Floor access in Mexico's Cámara de Diputados*

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Abstract

This chapter describes the institutions of legislative debate in the Mexican Cámara de Diputados and assesses predictors of floor participation. Multiple regression models are fit on more than twenty-three thousand speeches between 2006 and 2020. They shows that majority party members get privileged floor access, in both the number of speeches delivered and their word-length, even after accounting for the negative effect of party size. Other status indicators, such as committee chairs, party leaders, and seniority, have more modest but also positive effects in debate. Women speak more than men. And the removal of single-term limits in 2018, which tend to personalize elections, associate with a significant surge in floor participation.

Keywords: Floor debate, speech, Congress, presidential democracy, Mexico

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> In the end, the chamber is a mandarinate where the few decide for all. That doesn't mean that independent voices cannot speak ... Knowledge of the Rules will let you take the pulpit for fact checking by simply raising your hand, or make suspensive motions, or reserve articles from the report under discussion
>
> —FORMER LAWMAKER FROM THE LEFT, INTERVIEWED ON CONDITION OF ANONYMITY, JUNE 17TH, 2020

1 Introduction

Legislative studies are a relatively young field of Mexican politics. And the growth is remarkable. Much has been learned on candidate selection; redistricting; the role of standing committees; party discipline; vote trading; pork barreling; potential and actual instability; gubernatorial coattails and influences in roll call voting; constitutional amendment; executive success and conditions for predominance; agenda setting; the budget process; and more.[1]

But there is no scholarship on legislative debate in sight. Other than brief and general mentions to the subject, I could find no systematic study of floor access. This chapter aims to start filling the void by describing the institutional setting of speech in the Cámara de Diputados and performing a systematic examination of the determinants of floor participation.

A disconnect appears between formal and informal institutions. Formal rules decentralize agenda power by granting members broad rights of recognition to take the floor and deliver speeches. Informal rules channel debate through legislative parties, leaders managing participation in centralized fashion. Unlike the U.K. Parliament, where delegation to the cabinet annuls most private members' formal rights (Cox 1987), the Cámara appears to belong in a middle ground, where the U.S. Senate probably also lies (Den Hartog and Monroe 2011).

Focus is on the Cámara de Diputados of the bicameral Congress. The chambers have symmetric

[1] See Ascencio and Kerevel (2021); Béjar Algazi (2012; 2009); Casar (2016); Casar and Marván Laborde (2014); Heller and Weldon (2003); Kerevell (2015); López Lara (2013); Magar (2012); Magar, Trelles, Altman and McDonald (2016); Rosas and Langston (2011); Téllez del Río (2018); Weldon (1997; 2002).

powers over most legislation, but the Senate is excluded from adoption of the annual budget, and I leave it out. Moreover, due to time constraints, I further narrow the focus to three out of eight Cámara terms since the advent of competitive politics in Mexico. I examine the 60th Legislature (2006-09), the 62nd (2012-15), and the 64th (2018-21) up to the end of the second ordinary year—enough to investigate how the removal of term limits affects debate.

The chapter is organized thus. Section 2 describes political institutions, the party system, and major changes to both. Section 3 describes the institutional setting of legislative debate in the Cámara. It identifies key players, the structure of debate, recognition-granting motions, and how party discipline works as a substitute to centralized agenda power. Section 4 performs data analysis. Multiple regression models reveal the mutual influences of parties and individual rights in the number of speeches deputies make and their length. Section 5 discusses minority rights in the context of Mexican politics, and concludes.

2 Institutions and parties

Mexico is a presidential democracy. For most of the 20th century a hegemonic party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), held the strings of political influence in a tight grip nationwide. The PRI's electoral fortunes suffered from societal change and formidable economic setbacks in the 1980s, but it was not until 1997 that competitive politics took over (Cornelius 1996; Cosío Villegas 1981; Molinar 1991; Scott 1959). For the first time in over six decades, the PRI lost control of the lower chamber of Congress in that year's midterm election. Then in 2000 the country's long-standing right-of-center opposition, the National Action Party (PAN) won the presidential race.

Along with democracy came two decades of divided government. The executive's control of the legislative process ended abruptly, inaugurating relative balance between the branches (Lujambio 1996; Weldon 1997). The president retained a prominent role in lawmaking, but genuine negotiation with the opposition was required to get things done (Béjar Algazi 2012; Casar 2013).

	60th	62nd	64th
	2006-09	2012-15	2018-21
Party	%	%	%
pan	41	23	16
pri	21	43	9
prd	25	20	4
morena			51
opportunistic w/ president		8	14
other opportunistic	13	7	6
Total %	100	100	100
N	500	500	500
President's party	pan	pri	morena

Table 1: Parties in three Legislatures of the Cámara de Diputados

The party system of the competitive era had three major and a handful of small opportunistic parties. Majors included the PAN, the PRI, and a left-of-center Democratic Revolution Party (PRD). Local competition was generally between the PRI and another major. The PRI retained strongholds from its hegemonic era in towns and smaller cities, but neither party had particularly strong ties to social groups (Moreno 2009). Parties would rebuild clientelistic coalitions from near scratch at every electoral campaign (Díaz Cayeros, Estévez and Magaloni 2016).

The three-plus party system came crashing down in the critical election of 2018. After decades of infighting the left finally split. The faction loyal to Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known as AMLO, successfully launched the National Regeneration Movement (Morena), a new party, overcoming formidable entry barriers. This feat paved his way to winning the presidency by a landslide. Riding AMLO's coattails, Morena won a majority in Congress. Inclusion of the incomplete 64th Legislature (data runs up to June 30th, 2020 which marks the end of the second year) brings the single-party unified governmentto contrast with the othr terms: a minority president in the 60th and an informal coalition with opportunistic parties in the 62nd.

