The Partisanship of House Committees and Member Self-Selection*

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Abstract

The extant literature suggests that members choose committees for distributive reasons and seek more prestigious committees as they move up the seniority ranks. But why do some members chose committees like Rules and Judiciary which are not distributive in nature and seem to offer little electoral assistance? I claim that committees also offer representational benefits: namely, the ability to engage with policy areas that match the ideological preferences of their constituents. Members from moderate districts seek out committees with jurisdictions over consensual issues, while members from extreme districts prefer committees with highly partisan jurisdictions. Using a unique dataset of committee partisanship constructed from committee roll call votes, I show that members are more likely to select ideologically congruent committees, and more likely to leave non-congruent committees, though members prefer committees that also allow them to distribute particularized goods.

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Standing committees remain the center of legislative action in Congress. Committees and their memberships are responsible for writing most legislation, conducting oversight of the executive branch, and processing jurisdictional issues that move onto the congressional agenda. Members also view their committee assignments as central to their legislative brand and reelection prospects, and seek out the most favorable assignments. For example, after the 2018 congressional elections the Congressional Progressive Caucus threatened to withhold support for Nancy Pelosi's speakership bid unless she guaranteed members of the caucus seats on many of the "exclusive" committees, including Ways and Means, Intelligence, and Financial Services.[1]

A significant body of research examines how members choose committees, and how well those choices reflect empirical predictions made by different theories of congressional organization. Distributive theory offers the most coherent explanation of committee self-selection, claiming members prefer committees that allow them to direct particularized benefits to their districts, thus increasing reelection prospects. There are two puzzling aspects of the theory, however: first, the vast majority of committee seats are for non-distributive jurisdictions, and second, service on many of these non-distributive committees is highly valued by members (e.g., Foreign Affairs, Rules). If members see reelection as their primary imperative and Congress is organized around distributive principles, why have so many non-distributive committees developed, and why are seats on them sought after?

Alternative explanations for committee self-selection are not well-developed and suggest either that all committees have hidden distributive benefits, or that members value policy oriented or prestige committees because they allow them to influence non-particularized (i.e., national rather than district level) policy outcomes or increase their status within the chamber. Evidence that even the most classically distributive committees (e.g., Appropriations) help members achieve reelection is thin and there is virtually no evidence for hidden distributive benefits from policy or prestige oriented committees (e.g., Foreign Affairs). It is also unclear whether helping produce national policy outcomes (as opposed to particularized goals) or increasing personal prestige helps members win reelection, and there is only anecdotal evidence members care about these factors.

[1] See, "Jayapal and Pocan Release Statement on Meeting with Nancy Pelosi." Pramila Jayapal Press Release, November 15, 2018. Accessed at: `https://jayapal.house.gov/media/press-releases/jayapal-and-pocan-statement-meeting-leader-pelosi` on November 22, 2018.

The theory here claims that committee service offer members an opportunity to build their ideological credentials (i.e., moderate or extreme) in order to appeal to their constituents. Legislators who represent moderate districts prefer to sit on bipartisan committees as a way of engaging in dyadic representation and avoiding electoral sanctions from constituents. Conversely, members who represent extreme districts prefer to serve on committees with jurisdictions that are more partisan as a way of communicating their ideological preferences to their constituents. The claims and empirical evidence presented here complement recent literature demonstrating that members' carefully manage their voting record, bill sponsorship activities, public statements, and other legislative activities to ensure consistency with the preferences of their constituents.

I measure the most important aspect of committee action, the development of legislation, through roll call votes taken within committees. Using a unique dataset of all roll call votes taken within House standing committees from the 104th through 114th Congresses, the data include the extent to which each roll call vote was supported by Democrats and Republicans, the bill on which the vote occurred, and the committee in which the vote was taken. Using these data, I create a measure of a committee's partisanship within each congress, and use it to determine whether members from more ideologically moderate (extreme) districts self-select onto committees which are more bipartisan (partisan). Committees offer a unique opportunity within Congress for members to convey ideological/partisan preferences because committee activity involves legislative stakes rather than only rhetorical ones (as compared to activities like floor speeches). Further, members of the minority have a greater ability to pursue their agenda items as committee rules empower them to a greater degree than on the chamber floor.[2]

This research yields four findings. The first descriptive result is that standing House committees vary in their latent level of partisanship, and the relative level of partisanship of a committee is stable over time.[3] Second, members serve on committees which have a level of partisanship congruent with their district's ideological extremity; third, members are more likely to leave a committee if its level of partisanship does not match their district's ideological extremity; fourth, committees which are *both* distributive and ideologically matched are the most sought after assignments for members. Committee partisanship is a valuable component

[2] Agenda setting by the majority occurs within committees as the chair can largely determine which bills to address, but standing committee rules allow the minority to bring nearly any issue related to the bill up for a vote as a recorded roll call vote within a committee requires agreement from only 1/5 of members.

[3] Relative level of partisanship means as compared to other committees. The absolute level of partisanship over time for a given committee varies as member ideology and institutional polarization vary.

of member self-selection behavior and offers an explanation for the creation of non-distributive committees and member preferences to serve on those committees.

The Importance of Committee Service in Congress

The modern House has approximately 20 standing committees, and scholars have long observed that lawmakers prefer some committees more than others, and that some are more important to the policy process (Masters 1961).[4] Members request committees and the party leadership makes assignment decisions, with seniority playing a crucial, though not exclusive role in determining who sits on which committees (Frisch & Kelly 2004). Committees on which members prefer to serve are classified as "valuable," and early attempts to systematically characterize these committees documented the transfer patterns of legislators as revealed preferences of committee value (Bullock 1976, Fenno 1973).[5] Groseclose & Stewart (1998) developed cardinal committee value scores by examining committee transfers and considering the relative values of the committees involved in individual member transfers (also see Munger 1988). Their evidence demonstrates that Ways and Means, Appropriations, Rules, and Energy and Commerce are the most sought after.[6] There is substantial evidence that committee service assists members in their reelection goals and removal from committee service negatively affects members in a variety of ways (Fowler, Douglass & Clark 1980, Grimmer & Powerll 2013, though see Berry & Fowler 2018 for a contrasting view).

Existing Theories of Committee Self-Selection

Distributive theory claims that legislators seek to provide benefits to their constituents, which are heterogeneous across districts (Weingast & Marshall 1988). Legislators are "high demanders" with outlying preferences on policy issues, congruent with the outlying preferences of their district. Committee service al-

[4]The number of standing committees changes, and temporary, select, and joint committees are created and disbanded semi-regularly. Here, I consider only permanent, non-select and non-joint committees, except for Homeland Security which was a select committee that became permanent after the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002. Members are occasionally stripped of their committee assignments for bad behavior. See for example, "'They basically have nothing to do': Trio of Republicans face life in exile." Melanie Zanona, Politico.com, February 4, 2019. Accessed February 28, 2019 at `https://www.politico.com/story/2019/02/04/congress-house-republicans-committee-assignments-stripped-1145320`.

[5]Importantly, transferring is not costless because leaving a committee means losing seniority on the new committee.

[6]Stewart (N.d.) recently updated committee values since 1994 and finds similar patterns, though there is compression among values, indicating greater indifference among members about which committee they serve on. Because the data used here extends from the 104th Congress, I use the updated scores in the analyses.

lows lawmakers to distribute economic benefits (e.g., funding for infrastructure, tax breaks for local business interests), rather than espouse ideological positions (Rundquist & Ferejohn 1975). They ensure the provision of particularized goods by ensuring that outlying preferences are enacted with majority support through log-rolls across jurisdictional areas (Shepsle & Weingast 1981, Weingast, Shepsle & Johnsen 1981). This norm of universalism suggests low partisanship and high cooperation among members and across committees, with oversized passage coalitions providing evidence for this claim (Madonna 2011, Riker 1962, Shepsle 1974). Even if a chamber majority is opposed to the proposed policy, committees exercise an *ex post veto* over legislation within their jurisdiction, preventing chamber majorities from reducing or removing distributive benefits (Shepsle & Weingast 1987). Thus, members have strong incentives to seek out committees which allow them to provide particularistic goods to their constituents, enhancing their reelection prospects as voters reward incumbents for addressing jurisdictional issues of disproportionate interest to the district (Bickers & Stein 1996, Lazarus 2010, Law & Tonon 2006).[7] Evidence on whether member committee service is consistent with district characteristics is mixed (Adler 2000, Adler & Lapinski 1997, Frisch & Kelly 2004, Shepsle 1978), as is the evidence that even members on classically distributive committees like Appropriations provide particularized goods to their district at a greater level than other members (Berry & Fowler 2016, Lazarus 2010).

Information theory claims that committees are agents of the chamber median, and serve as information providers (Krehbiel 1991).[8] The median has final say over which members serve on which committees, delegates information processing to them, and then selects the utility maximizing policy. Consistent with House rules which require the slate of committee appointments to be approved by the chamber, committees' collective preferences are theorized to be representative of the chamber's policy preferences (Groseclose 1994*b*, Groseclose 1994*a*, Krehbiel 1990).

The theory has trouble explaining why members self-select onto certain committees, or why some committees are more valuable than others; if individual members are not able to extract benefits from their service, why is any particular committee more electorally useful than any other committee? Members should be indifferent with respect to their assignment and there should be no consistently valuable committees across time given that a particular committee assignment is electorally unimportant.

