurmond (R., S.C.) making his peace with universal suffrage is a good picture of what the electoral side of

130. Thus upstate New York Republicans moving to the Senate commonly shift to the left. For a good example of the advertising and position-taking strategies that can go along with turning a House member into a senator see the account on Senator Robert P. Griffin (R., Mich.) in James M. Perry, *The New Politics* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1968), ch. 4.

131. Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*, pp. 141–42.

American legislative politics is all about. The senator was reacting in 1971 to a 1970 Democratic gubernatorial victory in his state in which black turnout was high:

> Since then, the Republican Senator has done the following things:
>
> —Hired Thomas Moss, a black political organizer who directed Negro voter registration efforts for the South Carolina Voter Education Project, for his staff in South Carolina, and a black secretary for his Washington office.
>
> —Announced Federal grants for projects in black areas, including at least one occasion when he addressed a predominantly black audience to announce a rural water project and remained afterwards to shake hands.
>
> —Issued moderate statements on racial issues.
>
> In a statement to Ebony magazine that aides say Thurmond wrote himself, he said, "In most instances I am confident that we have more in common as Southerners than we have reason to oppose each other because of race. Equality of opportunity for all is a goal upon which blacks and Southern whites can agree." [132]

132. "Thurmond Image Seen as Changing," *New York Times*, October 17, 1971, p. 46.