Weak parties in the electorate lie in sharp contrast to strong legislative parties, which they draw from electoral rules. The formula is mixed member plurality—three-hundred deputies are elected every three years by first-past-the-post in single member districts (SMDs), two-hundred more by closed-list proportional representation (PR), all seats contested in races concurrent with

the presidential election, then again at the presidential midterm (Weldon 2001).

What gave leaders their centrality were two other key features. Single-term limits, which the constitution set on every elected officeholder, diverted all political ambition to the progressive format (Schlesinger 1966). And centralized ballot access gives national and state party leaders control of future political careers (Langston 2008).[2]

Leaders control a stock of selective incentives to reward loyalty. Leaders distribute their party's share of committee chairs and seats. The Junta appoints members at the start of the term, and freely makes replacements afterwards by simple announcement to the floor. This is a key selective incentive to achieve collective action in the partisan theory of congressional organization (Cox and McCubbins 1993). Leaders have other carrots and sticks in the form of discretionary spending. By one count, leaders of the 60th Legislature (2006-2009, included in the data) routinely received discretionary spending authority over one-fifth of the Cámara's yearly budget—plane tickets, bonus payments, and income tax breaks that could be handed to the rank and file (Casar 2011).

This institutional combination both removes personal vote incentives (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987; Carey and Shugart 1995) and rewards top-bottom discipline. An indicator is cohesion, which is near perfect across parties. Téllez del Río (2018) computed frequencies with which deputies voted against a majority of their party. Excluding unanimous votes, the mean for the 1997–2018 period is just 2 percent, or 3.4 percent when abstentions are counted as votes against the party majority (p. 25).

Discipline plays a fundamental role in floor access. Formal rules, we see next, make it very difficult to control the flow of legislation without legislative parties. Party discipline operates as an alternative to agenda cartelization in many systems (Prata 2001), including the Cámara.

In a surprising recent development, single-term limits were eliminated for selected offices, including federal deputies. The 2021 midterm election will be the first since the 1930s where incumbents are allowed on the ballot (see Magar 2017 for details). This should introduce a degree of personal vote seeking among a subset of deputies with static ambition. While reformers further

[2]Reliance in primaries for SMD candidate selection, mostly by the PAN (Ascencio and Kerevel 2021), on occasions by the PRI (Poiré 2002), opens room for exceptions to centralized ballot access. They deserve closer attention.

centralized nominations by keeping term limits in place for party switchers, this might not fully reign in competitive incumbents. Parties removing quality candidates—such as previous winners of elected office (Jacobson 1997), dynastic candidates (Enríquez González 2018), and what Zaller (1998) calls "prize fighters"—in order to secure nomination of docile newbies, risk losing those districts.[3] I examine the effect of letting static ambition play out on debate in the partial 64th term.

3 The rules of debate

A prominent study of agenda power in Mexico aims the focus on the executive in the legislative arena, and only secondarily on intra-cameral institutions. Casar (2016) characterizes debate in Congress as centralized: "[governing] bodies have the power ... to conduct floor debates, including assigning turns and time to speakers" (p. 154). The overview of the structure of legislative debate in this section shows that the author must have /de facto/ practice in mind, because formal rules actually decentralize agenda power to a considerable extent.

The Cámara's Rules (Reglamento 2019) has prescriptions for debate, the Organic Law (Orgánica 2019) for congressional organization. There are two governing bodies, the Junta and the Mesa. The *Junta de Coordinación Política* is the Cámara's top decision-making organ. The leaders of all parties with no fewer than five deputies are represented. The majority leader presides the Junta throughout the term. In the absence of a majority party, however, the leaders of the top-three seat holding parties preside the Junta, alternating one year each. The Junta appoints and replaces committee members, prepares each session's order of the day (/orden del día/), and in general makes and enforces party agreements. It decides by majority rule, with members' votes weighted relative to group sizes in the plenary. So majority status is crucial to control the Junta (cf. Cox and McCubbins 2005).

The *Mesa Directiva* is the chamber's steering board. The Mesa chair is the Cámara president

[3]This could explain considerable amounts of constituency service in systems with party-centered campaigns, such as the U.K. in the 1970s (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina 1987). The personal vote adds a couple percentage points to incumbents in the general election, insufficient to cancel out party tides, but enough to decide swing constituencies. A party can veto the MP's renomination, but risks not holding those seats.

/ex-officio/. The Mesa makeup has consensual traits, regardless of there being a majority party or not. It is elected yearly by two-thirds supermajority of Cámara members from candidates proposed by the Junta. While Mesa members can reelect, the chair must rotate between the top-three seat-holding parties, one year each.

Agenda control is formally frail. First, every committee report is guaranteed floor consideration and must be included in the order. If committees were adequate agents of the Junta majority, they might serve as gatekeepers by denying reports to unwanted bills. But the Junta is required to distribute relatively powerful committee chairs proportionally among the parties—chairs distribute the committee's staff and spending with great discretion (Casar 2011). And no party can control more than half of committee members, forcing vote-buying or plain cooperation across the aisles. Therefore, some committees are bound to be preference outliers.

Second, the open rule is the default for bill consideration in the floor. Debate takes place in two stages. The entire bill is first examined /en lo general/, then articles are considered individually /en lo particular/ (see Heller and Weldon n.d.). Members can freely reserve articles for deletion or amendment, denying the Junta a useful procedural tool common in other assemblies: the closed rule (eg., Cox 2006; Dion and Huber 1996).