[7] Though the relationship between pork and electoral success depends on a variety of factors, see Stein & Bickers (1994).

[8] The theory can easily be extended to chambers with institutional rules that empower a member other than the median, such as in the Senate were the filibuster pivot (3/5 member) is decisive.

Finally, party-based theories offer no theoretical explanation of committee selection by members or committee service in general. Instead, they emphasize the role of top-down selection by the parties, and members have little agency in choosing their assignment (Young & Heitshusen 2003). The parties rely on committees as agenda-control and legislative development tools and their involvement is limited to producing legislation favored by the party and keeping disfavored agenda items off the floor where they might "roll" the majority party (Cox & McCubbins 2005). Here, parties are the mechanism which enforce collective action and protect the party brand, ensuring reelection for all members within the coalition (Cox & McCubbins 1994). The more cohesive and distinct each party, the more members will delegate to their leadership to organizational decisions such as committee composition (Aldrich 1995, Aldrich & Rohde 1997, Aldrich & Rohde 2000, Rohde 1991).

Like information theory, party-based claims do not explain demand-side preferences such as why members prefer some committees to others. If the leadership largely determines the content of legislation and which bills receive floor action, members simply carry out orders. As with information theory, party members cannot use their committee seats to extract electoral benefits for themselves. Perhaps some members prefer to serve on committees that exert more influence with the party leadership, but these claims have not been explicitly theorized.

None of these theories is entirely satisfactory in explaining legislator demand for committee assignments. Distributive theory makes the most explicit claims regarding committee self-selection, but most committees are not distributive in nature. If congressional organization is based around the principle of distributing particularized benefits, what purpose do policy-oriented committees serve? Further, empirical evidence on committee valuation by legislators shows that many of these non-distributive committees are among the most sought after, including Rules, Foreign Affairs, and House Administration. If these committees do not aid members' reelection chances, what incentive exists for service on these committees?

Recent explanations focus on prestige or idiosyncratic member interest (Frisch & Kelly 2004, Frisch & Kelly 2006). Rather than promoting district-level goods, non-distributive committees allow members to exercise influence over an important policy area. Perhaps by specializing in an issue area where demand for legislator interest exceeds supply, reelection goals are indirectly helped by increasing the public profile of the lawmaker. While it is clearly the case that members enter Congress with different backgrounds and have different levels of *a priori* interest in different issue areas, reasons for self-selection such as personal issue

attachment are theoretically tenuous and do not directly connect to theories of legislative organization.

Lawmaker Behavior and Representation Incentives

According to democratic theory, elections are the mechanism which ensure legislators represent the interests of voters. In Congress, the observed ideologies of members reflects the ideological or partisan makeup of their district (Abramowitz, Alexander & Gunning 2006, McCarty, Poole & Rosenthal 2009), and the "electoral connection" explains a wide range of other behavior within the chambers, such as position-taking, voting, bill sponsorship and co-sponsorship, and the distribution of district-level goods (Harbridge 2015, Jessee 2009, Mayhew 1974, Shepsle & Weingast 1987).

These findings are in tension with other research that suggests voters have little information or knowledge about policy positions or ideology, and that normative claims about democratic accountability are inaccurate as voters are incapable of evaluating the performance of elected officials (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes 1960, Converse 1964, Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996, Miller & Stokes 1963). Yet, despite low political sophistication, there is a sizable literature demonstrating that voting decisions are largely based on congruence between the voter's own preferences and the behavior of members. For example, voters can identify their representatives' ideological and partisan positions (Peskowitz 2017), and as legislators move away from the preferences of their constituents, their reputation and vote share decline (Ansolabehere, Snyder & Stewart 2001, Binder, Maltzman & Sigelman 1998, Canes-Wrone, Brady & Cogan 2002, Erikson 1990, Jessee 2009, Shor & Rogowski 2018).

There have been a variety of mechanisms proposed to explain how voters constrain elected officials despite low sophistication (e.g., Lau & Redlawsk 1997, Lupia 1994, Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002, Wittman 1989), but importantly, elected officials *believe* that voters care about the positions and actions they take (Box-Steffensmeier, Ryan & Sokhey 2015, Fenno 1978, Jones 2011, Kingdon 1989, Mayhew 1974). As a result, members seek to build ideological records (Arnold 1990) and signal partisanship to constituents (Grimmer 2013). Committee service is one of the most important ways members' promote their "home style," and demonstrate effective representation of their voters' preferences (Fenno 1973, Fenno 1978). Committee service as a means of representation has been largely defined as the delivery of distributive goods to constituents. There is little theoretical or empirical work connecting committee service to dyadic ideological or

partisan representation, despite the importance of these two factors on other congressional behaviors, such as roll call votes, and on structuring voters' decisions (Downs 1957, Schaffner & Streb 2002).

Committee Service as Representation

Legislators seek service on committees that maximize their reelection chances, a claim consistent with well established findings that voters' are represented by members' ideological and partisan activity within the institution, and reward those behaviors when they are consistent with their own preferences. The legislative development and oversight work conducted within standing committees offers members an opportunity to convey ideological and partisan preferences to their constituents. Thus, a necessary first condition of the theory is that committees vary in their innate level of partisanship, just as some issue areas within the chamber are more partisan or polarized than others (Jochim & Jones 2012). That some committees deal with more partisan jurisdictions than others is widely recognized (Bendix 2016, Carson, Finocchiaro & Rohde 2010, Evans 1991), but I create a set of empirical measures based on voting behavior within committees to quantify the extent to which committee activity divides along party lines due to the innate or latent level of partisanship within the jurisdiction. Proposition 1 reflects this descriptive claim.

Proposition 1: House standing committees vary in their latent level of partisanship.

Variation in committee partisanship allows members to engage in behavior that matches the ideological orientation of their constituents. Members who represent ideologically extreme constituencies prefer to work in committee jurisdictional areas that are also highly partisan so that the member can credit claim for conflicting with the other party and pursuing ideologically extreme policy outcomes preferred by their voters. This builds their reputation among their constituents similar to other behavior within the chamber (e.g., floor roll call voting, floor speeches, etc.).

Congressional districts are conceptualized as being ideologically moderate or extreme, where moderate districts are those that have a median voter who lies close to the ideological center in the national political spectrum. Ideology is a continuous theoretical concept though district ideology is a function of the collective ideological preferences of voters within a district, measured here using vote shares for the two major parties, a common method of capturing district ideology (Carson & Engstrom 2005, Erikson & Wright 1980, Kernell 2009).

Congressional representatives make dichotomous voting decisions that manifest as partisan divisions, which are highly correlated with ideology. I claim that in the modern Congress, district ideology maps onto legislator partisanship in that voters in more ideologically extreme districts prefer a legislator who is more partisan.[9] I refer to members as representing ideologically moderate or extreme districts and serving on committees which are partisan or bipartisan, consistent with the extant literature (Ansolabehere, Snyder & Stewart 2001, Canes-Wrone, Brady & Cogan 2002, Engstrom & Kernell 2005, Kernell 2009).[10]

A Theory of Ideological and Partisan Alignment in Committee Service

In first-past-the-post, single-member district representation, the median is decisive and thus the voter the legislator needs to satisfy in order to win reelection. Assume the district median voter is of one of two types: moderate or extreme. A representative observes the median voter type through an election, (which by definition, the representative has won). I assume the median voter is not strategic about revealing their type because they always receive a higher payoff from the legislator matching their type through their representation style once in Congress.

With respect to committee service, assume each committee is of either the moderate or extreme partisan type, and a lawmaker can choose to serve on a committee that matches the type of their district median voter. Committee types are a function of the latent level of partisanship in a particular committee's jurisdictional area, such that some committees have higher latent levels because the bills and oversight activities addressed within the committee's jurisdiction are higher than in other jurisdictions.

Suppose members have a prior probability of being reelected, q, which is based on the competitiveness of their district, the extent to which they engage in effective representation, etc. Committee service increases the probability of reelection, though not all committees are equally effective in promoting a representative to their constituents. Assume the representative's probability of being reelected increases by p if they serve on a

[9] Due to space limitations, I cannot fully explore the implications for Congress historically, but even in eras with low partisanship (e.g., the post-war era), some issue areas are more partisan than others, and the theory is expected to hold in that members from cross-pressured districts should serve on committees with jurisdictional control over issues that are not highly partisan. For virtually the entirety of congressional history, parties have animated voting decisions within Congress.

[10] I am interested in the extent to which committees are more or less partisan, rather than whether they are liberal or conservative. More partisan committees will have members who are very liberal or conservative as compared to bipartisan committees, which will have members who are moderate. I am also not concerned with the extent to which committees represent the chamber, in either a distributive or ideological sense, though this presents an interesting avenue for future research (see McGrath and Ryan 2019, and Richman 2008 for recent summaries of this literature.).

committee which matches the type of their district median, and increases the probability they are reelected by $1-p$ if they do not match. Values of p vary such that matching committee types map onto p differently for different members, but assume $p > 1-p$. Let the distributive benefit capacity of a particular committee seat equal ε_j, where $p+q+\varepsilon_j$ or $1-p+q+\varepsilon_j$, both bounded 0 to 1. If $p+\varepsilon_1 > (1-p)+\varepsilon_2$ then the member chooses to serve on committee 1 rather than on committee 2, matching the type of their median voter.