Third, and most relevant to this chapter, speakers self-select. Individual members are entitled to take the floor when recognized by the presiding officer, for a duration set by rules or by party agreements. And recognition is permissive. Introducing amendments to a report, for instance, grants right of recognition to take the floor. Party leaders get the first round of debate slots for a list of speakers of their choice, but cannot preclude others from adding their names to that list afterwards, making debate resemble first-come-first-serve after the party appointees have spoken. The limit here is the floor, who can decide to vote the motion or to continue debating.

Rules set limits for different kinds of debate summarized in Table 2. The first entry are drafters of new legislation, who get first recognition to take the floor in order to persuade fellow lawmakers. The time limit is ten minutes when the draft is a new law, five minutes when it changes existing statutes. Bills whose author has not had a chance to present before the session ends migrate to the

Debate type (in Spanish)	Goal	Durat.	Selector	Veto
1. Introduce legislation (iniciativa)	Author			
- a new law	presents	- 10′	- member	- no
- amend a law	the bill	- 5′	- member	- no
2. Committee report (dictamen)	Move			
- Debate en lo general vs SQ, chair	for floor	- 10′	- comm.maj	- pres.^1
- " " " others	consideration	- 5′	- members	- pres.^1
- Amendments (debate en lo particular)		- 5′	- members	- no
- negative report		- 3′	- comm.maj	- pres.^1
3. Resolutions (puntos de acuerdo)	Position			
- standard, author	taking	- 10′	- member	- comm.maj
- urgent, author (obvia resolución)		- 5′	- Junta	- floor
- other speakers		- 3′	- party	- no
4. Current events (agenda política)	Position	< 2hrs		
- Junta proponent	taking	- 10′	- Junta	- no
- other speakers		- 5′	- member	- no

^1 = President can delay/prevent speech by granting recommit.

Table 2: Types of debate

next day's order upon author's request /viva voce/ (otherwise they are referred to committee.) The rightmost columns report who selects the speaker—self-selection by drafting a bill, in this case—and who, if anyone, can veto the speaker's recognition—no one here. Deputies speaking next get five minutes each.

Other speech types grant right of first recognition differently. Debate /en lo general/ grants ten minutes (fifteen in constitutional amendments) to the reporting committee chairperson or designated handler of the report. The Cámara president can delay debate by recommitting the bill—and possibly prevent it if the committee kills the bill. /En lo particular/ amendments and Cámara resolutions grant first recognition to the proposing member.

Party-selected speakers get five minutes each, in reverse-size order, after the first /en lo general/ speech. Members who request it then get five minutes each, the president arranging them in rounds, one for one against. After six such rounds, the floor can either proceed to vote, or continue with blocks of three such rounds. When the report deals with issues of great interest, debate can go on for several hours.

Cámara resolutions (/proposiciones con punto de acuerdo/) are tailor-made for members' position-

taking needs. If adopted, resolutions become the opinion of the chamber on some specific issue. But party leader support is a must. Resolutions require urgent status (/urgente u obvia resolución/) in order to avoid committee referral and move directly to the floor; only the Junta can request that the floor grants urgent status to at most two resolutions per session. If granted, the proposer takes the floor for five minutes. Parties then appoint one speaker each, for three minutes. The floor can then decide to vote the resolution, or open rounds of debate with self-appointed speakers.

Current events (/agenda política/) are party leaders' position-taking venue. The Junta determines up to two themes for debate before consideration of reports and bills, party leaders appointing one speaker each. The promoting party speaker gets first recognition for 10 minutes, others 5 minutes each, and talk in reverse-size order. Current events debate cannot exceed two hours per session.

Debate under such rules becomes a succession of punctuated, mostly uninterrupted short speeches. Members can approximate back-and-forth talk, at least occasionally, by catching the president's eye from their seats in order to interrupt with a motion. The president has discretion to deny, or grant up to three minutes to elaborate. Such motions are distinct from points of order (which members can also make, see Reglamento art. 114 for typified motions). They grant recognition to speak. One (/cuestionamiento al orador/) to interrogate the speaker, who must also accept the question be made. Another is (/alusiones personales/), to give right of reply to alluded members by recognizing them immediately after the speaker ends. And (/rectificación de hechos/) wind up an additional name at the end of the list of speakers.

Rules like these are ill-designed to prevent plenary bottlenecks (Cox 2006). Even in the presence of a majority party, individual members retain speaking rights that water down the Junta's efforts to cartelize the legislative process. Absent formidable party discipline, preventing dilatory tactics would be enormously difficult. The final section elaborates.

Three former deputies from the larger parties offered quick impressions on internal party speech rules upon request.[4] One commonality (in this very small sample) is the informal erosion

[4]Email exchanges with Fernando Rodríguez Doval (PAN), Laura Guadalupe Vargas Vargas (PRI), and an anonymous former deputy from the left, June 17th, 2020.

of formal individual members' debate rights in favor of centralized speech allocation. The PAN relies on a debate vice-leader (subcoordinador de debate parlamentario) responsible of selecting speakers in debates. When two members wish to speak at once, the vice-leader would let them figure who gets the party's slot in the debate, who then speaks for or against. The PRI leadership sets apart issues of party interest, over which it decides all speakers centrally. Members communicate their wish to speak on unwhipped issues to their state caucus, who seeks authorization to speak with party whips. The left is no exception, leaders micromanaging the party's debate strategy. An important consideration is that rules give parties one speaking slot each in many debates, regardless of size. Distributive conflict over speech is therefore more acute for larger parties, with longer speaker lists. A must for members whom the leadership leaves out is a solid understanding of the Rules. As pointed in the chapter's epigraph, they can make individual speaking rights effective by introducing suspensive motions or amendments, both of which come equipped with recognition to take the floor.