Does a lawmaker ever prefer to serve on a committee that does not match their median voter type, holding constant the value of ε_j? If a member receives more benefits from serving on an incongruent committee than they do from serving on a committee that matches the type of their median voter, $p < 1-p$. There is no clear theoretical reason as to why this might be the case given that the extant literature suggests voters care about their members' partisan behavior within the institution and prefer it match their preferences.

A lawmaker may serve on a non-matched committee if ε_j is sufficiently high, or $1-p+\varepsilon_2 > p+\varepsilon_1$. Given that p is greater than $1-p$, this occurs when $\varepsilon_2 > (p-(1-p))+\varepsilon_1$. For this inequality to be satisfied, the extent to which sitting on a non-matched committee hurts a member's reelection probability must be small (the difference between p and $1-p$), *or* the possible distributive benefits received from the alternative committee assignment, ε_2 must be very high. Similarly, any additional benefits received from the matching committee, ε_1, must be low. To generalize, as the extent to which a member is not well ideologically matched to their committee, the greater the extent to which the committee must provide distributive benefits that enhance their reelection prospects.[11]

Empirical Expectations of Committee Selection

The theory first predicts that, holding all other factors constant including distributive benefits which allow members to increase their reelection chances, legislators select committees with partisanship levels similar to their district ideology. That is, members representing ideologically extreme (moderate) districts should serve on partisan (bipartisan) committees.

Hypothesis 1: As the ideological extremity of a member's district increases, the committee(s) on which a

[11] Though this is how benefits which increase the probability a legislator is reelected through committee service is operationalized here, note that distributive goods are not the only possible source. For example, committees on which members can be highly effective legislatively (e.g., passing laws, achieve national prominence, or engage with important policy issues) may also allow them to maximize their reelection chances.

member serves will be increasingly partisan.

Distributive benefits also play an important role in selection as they add to the total electoral payoff received from committee service. Further, if a lawmaker receives substantial benefits from serving on a valuable distributive committee they are more likely to serve on an ideologically incongruent committee, though as the theory demonstrates, the best possible committee assignment is one in which the committee offers distributive benefits and also has a high level of partisanship congruent with the ideological makeup of a member's district. Thus, a member is most likely to select a committee when the distributive benefits are high, conditional on the level of ideological/partisan congruence with the committee. Conversely, when a committee has a low value of ε_j, the probability of selecting the committee will be low, but positively conditioned by level of congruence.

Hypothesis 2: As the level of distributive benefits offered by a committee on which a member serves increases, the level of congruence between a member's district ideological extremity and the partisanship of the committee will decrease.

The Conditional Effect of Ideological/Partisan Alignment on Committee Departure

House members do not always receive their preferred assignments because they are doled out by seniority (Goodwin 1959) and sought-after committee seats are limited. New members in particular may not receive committee assignments that maximize their utility when accounting for district alignment and additional benefits from distributive potential (Kellermann & Shepsle 2009). As a result, members may have an incentive to depart their current committee and join another but switching committees is not costless; members lose their seniority which can affect their reelection prospects (Groseclose & Stewart 1998). Committee departures demonstrate revealed preferences about which committee assignments maximize legislators' overall utility received from ideological congruence and distributive benefits. If members care about the ideological implications of their committee service, there will be evidence they change committees for greater district-committee congruence.

Assume a member serves on a committee on which they are not well suited ideologically (e.g., a member from an ideologically moderate district serves on a partisan committee, or vice versa). The member's utility from their current committee assignment is $1-p+\varepsilon_2$, but it is the case that $p+\varepsilon_1 > 1-p+\varepsilon_2$. If they

switch, they suffer costs c, so the payoff from switching and serving on a matched committee is $p+\varepsilon_1-c>(1-p)+\varepsilon_2$ or $(p-(1-p))+\varepsilon_1-c>\varepsilon_2$. Given that p is constrained to be greater than $1-p$, switching should only occur is the costs of doing so are low, if the difference between p and $1-p$ is large, if the distributive benefits received from switching are very high, or if the distributive benefits received from the current committee assignment are low.[12]

Similarly, if the reverse is true, a member serves on an ideologically well-matched committee but they prefer a non-well matched committee, it must be the case that $1-p+\varepsilon_2-c>p+\varepsilon_1$. Again, the member must receive a substantial payoff from the new committee (ε_2 is high), the current committee assignment must offer a very low additional benefits payoff (ε_1 is low), and the difference in the increase in probability of reelection from serving on a matched committees versus not well-matched committee is small (i.e., $(1-p)-p$ must be negative but should be close to zero for a member to switch).

For members who are already likely to be reelected (high value for q), the effect of p and $1-p$ on q are small as the sum of q and p or $1-p$ is constrained to be less than one. Put differently, members' in competitive, moderate districts are more likely to lose their reelection race and are sensitive to changes in the probability of winning, while members in safe seats are relatively insensitive. For members with a low prior probability of reelection, switching between committees can produce dramatic increases in the value of $p+q$. Conversely, for members with a relatively high probability of reelection, p will always be small. I proxy for a member's prior probability of reelection, and their sensitivity to serving on a well-matched committee, by using presidential vote share in the previous election within their district. Members from closely divided partisan districts are at greater risk of losing their seat, and if they are also not well-matched, are more likely to depart their committee.

Hypothesis 3: As the level of ideological and partisan mismatch between the committee and member increases and the district becomes more moderate (low prior probability of reelection), the more likely it is a member will depart their committee.

The level of distributive benefits offered by a committee will incentivize a member to remain on a non-matched committee. When a committee is not distributive, (does not offer a high value for ε_j), members

[12]The claims here are consistent with the intuition used to capture committee values in that committees receive higher relative value not just when a member switches onto the committee, but when the value of the committee the member leaves is also high. In short, a committee is more valuable when a member leaves another high value committee to join it (Groseclose & Stewart 1998, Munger 1988).

should be more willing to move as ideological and partisan incongruence increases. The reverse is also true: when a committee has a high distributive component, members will be less likely to leave the committee, even as incongruence increases, because they are unlikely to do improve on their total utility on a new committee.

Hypothesis 4: As the level of ideological and partisan mismatch between the committee and member increases, and the committee offers fewer distributive benefits, the more likely it is a member will depart their committee.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 articulate empirical expectations about committee selections made by members, given the constraints of the seniority system and limited seats for the most plum assignments, while hypotheses 3 and 4 are empirical expectations about leaving committees, which partially accounts for these constraints. Ideally, the data would allow for direct comparisons between committee dyads, such that differences could be calculated between committees which members depart and join. This is not possible because members view committee assignments as a portfolio, and leave or join committees in order to improve its overall value. Trading multiple committee seats for multiple alternative committees is common, as is exchanging multiple committee assignments for fewer (but presumably better) assignments. Because members are making implicit comparisons between multiple seats at a time, I cannot empirically model committee dyads in which a member leaves one committee and joins the another. Instead, the approach taken above separately models overall committee selection and committee departures at the member-committee level.

Measuring Committee Partisanship and Data Limitations

Committee partisanship is measured using all roll call votes taken within all House standing committees, 104th-114th Congresses (1995 to 2017). Roll call voting records are commonly used to measure levels of partisanship or ideology for elected officials as votes are generally considered to be an observable expression of sincere preferences (Groseclose & Milyo 2010, Poole & Rosenthal 1997). Further, compared to votes taken on the House floor, the sample of issues on which votes are taken is less censored because the minority party and individual members have the ability to force votes on virtually any issue during the consideration of legislation.

All votes taken in standing committees such as those on amendments, motions, and to report the bill, are incorporated into three measures of partisanship. While patterns of partisanship differ on each of these types

(for example, most of the majority votes to report a bill, while amendment votes are dominated by minority party support as they try to modify the bill in a way more favorable to their preferences or to roll the majority party), the measures here capture the level of partisanship of the committee as a whole. That is, to what extent do the majority and minority parties agree when voting, regardless of the direction or purpose of the vote?

The measure used in the main analyses is the average absolute difference between the percentage of Democrats voting "yea" minus the percentage of Republicans voting "yea" on a given vote. A value of zero indicates that the same percentage of Democrats and Republicans voted "yea" across all votes, while a value of 100 indicates that all members of one party voted against all members of the other party. Consistent with previous research, the percentage voting in favor for a given vote is found by dividing the number of voters voting yes by the total number of voting members (Krehbiel 1998).[13] The measure is equal to:

$$\textit{Average party difference for committee j in congress k} = \frac{\Sigma(|\textit{Democratic percentage voting yea - Republican Percentage voting yea}|)_{\textit{vote i}}}{\textit{number of votes in committee j in congress k}} \tag{1}$$

Two other measures used for robustness checks are related to party line voting, where greater than 50% of Democrats or Republicans voted against 50% of members of the other party are deemed "low party votes," while votes where greater than 90% of members of each party opposed the other party are deemed "high party votes." These threshold are admittedly arbitrary, though a 50% threshold has commonly been used to define party line votes (Brady, Cooper & Hurley 1979, Hurley & Wilson 1989, Kerr 2000, Sinclair 1977), and the results are insensitive to changing the thresholds defining high and low party line votes (i.e., estimates using a 50%, 75%, 90%, or 95% threshold are not substantively different from each other).