Proksch and Slapin's (2015) scheme, used across chapters in this volume, compares assemblies according to how members gain access to take the floor in order to deliver speeches (p. 79). Their continuum connects two extremes: party-controlled and individual member-controlled floor access. Formal rules place the Cámara towards the individual member-controlled access limit of the continuum; but partisan rules pull it towards the party-controlled access side. Party leaders move the strings of lawmaking. Their influence, however, derives almost exclusively from party discipline (near-perfect across the board) and not from agenda power (which is quite diffuse). The removal of single term limits ought to make this tension between formal and de facto institutions harder to manage for all parties.

4 Predictors of legislative debate

Speeches were digitized by the stenographic service (scraped from http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx). I turned text into data with regular expressions—for HTML tag removal, for speaker and speech

identification.[5] The *dependent variable* is a member's participation in plenary debate during each of the legislative periods observed (the appendix clarifies Mexican congressional terminology). The 60th, 62nd, and 64th Legislatures had six, eight, and six periods, respectively, totaling twenty in the data. Four are extraordinary periods, the rest ordinary. Mean days per extraordinary period was 5.3, 31.4 for the ordinary. Debate models control for period type and length.

The units of observation are member-periods. I use two specifications of the dependent variable. One is *speeches(i,p)* equal the number of days that member i took the floor in period p. Owing to the permissive agenda, speech made from the deputy's seat by means of motions, without taking the lectern, count as debate. As elsewhere in the volume, days when a deputy spoke fewer than 50 words in total are arbitrarily considered non-debate and dropped, adding zero towards the member's aggregates. Since officers do not participate in legislative debate, all steering speech, as when the president recognizes a deputy or the secretary calls a voice vote to dispense reading of the bill, was also removed. So was speech by non-deputies, as in cabinet member hearings. All text remaining is considered debate, members' daily totals added across sessions in the same period to produce aggregates for analysis.

The other specification is *words(i,p)* equal the total words that member i spoke in period p divided by the proportion of all session days in period p that i served in the Cámara—members can take leaves of absence and many served less than the full period. So the denominators for members i and j who both spoke 2 thousand words, but i served uninterrupted throughout period p while j served only half of period p, are 1 and 0.5, respectively, and words(i,p)=2000 while words(j,p)=2000/0.5=4000.

Table 3 has a summary of the dependent variable along others of interest. Member-period observations total 9978. The median member spoke once per period, delivering 556 words relative to days in office (544 words per period in absolute terms). At 1300 words per period, means are substantially higher owing to a right-skewed speech distribution. Relevant to the choice of

[5] Analysis was performed in R (R Dev. Core Team 2011), data and code are available at https://github.com/emagar/legdeb. I relied on libraries lme4 (Bates, Mächler, Bolker and Walker 2015), lubridate (Grolemund and Wickham 2011), margins (Leeper 2018), MASS (Venables and Ripley 2002), plyr (Wickham 2011), stargazer (Hlavac 2018), and zoo (Zeileis and Grothendieck 2005).

Part A: Continuous variables

	min	median	mean	sd	max	N
N speeches (DV1)	0	1	2	3.1	37	9978
N words / exposure (DV2)	0	556	1326	2665.7	50291	9978
N words	0	544	1301	2632.2	50291	9978
Days in office (exposure)	1	29	25.4	12.2	40	9978
Party share	0.4	25	29.3	16.2	51	9978
Years since frosh	0	1	1.7	2.2	17	9978
Seniority (previous terms)	0	0	0.3	0.6	4	9978
Age	21	46	45.9	10.1	78	7453

Part B: Dichotomous variables

	0	1	tot	N
Spoke	40.3	59.7	100	9978
Majority	84.7	15.3	100	9978
Leader	98.4	1.6	100	9978
Chair	88.4	11.6	100	9978
SMD	39.3	60.7	100	9978
PAN	73.4	26.6	100	9978
PRI	73.7	26.3	100	9978
Left	68.9	31.1	100	9978
Suplente	94.1	5.9	100	9978
Extraord	80.4	19.6	100	9978
Female	63.7	36.3	100	9978
60th	69.8	30.2	100	9978
62nd	59.7	40.3	100	9978
64th	70.6	29.4	100	9978

Table 3: Variable descriptives

estimation methods, speech data are not evidently over-dispersed (at 3.1, the standard deviation is not that much higher than the mean of 2), so both negative binomial and poisson regression will be used for model fitting. And with nearly two out of five members (40.3 percent) uttering not a single word in the period, a zero-inflated approach is adopted too.

Debate length is more intuitive when expressed as members' daily totals instead of the period totals analyzed. In the median session, 36 different speakers contributed to daily debate, and six days had over 100 speakers. (The appendix has more descriptives.) Considering speakers only, the overall median daily speech length is 606 words. Mild term effects show up—the 60th period-by-period medians slightly above and the 64th slightly below the overall median—but period distributions are, in general, similar. The clearest exceptions are extraordinary periods. Models therefore also control for term and period type effects.

Deputy Valentina Batres holds the record for delivering the longest daily speech in the three terms examined. At 15,932 words, her March 11th, 2008 speech is 50 percent longer than the

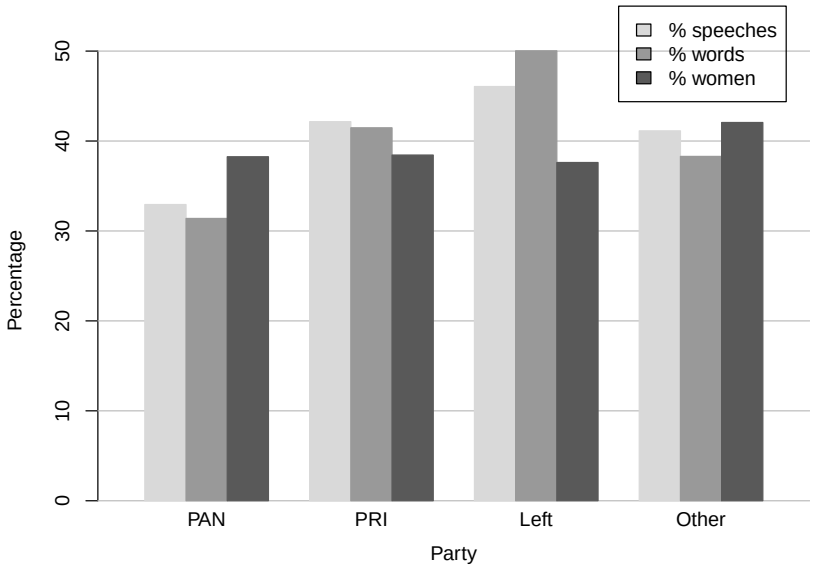
	% women	of
Members	39	1710^
-60th	28	603
-62nd	41	640
-64th	47	531
Cámara presidents	35	31
Committee chairs	28	174
Party leaders	21	24
- major party	0	12
- opportunistic	42	12
Speechmakers	37	5926
Speeches	41	23637
Words spoken	41	17.5M
^Returning members counted once only.		

Table 4: Women representation and debate

runner-up and has about as many words as *Don Quijote de la Mancha*'s chapters 1 through 7 (forty-five pages in the edition I own). Batres and legislators close to AMLO used dilatory tactics throughout that day's session, delaying the vote of a national geostatistics law. Filibustering was in fact aimed at something other than this technocratic bill: they wanted the Cámara president to amend the day's order to hear about alleged misconduct by the minister of the interior. The names associated to outlier member-periods are few: only nine deputies repeatedly surpassed 20 thousand words per period, mostly in the 62nd term. Routine filibusters in the Cámara are worthy of further study.

The impact of gender in floor access is of interest across chapters. Of 1710 members observed, 39 percent are women (see Table 4). Owing to stricter quotas, 47 percent of the 64th Legislature were women, up from 28 in the 60th (Piscopo 2016). Women participation in debate exceeds their numerical presence: despite subrepresentation among committee chairs and party leaders (but not Cámara presidents), 41 percent of both speeches and total words were delivered by women. A degree of concentration is also manifest, as women represented 37 percent of unique speechmakers, who took the floor more often and quite longer.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of debate by female members, pooled across the terms observed, and broken by main parties. Light gray bars are speeches by female deputies, mid gray bars the total words delivered by female deputies, and dark gray bars the percentage of women in the



(Data to redo the barchart in Stata is this.)

	party	pct.women	pct.speech	pct.words
1	pan	38.25	32.94	31.39
2	pri	38.44	42.15	41.47
3	left	37.61	46.06	50.03
4	other	42.06	41.13	38.29
5	total	38.65	41.18	40.76

Figure 1: Gender and speechmaking by party

Past terms	Mean number of speeches	Mean number of words	Member-periods
0	1.8	1122	7959
> 0	2.7	2019	2019
1	2.6	1880	1585
2	3.4	2774	344
> 2	2.3	1305	90

Table 5: Seniority and floor access, member-periods

legislative party across terms observed. Relating speech and numerical importance shows that the average woman deputy from the left spoke 63 percent more words overall than their male counterparts. The reverse relation holds among PAN deputies but much less acute. The other parties break more or less even. In general, gender differences between parties are mild.

Single-term limits offer little leverage to evaluate seniority effects on floor access. Members wishing to return had to wait one term at least. It is remarkable that, despite this, 14 percent of members had previous federal deputy experience. A hint that the removal of single-terms will not be shunned by lack of static ambition (as in Argentina, for instance). Freshmen spoke 1122 words per period on average, compared to 2019 for members with past terms in Congress. Member-periods with one past term made 44 percent more speeches and spoke 68 percent more words than those with none; with two past terms instead of one, 30 percent more speeches and 48 percent more words; but those with more than two past terms gave 33 percent less speeches and 53 percent fewer words than those with two. This drop could be attributable to earlier recruitment of senior members, antedating competitive politics; or it could be due to higher likelihood that senior members occupy positions that might depress willingness to speak despite floor access possibilities. The multivariate analysis might shed some light.

To analyze participation in floor debates, I fit multivariate regression models to words spoken. In the right side are status variables, member characteristics, and controls. Units are member-periods.

/Status variables/ A dummy for *majority* status indicates members from Morena in the 64th Legislature—the only party controlling over 50 percent of seats. If debate is an (imperfect) sub-

stitute for legislative outcomes, then minority members demand more frequent floor participation (Proksch and Slapin 2015). On the contrary, if members put value on debate per se, the majority may demand it as much as others, possibly with better access to the floor. Next, a dummy for committee *chair* status. When producing a report, the chair has privileged access to the floor, and this should translate into more speech. A dummy for party *leader* status completes this set. Leaders allocate party speakers. Whether or not they take advantage of this privilege remains an open question, a good leader ought to distribute the goodies, or risk removal.