Each of these measures is calculated at the vote level then averaged at the committee-congress level resulting in a percentage of low party votes (50% threshold), high party votes (95% threshold), and the average party difference for each committee within each congress. The result is 197 observations (there are 20 committees in 11 congresses for a possible total of 220 observations, but not every committee has a recorded roll call vote for a given congress). There is variation in levels of partisanship within committees across congresses as well, so the standard deviation, along with the congress-level averages for each committee, is

[13] Bernie Sanders is coded as a Democrat despite identifying as an independent. There are no other independents in the dataset.

shown in Appendix Table A1.

There is significant variation in the level of committee partisanship. For example, on average, there is a 54% party difference in Agriculture votes, while there is a 94% party difference in voting on the Rules Committee (equivalent to 100% of one party voting yes and only 6% of the other party voting yes, on average). These patterns are reflected in the data on party line votes as well with, for example, only about 46% of votes on Intelligence qualifying as a low party vote (majorities of each party voting in opposition to the other party), while more than 97% of votes on Rules qualify as a low party vote. The table also shows that there is some variation within committees across time, with Ways and Means and Education and the Workforce exhibiting little variation in levels of partisanship over time, but Appropriations exhibiting somewhat higher variation over time despite being a moderately partisan committee on average. For the theory and analyses here, I choose not to focus on the causes of variation within committees across time. Instead, I am interested only in average levels of partisanship across time and leave theorizing about the causes of variation in partisanship within committees to future research. While there is variation within committees, their relative partisan committee ranks are largely consistent across time.

Appendix Table A2 shows the rank ordering of committees across all congresses. (See details in the Appendix.) With the exception of House Administration, ranked as most partisan, the order of committees is largely in line with expectations generated from the extant literature. Rules is the second most partisan committee, and Budget the fourth most. Classically distributive committees tend to be near the middle or bottom (e.g., Transportation and Infrastructure, and Agriculture). These results are very consistent with previous theorizing on committee types and partisanship, with, for example, Carson, Finocchiaro & Rohde (2010) noting that the jurisdictions of policy committees are more partisan than those of distributive committees.

The data is limited in that it only captures roll call votes within committees, and a significant quantity of committee activity is not voted on. Voice votes, unanimous consent votes, and division votes are recorded inconsistently by committees and over time, and as a result are not included here. Though the committee ranking has strong face validity, some committees stand out. For example, House Administration is commonly thought of as bipartisan given its jurisdictional focuses on federal elections and internal House operations. The roll call voting patterns within the committee reveal that the markup of legislation is quite partisan, however. As one recent example, in the 116th Congress the committee reported H.R. 4617, a bill that "generally limits

political spending and election interference by foreign entities,"[14] The bill was seen as a response to actions taken by Russia during the 2016 presidential election, but was also highly partisan. In committee, eight roll call votes were taken on the bill, and none of them featured any cross-party voting. On passage in the House, only one Democrat voted against the bill, and no Republicans voted in favor.

This example is typical of the disconnect that may occur between a committee's reputation and the legislation it actually develops. Just as in examining house floor votes, there is a selection problem in that only relatively partisan items are recorded in the data, while highly consensual actions will be completed via voice vote or unanimous consent. This problem is expected to be less acute than on floor voting because the threshold to call for a recorded vote in committee is low. Further, the relevant comparisons in the analyses are *between* committees and if the data generation process for votes is similar across committees, then the results are not driven by committee-specific selection mechanisms. Even when a unique characteristic of a committee, such has having a partisan chair, affects what legislative items receive votes, the empirical models measuring the relationship between district and committee characteristics control for both time-level and committee-level effects, holding baseline differences within these levels constant.

I am most interested in the substantive development of legislation, which is subject to recorded votes. Recall that the theoretical mechanism is that House members represent their district preferences through visible committee behavior. Consensual activities that are not represented by votes are also not as visible to constituents, and therefore less meaningful to House members when engaging in different representation styles. Still, it must be acknowledged, similar to research on chamber roll call votes, that the data may overstate the degree of partisanship within committees.

Additional Evidence for Jurisdictional Variation in Committee Partisanship

As a robustness check for the claim that the innate partisanship of committee jurisdictions vary, I calculate the same three measures of partisanship (i.e., percentage of high party votes, low party votes, and the average percentage difference between the two votes), for each committee's membership on votes taken on the House floor. By comparing these measures from floor votes to votes from within the committee, I obtain a standardized measure of how the level of partisanship for a committee's membership compares to every other

[14] Language from the bill summary authored by the Congressional Research Service. Accessed at: `https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4617` on November 20, 2019.

committee's membership on the same set of (floor) votes.

Figures A1-A4 and the discussion in Appendix B demonstrate that members across all committees behave similarly on floor voting, but differ substantially in their committee voting behavior. On floor votes, agendas are controlled by the majority party. In committees, agenda control is exercised by the Speaker and parliamentarian when bills are referred to committees based on jurisdictional considerations. The committee chair largely determines which bills to hear within the committee, but it is very difficult to control amendments and motions during the markup process. As a result, more moderate lawmakers, who vote similarly to their colleagues on floor votes, can use committee votes to differentiate themselves from their ideological peers. Committee votes are meaningful indicators of the markup process in committees, and lawmaker preferences and committee agendas differ in important ways across jurisdictional boundaries. The variation in committee partisanship is largely due to jurisdictional differences and the preferences of the legislators who serve on them, preferences which are often not well reflected in floor voting.

Model Parameters and Specifications

The dependent variable used in the first set of analyses is committee selection from a constrained choice set. Models of binary choice (i.e., logit) predict the effect of a variable on the probability of selecting an outcome for all observations across the sample, but here I am interested in the selection of a particular committee assignment from a large set (approximately 20) of possible choices. Conditional logit is the preferred estimation method for these data structures (McFadden 1973), which is equivalent to fixed effects logit, where intercepts, along with covariates, are estimated for the possible selection groups (here, committees).[15] I estimate fixed effects logit (rather than conditional logit) because calculating marginal effects from conditional logit models can be misleading as all fixed effects must equal zero (Beck N.d.).

District partisanship, one of the key independent variables, operationalizes the member's constituent preferences, and is measured using both the district's difference from presidential vote share in the most recent presidential election and Kernell's (2009) modified measure of presidential vote share for districts. Using the difference between the district's presidential vote share and the national vote share is a common way

[15] One difference between the conditional logit estimator and the logit fixed effects estimator is that the intercept in conditional logit is not estimated because it is constant across groups. This does not affect the estimated coefficients.

of measuring district ideology as it offers a direct expression voting behavior, and is comparable across time and districts, though it only varies every four years (Carson & Engstrom 2005, Carson, Engstrom & Roberts 2006, Erikson & Wright 1980). Kernell's (2009) measure uses multiple election returns to estimate the distribution of voter ideologies within a district. I find the absolute value of both measures, with higher values indicating more ideologically extreme districts. A number of districts are ideological outliers and both district ideological extremity measures have significantly higher mean values than medians. To account for this, I take the natural log of each and model fit statistics indicate the logged variables outperform the unmodified variables, though the results are robust to non-logged specifications.

The dependent variables used in the second set of analyses measure whether a member departed a committee at the end of a congressional term. If a member left Congress within the sample, leaving a committee is coded as missing because whether that member would have left the committee is unobserved.[16]

The extent to which a legislator is congruent with the extremity of the committee is measured by creating z-scores of the Kernell and presidential vote district measures for all members on committee j in congress k, then taking the absolute value. The variable is constructed such that members who lie exactly at the committee mean in district ideology have scores of zero, while those who are outliers with either more moderate or extreme districts than the committee mean have high values.

The theory also claims that committee departure is conditional on the extent to which the legislator is concerned about their electoral prospects. This concept is measured through the district partisanship measures as there is a substantial literature demonstrating that members in more bipartisan districts are more cross-pressured, are at greater risk of losing their seat, and pay closer attention to constituent preferences (Sullivan & Uslaner 1978). I also use the legislator's vote percentage received in the most recent election as an indicator of electoral security.

A set of control variables are included in the models, including a member's seniority rank on the committee, and whether they are a chair or ranking member of any committee, as longer tenured members will be less likely to leave a committee (Kellermann & Shepsle 2009, Richman 2008). The committee seniority variable also controls for members who are forced to leave a committee due to party seat losses from an election, as these are the most junior members. I also control for gender, as women behave differently in Congress than

[16]The sample extends from the 104th through 114th Congresses, but committee data is available for the 115th which I use to code leaving a committee at the end of the 114th.

men (Volden, Wiseman & Wittmer 2013), whether the member belongs to the majority party, and party identification to capture any differing patterns in committee service between the parties (Frisch & Kelly 2004). The models control for the percentage of majority party members on the committee, as there is dispute about the extent to which committees are majority party dominated (Groseclose 1994*b*, Krehbiel 1990, Shepsle & Weingast 1981).

Committee membership rules vary by party and congress, but members usually serve on two committees (one non-exclusive committee and one exclusive committee[17]) so that various individual factors (e.g., committee partisanship, rank within committee) vary across committees for the same member. Hence, the units are member-committee seats within congresses with observations nested within committees and congresses. The models are conditional/fixed effects logit for committee selection and binomial logit for committee departure. Committee fixed effects control for all differences across committees and constant across time (e.g., committee type, Grosewart score, etc.) Congress fixed effects control for all heterogeneity across time, such as baseline levels of polarization, party control of Congress, divided government, etc.

Ideological and Partisan Congruence Increases the Probability of Committee Selection

The first set of empirical tests explore whether congruence between the ideology of a lawmaker's district and the partisanship of a committee increases the probability a member will select that committee. To measure the hypothesized relationship, district ideology (measured using both the Kernell measure and presidential vote within the district) is interacted with committee partisanship (measured using the average difference in party voting within the committee, though the results are robust to the other two committee partisanship measures).

The results in models 1 and 2 in Table 1 are fixed effects logit models so the coefficients are not directly interpretable. Predicted probabilities are shown in Figure 1 with the solid thin line showing predicted probabilities of committee selection as committee partisanship increases when district ideology is at its minimum, and the thick black line showing the probability of selection when district ideology is at its maximum. Hy-

[17]The parties rank committees slightly differently but as of the 113th Congress, both parties classify committees into "exclusive," "non-exclusive," and "exempt."

Table 1: Fixed Effects Logit Estimates of Committee Assignments

	(1)	(2)
Choice-Specific Variables		
Logged Kernell District Ideology	-0.11*	
	(0.03)	
Logged Presidential Vote District Ideology		-0.12
		(0.08)
Committee Party Seniority Rank	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Committee Overall Seniority	-0.05	-0.05
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Alternative-Specific Variables		
Avg. Diff. in Committee Partisan Voting	0.14*	-0.25
	(0.07)	(0.18)
Maj. Party Percent of Committee Seats	-0.22	-0.20
	(0.53)	(0.53)
Logged Kernell District Extremity x	0.14*	
Avg. Diff. in Committee Partisan Voting	(0.06)	
Logged Pres. Vote. District Extremity x		0.14
Avg. Diff. in Committee Partisan Voting		(0.09)
Constant	-1.80*	-1.49*
	(0.39)	(0.44)
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
AIC	49688.10	49949.49
N	75,758	80,173
Cases	7,826	7,868

Note: *p<.05, #p<.1. Models are fixed effects logit with standard errors clustered by committee, where the dependent variable is selecting a committee from a constrained choice set of committees. Cases indicate unique number of member-committee-congress observations. Choice-specific variables are those that vary by individuals, alternative-specific variables are those that vary across the choice-set (committees).

pothesis 1 claims that when a district's ideology and the partisanship of a committee are congruent, a member is likely to select that committee.

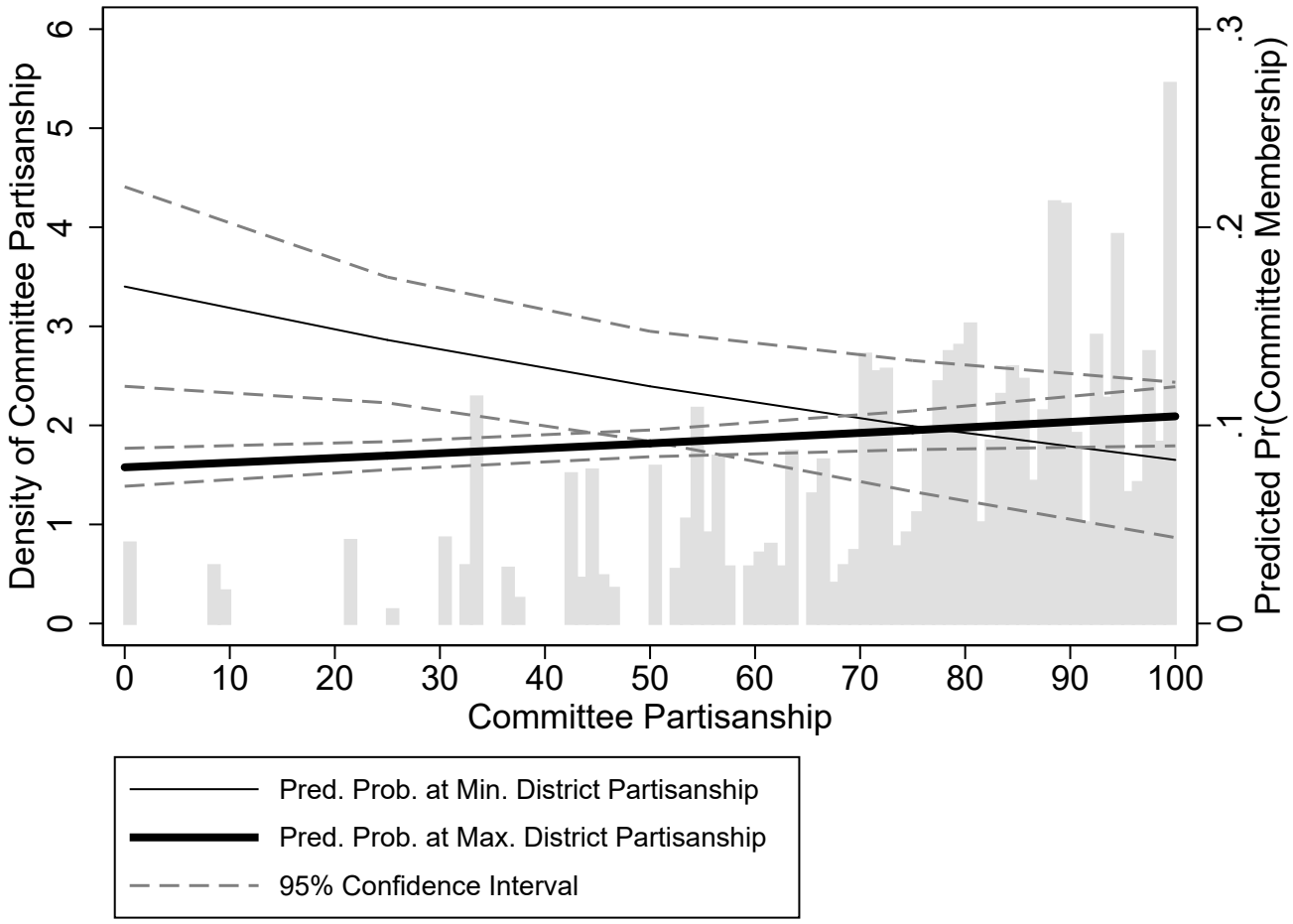
As the figure shows, when a member comes from a moderate district *and* committee partisanship is low, the probability of selecting any given committee is about .17 (95% CI: .12 to .22), but when a member represents a moderate district and committee partisanship is at its maximum, the probability a member selects the committee is only .08 (95% CI: .04 to .12). For members who serve in the most ideologically extreme districts, the probability of selecting the most bipartisan committee is only .08 (95% CI: .07 to .09). But, for these members, the probability of joining the most partisan committee increases to .11 (95% CI: .09 to .12). The marginal substantive increase is much smaller for members in extreme districts because the variable is logged, but these results are strongly supportive of the theory.

Other results in Table 1 are consistent with expectations. The member's seniority, either within the party or overall on the committee are not predictive of whether they join the committee. This is likely because the vast majority of committee selection choices occur when a member is new to the institution, thus there is little variation on this variable. The percentage of the committee made up of the majority party also has no effect on the likelihood of joining a committee. Committee-specific characteristics such as its overall value, its distributive or policy influence potential are captured by the committee fixed effects.

Robustness Check: Alternative Model Specifications

As a robustness check for the claim that members use committees to represent their district's ideological interests, I estimate a number of alternative model specifications. First, mixed effects regression model where committee partisanship is the dependent variable (as measured by the average absolute difference in Republicans and Democrats voting "yea" on all roll call votes taken within the committee within a congress) and district partisanship is the independent variable. Observations are member-committee seats with varying intercepts for Congress, and a set of control variables at the member and committee level are included. The results are shown in Table A3 in Appendix C; the coefficients for both measures of district partisanship are positive and significant, supporting the theory that members seek committees which match their district ideology. For Kernell district extremity, increasing from the minimum to the mean extremity results in a committee assignment that is 71% more partisan as measured by average absolute difference between Republican

Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities of Committee Choice Conditional on Kernell District Ideology and Average Difference in Committee Partisan Voting



Note: Predicted probabilities from model 1 in Table 1. The left y-axis is the density of the measure of committee partisanship, average difference in partisan voting. The x-axis is committee partisanship from the minimum to the maximum, while the right y-axis is the predicted probability of choosing a particular committee.

and Democratic voting (95% CI: 1.3% to 141%). The results in model 2 are very similar. I also estimated a regression with fixed effects for congresses, and the Kernell district partisanship is statistically significant, while district presidential vote partisanship is significant at the .06 level (Table A4 in Appendix C).

Endogeneity may be a concern if a member has "reverse coattails," whereby they affect presidential vote share within their district because of their committee service. To address this concern, I replicate all results using only members in their first term in office who are least likely to affect presidential vote share within their district. The results for first term members are nearly identical to the results for all members, giving confidence that the results are not due to endogeneity.