/Member variables/ Aside from *woman* and *seniority*, regressors in this group include *smd*, a dummy equal one for members elected in single-member districts. Systematic differences in members' pork requests are attributable to the method of election (Kerevell 2015), which may also translate into higher demand for access to the floor. I also interact this regressor with a dummy indicating the 64th Legislature, which dropped single-term limits (*smd x reelection*). The more personal vote should generate higher demand for floor access. *Party size* is the percentage of seats the member's party holds. Larger parties must divide the slot that all parties get to take the floor among more members, and this should show up as a negative regression coefficient. And a dummy *suplente* controls for substitute members. Regressors not in the right side include members' ages due to incomplete data, and party ideology, which made no difference in the estimates.

/Other controls/ Also in the right side are dummies for the *62nd* and *64th* terms (the 60th is the baseline) and another for *extraordinary* periods. Finally, with the option to take leaves of absence and have suplentes take over, some members served incomplete periods. The *exposure* is the number of days that the members served in the period, logged. Higher exposure offers more opportunities for floor access. Unlike other chapters, models exclude party fixed effects, they made no substantive difference in the estimates we report (the appendix reports these models).

Table 6 reports the estimation of six different model specifications. In the left side are both flavors of the dependent variable. Count models of speeches were fit with negative binomial regression (1 and 2) and zero-inflated poisson regression (3), while models of words relative to tenure

with ordinary least squares (4, 5, and 6). Specifications vary the regressors. Models 2, 3, 5, and 6 include fixed term effects to capture any heterogeneity between Legislatures that are pooled together. Model 6 also estimates separate error terms for each member, intended to capture individual heterogeneity. And model 3 accounts for the excess of zeroes in the distribution. The overall fit is correct across models, likelihood ratio tests (not reported) reject the intercept-only model with much confidence.

Interesting patterns emerge from coefficient estimates. Party size exerted a negative and statistically significant effect in member floor access across specifications. This is easier to interpret from OLS coefficients: other variables constant, changing the party size from large (40 percent of seats) to small (15 percent) associates with a predicted drop of 1,650 words per member in the period. Martin Luther King took 16 minutes to deliver his famous "I have a dream" speech, which approximates that word count. I also find a positive, large, and statistically significant effect of majority status, which acts against size. Far from letting legislative accomplishments speak for themselves, majority members take the floor systematically more than those of similar-sized parties. Figure 3 demonstrates the discontinuity through simulation with model 2 parameters. As party size crosses the majority threshold the member gets a bonus, delivering a number of speeches comparable to a party with 25 to 30 percent of seats.

Other forms of status also associate positively to floor access, with results somewhat sensitive to model specification. Party leadership exerts a substantially larger effect than majority status on speech length, but much smaller on the number of speeches. Leaders get privileged floor access and appear to specialize in longer speeches, probably on more significant legislation. Committee chairs also deliver more speeches than other members, but controlling for term and member effects bears upon OLS coefficient significance, both substantially and statistically, hinting to important differences in speech length across committee jurisdictions and individuals.

I also find positive effects of seniority and gender that resonate with the bivariate patterns of floor access. The coefficient for *women* is not robust to random member effects (accounting for zero-inflation also bears on impact). This is probably due to the concentration of debate by women

Regression results

	DV = Speeches in period			DV = Words/exposure in period		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Exposure (logged)	0.99***	1.32***	1.07***			
	(0.02)	(0.04)	(0.04)			
Majority	1.20***	0.98***	1.11***	826.87***	1,738.55***	1,102.46***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.04)	(84.75)	(128.10)	(219.25)
Party leader	0.35***	0.31***	0.22***	2,241.56***	1,911.89***	1,260.70***
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.04)	(202.81)	(199.88)	(302.50)
Comm. chair	0.28***	0.26***	0.12***	289.72***	225.24***	184.63
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(78.23)	(76.64)	(127.37)
Seniority	0.11***	0.12***	0.10***	210.68***	245.54***	253.18***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(46.37)	(45.33)	(83.10)
Woman	0.13***	0.09***	0.04**	136.54***	125.68**	16.18
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(52.64)	(52.14)	(96.83)
Party size	-0.05***	-0.04***	-0.04***	-61.52***	-71.85***	-63.13***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(1.92)	(2.20)	(3.76)
SMD	0.03	-0.06*	-0.01	-48.69	-90.05	-113.31
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(53.48)	(63.34)	(112.33)
SMD x reelect		0.26***	0.10***		232.39**	-8.32
		(0.05)	(0.03)		(111.13)	(182.94)
Suplente	-0.17***	-0.09	-0.23***	-271.52**	-346.94***	-330.99**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(106.35)	(103.79)	(137.19)
62nd Leg.		0.25***	0.24***		726.90***	843.14***
		(0.03)	(0.02)		(60.94)	(94.39)
64th Leg.		0.17***	0.16***		-279.10***	316.26**
		(0.05)	(0.03)		(107.10)	(158.53)
Extraordinary		0.67***	0.69***		-1,234.16***	-1,240.27***
		(0.08)	(0.07)		(64.62)	(43.42)
Constant	-1.66***	-2.97***	-1.95***	2,874.07***	3,064.88***	2,805.63***
	(0.08)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(68.55)	(84.01)	(140.25)
Fixed effects	no	term	term	no	term	term
Random effects	no	no	no	no	no	member
Estimation method	negative binomial	negative binomial	zero-inflated poisson	OLS	OLS	linear mixed-effects
theta	1.55*** (0.05)	1.65*** (0.05)				
Observations	9,978	9,978	9,978	9,978	9,978	9,978
R2				0.14	0.18	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	32,689.90	32,478.98	34,832.82			178,880.70