The Conditional Effect of Committee Distributive Potential

The relationship between ideological and partisan congruence will be positively conditioned by the distributive capacity of the committee. Table 2 interacts the two committee measures of district partisanship (district presidential vote and the Kernell measure) with whether a committee is classified as distributive. This classification is drawn from Deering & Smith (1997) and Frisch & Kelly (2004) who call these committees, "constituency oriented," and includes: Agriculture, Armed Services, Natural Resources, Transportation and Infrastructure, Science, Space, and Technology, Small Business, and Veterans' Affairs. To these, I add Appropriations, (the Deering & Smith/Frisch & Kelly classification categorizes Appropriations as a "prestige" committee.)[18]

To find the conditional effect for a distributive committee on the relationship between district ideology and committee partisanship, the same conditional logit models are estimated, but the sample is split by distributive and non-distributive committees. While an interaction term between district ideology, partisanship, and committee type would be preferable, committee type is collinear with the committee fixed effects necessary to estimate the conditional logit models. Thus, each of the two models using Kernell district partisanship estimates a member's likelihood of selecting a committee from among either a distributive committee choice set, or a non-distributive committee choice-set.

Again, the substantive interpretation of the fixed effects logits are conveyed by Figure 2. Members from moderate districts (left panel) have the highest probability of selecting a committee that has low partisanship, and the probability of selecting a committee decreases as committee partisanship increases. The opposite is true for members from extreme districts (right panel), as their probability of selection increases as the partisanship of the committee increases. In each of the panels, the thick black line shows the probability of selecting a distributive committee, while the thin gray line shows the probability of selecting a non-distributive committee. In both panels, the probability of selecting a distributive committee is statistically significantly higher than for non-distributive committees, especially at lower values of committee partisanship. The effect is much smaller for members from ideologically extreme districts (note the scale of the y-axis in the right panel is one-half of the left panel), but ideologically extreme members have a higher probability of selecting

[18] I also created my own measure which in addition to these committees adds Ways and Means, and Energy and Commerce, and the results are consistent with those shown here.

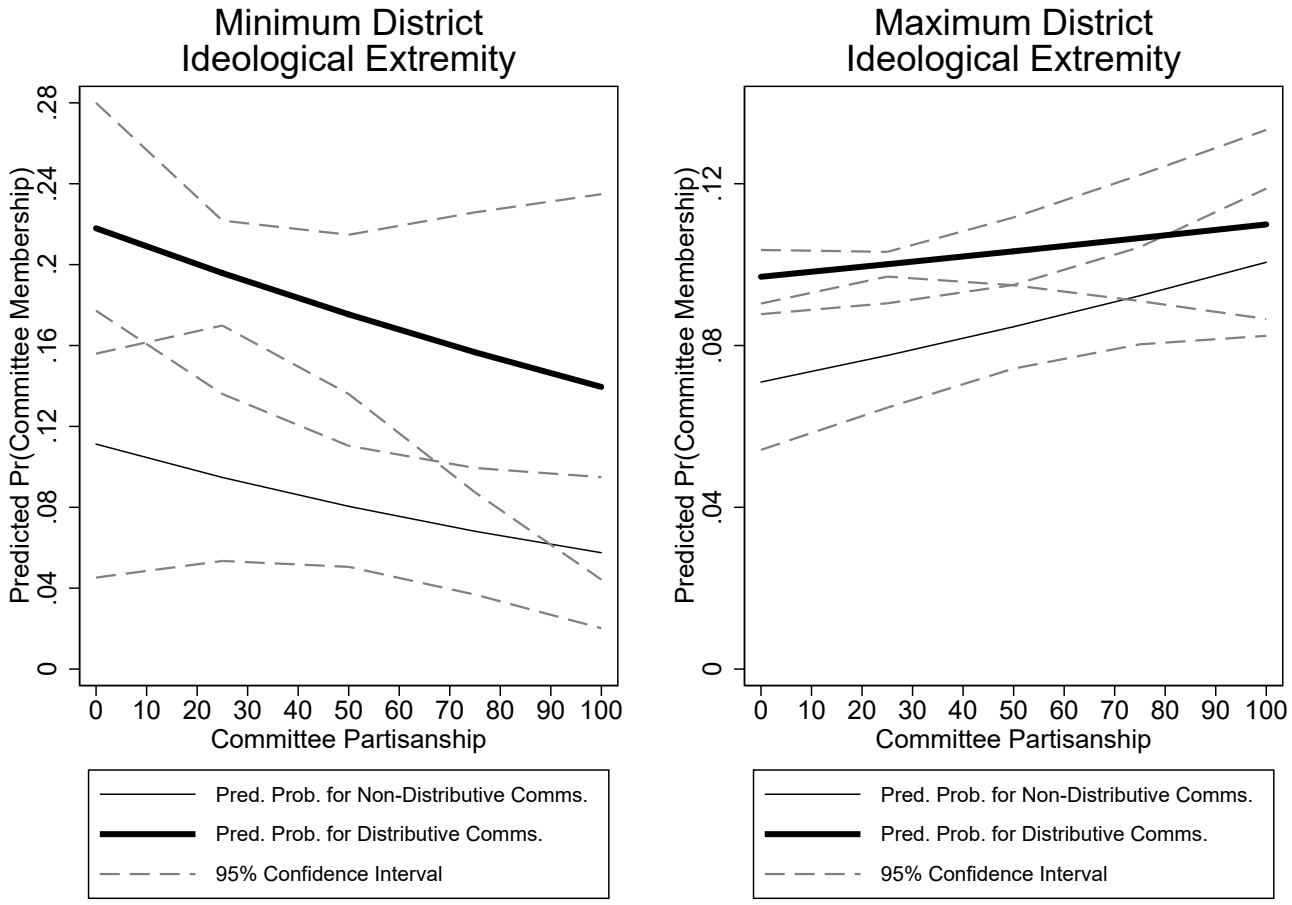
Table 2: The Conditional Effect of Distributive Committees on District Partisanship and Partisan Committee Membership

	Non-Distributive Committees	**Distributive Committees**
	(1)	(2)
Choice-Specific Variables		
Logged Kernell District Ideology	-0.06	-0.12*
	(0.06)	(0.03)
Committee Party Seniority Rank	-0.03$^{\#}$	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.02)
Committee Overall Seniority	-0.06*	-0.02
	(0.03)	(0.05)
Alternative-Specific Variables		
Avg. Diff. in Committee Partisan Voting	0.22*	0.04
	(0.11)	(0.05)
Maj. Party Percent of Committee Seats	-0.29	-0.28
	(0.89)	(0.56)
Logged Kernell District Extremity x	0.14	0.08
Avg. Diff. in Committee Partisan Voting	(0.09)	(0.09)
Constant	-1.27*	-2.07*
	(0.59)	(0.52)
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
AIC	27991.25	21566.26
N	49,387	30,371
Cases	4,269	3,557

Note: *p<.05, $^{\#}$p<.1. Models are fixed effects logit with standard errors clustered by committee, where the dependent variable is selecting a committee from constrained choice set of committees. Model 1 is sub-sampled only for non-distributive committees, model 2 is sub-sampled only for distributive committees. Groups are individual members of Congress with fixed effects for congressional term. Cases indicate unique number of member-committee-congress observations. Choice-specific variables are those that vary by individuals, alternative-specific variables are those that vary across the choice-set (committees).

a distributive committee even if the committee has low to moderate partisanship. At high partisanship, the differences between the types of committees are not statistically significant. These results are strong evidence for Hypothesis 2.

Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities of Committee Choice for Distributive and Non-Distributive Committees, Conditional on Kernell District Ideology and Average Difference in Committee Partisan Voting



Note: Predicted probabilities from model 1 (left panel) and model 2 (right panel) in Table 2. The y-axis is the predicted probability of choosing a particular committee for members with minimum district ideological extremity (left panel) and maximum district ideological extremity (right panel). The right panel y-axis is scaled to be one-half of the left axis panel. The x-axis is committee partisanship from the minimum to the maximum.

Mismatched Members Are More Likely to Depart Committees

Not only do legislators prefer to serve on committees that have levels of partisanship consistent with the ideological leanings of their districts, the theory also suggests that the decision to change committees will be driven by the degree to which a lawmaker fits their current committee assignment, all else equal.

As described in the theory, while misaligned committee assignments should be rare, they may happen for a variety of reasons, including little or poor information on district-committee alignment, a lack of seats available on congruent committees, or due to party leader preferences. Switching committees is very costly, however, and members must carefully calculate whether it is worth the loss of seniority to move to another committee. Departing is most likely for members from marginal or competitive districts, who have proximate electoral concerns that makes them more likely to be bear the costs of switching

Switching committees is quite rare, with only 937 occurrences of members leaving their committee (15% of total observations). Nearly 30% of committee departures occur in a legislator's first term, and more than 2/3 occur in a legislators first three terms. Because of the distribution of this variable and the highly idiosyncratic reasons a legislator departs a committee after their third term, the sample is limited to only the first four terms.[19] This is a more conservative test as the results are stronger when limiting the sample to only members in their first term. The estimator is binomial logit as the observations are at the individual level (whether a member left their committee or not); fixed effects for committee and congress are used, along with controls for member characteristics.

Table 3 shows three models where the absolute value of a legislator's committee z-score for Kernell district extremity is interacted with three other variables: the vote percentage received by the member in the last election (model 1), unscaled Kernell district extremity (model 2), and unscaled presidential vote district extremity (model 3). The coefficients are not directly interpretable, so predicted probabilities of leaving a committee taken from the results in model 3 are plotted in Figure 3. The predicted probabilities for models 1 and 2 are substantively similar. The left y-axis shows the distribution of presidential vote district extremity, the right y-axis shows the predicted probability of a committee-member leaving their committee at the end of the congressional term, and the x-axis varies the district's level of extremity, with zero values indicating the district is moderate, while high values indicate the district is ideologically extreme.

The thin gray line shows predicted probabilities of leaving a committee when a member is not an outlier on their committee (outlierness is at its minimum). When a member is in a bipartisan district, there is a low probability of switching committee seats because they are well-aligned, ideologically, with the committee,

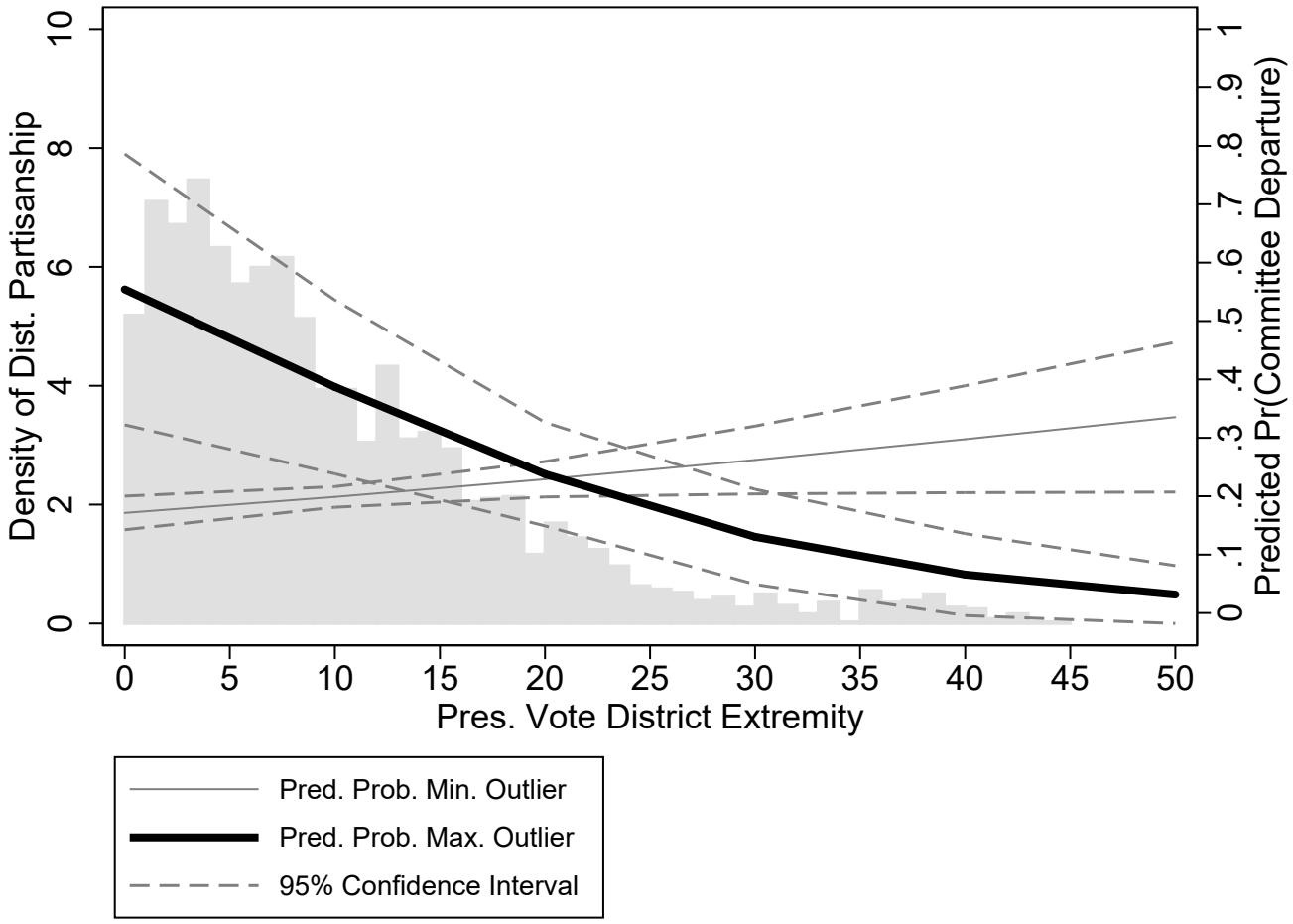
[19]Separate models with a three way interaction of a legislator's outlierness (z-score), their district ideology and the number of terms served were also estimated. The results are very similar, though weaker, as it is clear that legislators leaving a committee after their third term are doing so for idiosyncratic reasons not well explained by the models.

Table 3: The Conditional Effect of Outlying Preferences on Committee Departure

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Member Outlierness (Kernell Z-Score)	0.66	0.35*	0.44*
	(0.41)	(0.17)	(0.15)
Committee Party Seniority Rank	0.02#	0.02*	0.02*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender (Female=1)	0.19*	0.20*	0.21*
	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.10)
Majority Party Member (Yes=1)	-0.06	-0.11	-0.10
	(0.15)	(0.14)	(0.13)
Member Party (Dem.=1)	0.003*	0.003*	0.003*
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Chair or Ranking Member of Any Committee	-0.34#	-0.32#	-0.31#
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Member Vote Percentage	0.01*		
	(0.01)		
Z-Score x Vote Percentage	-0.01		
	(0.01)		
Kernell District Extremity		0.15	
		(0.25)	
Z-Score x Kernell Extremity		-0.21	
		(0.14)	
Presidential Vote District Extremity			0.02*
			(0.01)
Z-Score x Pres. Vote District Ideology			-0.02*
			(0.01)
Constant	-2.78*	-2.24*	-2.33*
	(0.49)	(0.30)	(0.31)
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R-Squared	0.09	0.09	0.09
N	2798	3152	3152

Note: *p<.05, #p<.1. Models are logit with standard errors clustered by committee, where the dependent variable is whether the member left committee *i* in congress *j*. The sample is limited to members in their first four terms. Member outlierness is the absolute value of a member's z-score for the committee-congress on which they serve using the Kernell district ideology measure.

Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities of Committee Departures Conditional on Outlying Preferences and District Partisanship



Note: Predicted probabilities from model 3 in Table 3. The left y-axis is lagged vote district partisanship density, the x-axis is district extremity as measured by the absolute difference between the Democratic presidential candidate national vote share and district vote share. The right x-axis is the predicted probability of leaving a committee conditional on district partisanship and absolute level of outlierness on a committee.

and salient electoral concerns exist. The positive slope indicates that even well matched committee-members might sometimes depart a committee, but only when they represent a safe district and are not likely to be electorally punished for switching.

The thick black line shows predicted probabilities at the maximum observed outlier value in the dataset, for a member with a z-score of 4.6.[20] The probability of a member leaving the committee when an extreme outlier and also representing a moderate district is very high, at .55 (95% CI: .32 to .79). Importantly, the probability decreases as the district becomes less moderate and less competitive, supporting Hypothesis 3.

[20]The member is Ron Dellums CA-9 in the 105th Congress who represented a very ideologically extreme district but sat on the relatively bipartisan Armed Services Committee.

Outliers will switch, but only if there are significant electoral disadvantages to serving on a mismatched committee.

The Conditional Effect of Committee Distributive Potential on Committee Departure

As with committee assignments, members should be less willing to leave a committee, even when mismatched, if the committee offers high distributive benefits. To test Hypothesis 4, I estimate an interaction with three component terms: a member's absolute ideological outlierness on their committee, their presidential vote district extremity, and whether or not their committee is classified as distributive.[21] Because these are logits modeling the decision to leave, I drop the committee fixed effects to allow for estimation of committee type (i.e., distributive or not), and include additional predictors of committees, specifically its Grosewart score.

[21]The results for an interaction using the other measures of district competitiveness, Kernell district extremity, and member vote percentage are very similar.

Table 4: The Conditional Effect of Outlying Preferences on Committee Departure

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Member Outlierness (Kernell Z-Score)	0.99	0.54*	0.77*
	(0.64)	(0.22)	(0.19)
Distributive Committee	-0.18	-0.34	-0.10
	(0.71)	(0.34)	(0.24)
Committee Party Seniority Rank	0.02#	0.01#	0.01#
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Gender (Female=1)	0.17#	0.19*	0.21*
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Majority Party Member (Yes=1)	-0.05	-0.07	-0.06
	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)
Member Party (Dem.=1)	0.00*	0.00*	0.00*
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Chair or Ranking Member of Any Committee	-0.37*	-0.36*	-0.35*
	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Grosewart Committee Value	-1.50*	-1.46*	-1.48*
	(0.13)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Maj. Party Percent of Committee Seats	1.65	1.54	1.53
	(2.14)	(1.91)	(1.92)
Z-Score x Distributive Comm.	-0.43	-0.17	-0.43#
	(0.89)	(0.27)	(0.24)

Table continued on next page

Table 4 Continued

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Member Vote Percentage	0.01*		
	(0.01)		
Z-Score x Vote Pct.	-0.01		
	(0.01)		
Distributive Comm. x Vote. Pct	-0.00		
	(0.01)		
Z-Score x Vote Pct. x Distributive Comm.	0.003		
	(0.01)		
Kernell District Partisanship		0.14	
		(0.30)	
Z-Score x Kernell Extremity		-0.24	
		(0.15)	
Distributive x Kernell Extremity		0.29	
		(0.45)	
Z-Score x Kernell Extremity x Distributive Comm.		-0.11	
		(0.24)	
Presidential Vote District Partisanship			0.02*
			(0.01)
Z-Score x Pres. Vote Dist. Extremity			-0.03*
			(0.01)
Distributive x Pres. Vote Dist. Extremity			0.01
			(0.01)
Z-Score x Pres. Vote. Dist. Extremity x Distributive Comm.			0.003
			(0.01)
Constant	-3.90*	-3.10*	-3.33*
	(1.44)	(1.12)	(1.11)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pseudo R-Squared	0.08	0.08	0.08
N	2753	3102	3102

Note: *p<.05, #p<.1. Models are logit with standard errors clustered by committee, where the dependent variable is whether the member left committee *i* in congress *j*. The sample is limited to members in their first four terms. Member outlierness is the absolute value of a member's z-score for the committee-congress on which they serve using the Kernell district ideology measure.