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 6: Models of legislative debate (standard errors in parentheses)

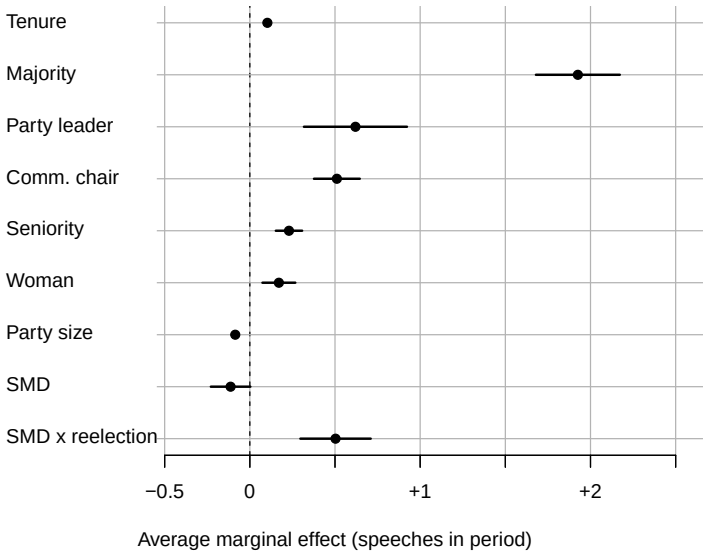


Figure 2: Average marginal effects from model 2. Circles report the effect in the expected number of speeches per period of a unit change in each independent variable, all else at mean values; bars are 95-percent confidence intervals.

highlighted above, some deputies taking the floor disproportionally more than others. Overall, the effect of gender appears to be on par with that of one additional term of seniority in Figure 2, which reports average marginal effects.

A null finding of interest involves the method of election. The coefficient for *smd* is indistinguishable from zero across models. Average marginal effects aid in negative binomial regression coefficient interpretation: in contrast to PR members and holding all other regressors at their mean, deputies elected in SMDs spoke slightly less, about 125 words in the period; the 95-percent confidence interval, however, barely excludes the zero and this signal therefore could be the product of chance alone. But look at the change in slope when interacted with reelection: this marginal effect is not just positive, but sufficient to cancel the negative pull of SMDs. Now a signal is discernible from random noise, even after controlling for majority status (the other big change in the 64th Legislature). Figure 3 makes this effect plain, a gap separates confidence intervals of predicted speeches by SMD members who can reelect (darker) and the term-limited (lighter). This finding hints to the invigoration of the personal vote after the removal of term limits and is worthy of more careful examination.

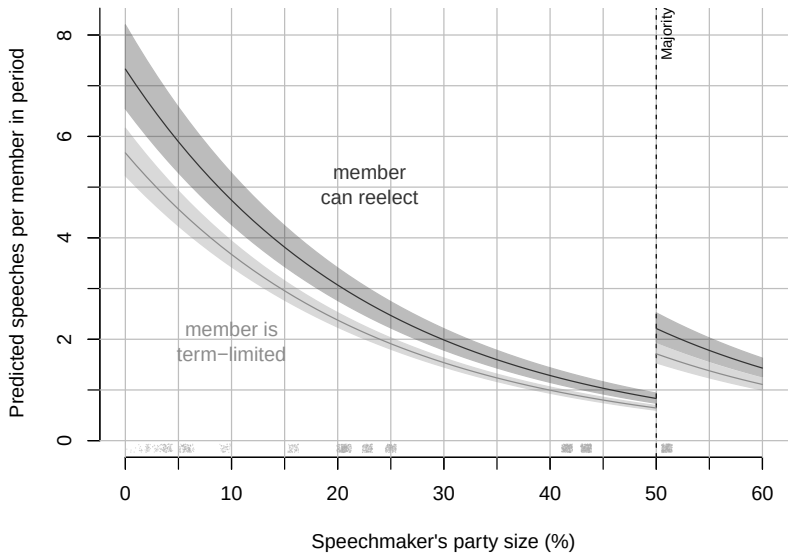


Figure 3: Predicted number of speeches by party size. Lines report point predictions using model 2, bands are 95-percent confidence intervals. Miniature points above the x-axis are observed members' party sizes (x- and y-jittered for visibility).

5 Discussion: minority rights

- Formally decentralized, party discipline centralizes floor access. - Notion of minority rights should help compare. - (50 year comparisons) - Victorian Parliament 1820–1870: Eff Secret, delegation to cabinet achieved de facto centralization; were rights formally withdrawn? Think not see uk chapter - US Senate c1900–1950 went from unanimous consent to 60- US House 1850–1900, large centralization, formal removal of minority rights, see Brady/McCubbins - Mex has not changed formal, which retains important minority rights (schedule all reports, amendments default, add yourself as speaker...) - Tomas de tribuna

6 Conclusion

(Forthcoming)

Tension lies at the heart of legislative debate in the Cámara. On one hand, intra-party institutions have informally, but effectively managed to reign in members' capacity to take the floor. The

effects that multivariate models uncovered for the majority, for leaders, and for committee chairs are all channeled through party structures in the Junta. On the other hand, formal institutions grant individual members formal rights of recognition to take the floor and, we have seen, these take many guises. The effect attributable to SMDs after the removal of term limits is, in all likelihood, associated to renovated personal vote incentives that members face.

Whether or not the informal solution to avoid plenary bottlenecks will continue to operate as it has so far is uncertain. Incumbents, some of them at least, may soon start overwhelming the system in their need to strengthen their electoral connection. The collapse of the three-party system in 2018 also plays against. Perhaps the heterogeneous coalition that gave Morena unified control of government will manage to consolidate, imposing a new informal arrangement, in spite of the 2020 covid depression.

In any event, examination of legislative debate has offered an interesting and illuminating perspective on some of the challenges that Mexican parties now face.

7 Appendix

7.1 Mexican terminology

- A *Legislature* is an elected chamber for a legislative term, between two congressional elections. The Mexican Congress relies on Roman numerals to distinguish consecutive Legislatures since the second half of the Nineteenth century.

- Legislative years break into two *ordinary legislative periods*, one covering the months of September through December, another February through April, all inclusive. *Extraordinary legislative periods* may be convened during the recess in order to consider a specific bill. Analysis aggregates each member's speeches in the duration of a given period (merging together all extraordinary periods that year, if any). So members in a legislative year like 2012-13 (that had no extraordinary periods) have two word aggregates in the dataset, one for each ordinary period; in a year like 2013-14 (that did), they have three word aggregates in the data. Periods are the units of observation in the analysis.

- A *plenary session* is a specific date in the calendar when diputados met. During ordinary periods, sessions are usually held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and may be scheduled in other weekdays if the Junta so decides. Diputados met on forty and thirty-one days in the first and second ordinary periods of 2013-14, respectively, and nine days in extraordinary periods, for a yearly total of eighty session days.

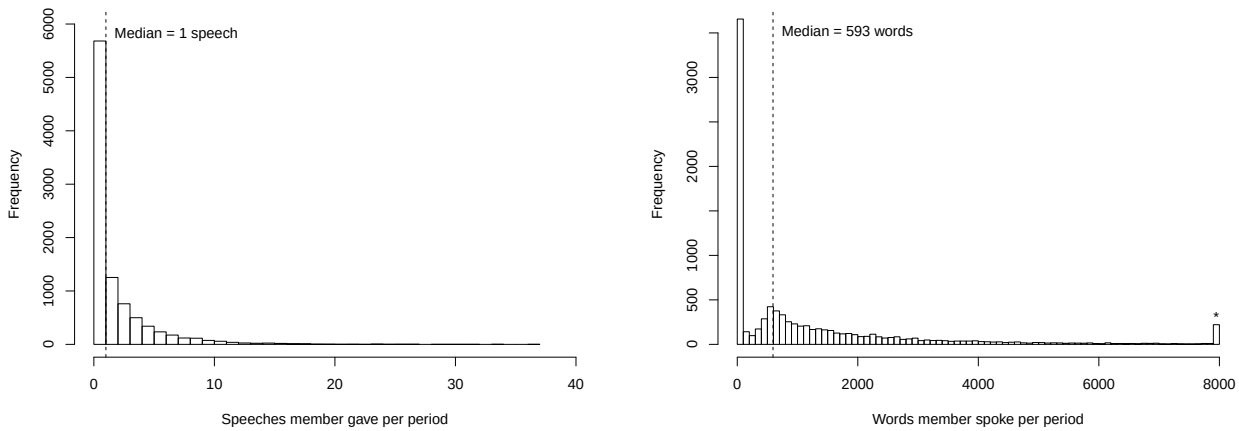


Figure 4: The dependent variable, number of speeches (left) and number of words (right). The column under a star in the right panel is cumulative, reporting 217 member-periods with 8 thousand words or more (2.2 percent of all, the actual distribution spreads these observations, with increasing sparseness, from 8000 to 50291).

7.2 Dependent variable descriptives

Figure 4 describes both flavors of the dependent variables. And Figure 5 portrays member daily aggregates across the periods analyzed. For clarity, this plot includes speakers only (keep in mind that non-speakers are included in the period aggregates analyzed.)

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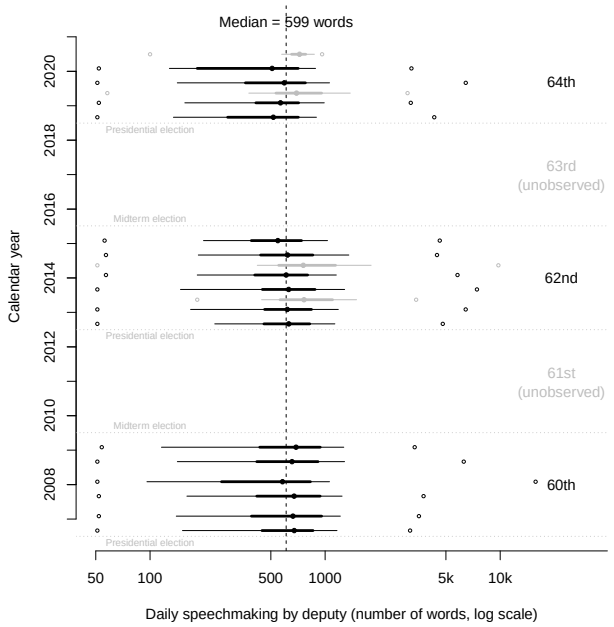

Figure 5: Daily speech length by legislative period observed. The plot excludes non-speaking members. Solid points indicate the median speech length in the period. Thick and thin lines connect the 25–75 and 10–90 percentiles, respectively. Hollow points are minima and maxima. Ordinary periods in black, extraordinary periods in gray.

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