Table 4 shows each combination of the three way interactions, with each component term equaling the effect when all other terms are zero. Figure 4 shows predicted probabilities of leaving a committee for

members of distributive and non-distributive committees at the minimum (left panel) and maximum level of outlierness (right panel). As with the previous results, the probability of leaving is lowest when a member is not an outlier on their committee and is also in a competitive district, and increases when they are not in a competitive district. As the left panel shows, there is no statistically significant difference in the probability these types of members leave a distributive committee as compared to a non-distributive one.

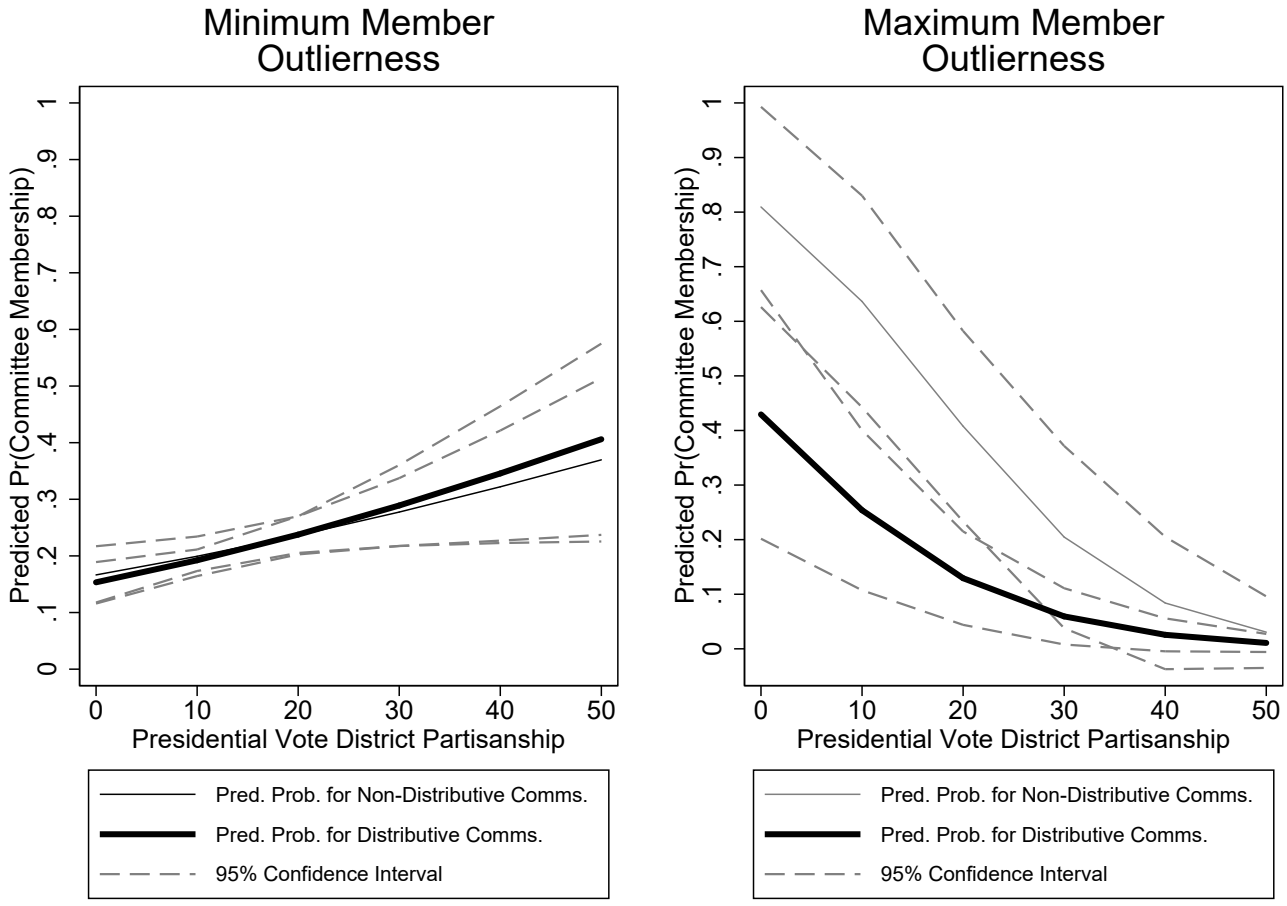
The more interesting case is for members who are ideological outliers on their committee *and* who are also in a competitive seat. Members on both distributive and non-distributive committees are significantly more likely to leave their committee. Additionally, the difference in the probability of leaving the committee for members on distributive and non-distributive committees is statistically significant when the district is competitive. That is, members on distributive committees, even when they are ideological outliers and are in a competitive seat, are about half as likely to leave their committee than similar members on a non-distributive committee. Clearly, serving on a distributive committee can be valuable to a member even if they are not well matched, but serving on a well matched, distributive committee is the most valuable assignment for a member, and one they are not likely to leave.

One possible confounder occurs when a party loses a substantial number of seats in the House. Because the party composition within the chamber changes, seats on committees are redistributed to the parties, and some members may be non-voluntarily removed from their committee assignments. Members are removed based on seniority, so that variable should control for this in the empirical models, but to ensure this is not driving the results, I sub-sampled the data for only congressional terms in which one party did not lose a significant number of seats. These are the 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, and 113th Congresses. The results are robust to only those observations, and the probabilities of leaving a committee increase at high values of district extremity and partisanship (results not shown but included in replication code).

Robustness Check: Randomization Inference

A common approach to examining whether committees are composed of preference outliers is to randomly reassign legislators to committees, then compare these simulated committee medians or means to the observed committee and determine whether there are statistically significant differences between the two. Groseclose (1994*b*) explains why this non-parametric approach is superior when looking for committee outliers. Any

Figure 4: Predicted Probabilities of Committee Departures Conditional on Outlying Preferences and District Partisanship



Note: Predicted probabilities from model 3 in Table 3. The left y-axis is lagged vote district partisanship density, the x-axis is district extremity as measured by the absolute difference between the Democratic presidential candidate national vote share and district vote share. The right x-axis is the predicted probability of leaving a committee conditional on district partisanship and absolute level of outlierness on a committee.

observed differences between the chamber and committee must be more non-representative than they would be by *chance*. Here, I am not examining whether committees are representative of their parent chamber or not, but whether there is a relationship between the district characteristics of members on committees and the committees' inherent partisanship. Are committees made up of congruent members significantly different than would be the case if the committees were simply created from a random draw of all legislators within the chamber?

To test this, I conduct a permutation analysis where committees are randomly assigned members, the models are re-estimated, and the simulated coefficients and standard errors are compared to the observed

coefficients and standard errors (Erikson, Pinto & Rader 2010). This process requires randomly assigning individual lawmakers to committees of the same size as in the observed data, estimating the coefficients, standard errors and t- or z-scores, iterating to create a distribution of each, comparing the observed values to the distribution of simulated values. As Erikson, Pinto & Rader (2010) note, inferences should be based on the distribution of test statistics rather than the distribution of coefficients, and this method performs well even in the presences of non-normal error structures (also see Kennedy 1995 and Kennedy & Cade 1996.) The permutation inference shows that the results are likely not due to random assignment of members to committees.

Discussion

Explanations for the self-selection of lawmakers onto congressional committees has been dominated by distributive theory, which suggests that committees assist members in achieving their reelection imperative by allowing them to distribute particularized goods to their constituents. According to distributive theory, the reason for the committee-based system of congressional organization is to allow outlying lawmakers with non-representative preferences to enforce collective action across all jurisdictional areas. Both informational and partisan theories do not explain member self-selection onto committees, instead assuming top-down assignments in which either the median (information theory) or the party leadership (partisan theories) determines committee selection. The evidence is clear that members have distinct preferences about their committee portfolios and seek out certain committees, which seems to counter claims that assignments are entirely due to the median or party leadership. A significant number of committees are not distributive in nature, many of which are among the most valued by members, suggesting that their motives are not exclusively distributive.

The theory here claims that committees differ in their latent level of partisanship; some jurisdictional areas are simply more divisive than others. Members have expectations about the jurisdiction's relative level of partisanship and seek out those committees which allow them to demonstrate their own preferences to their constituents. In short, committee service allows legislators to show that they are either reaching across the aisle to develop legislation with broad support, or allows them to burnish their partisan credentials. Cross-pressured members from moderate districts seek the former type of committee service, while those from partisan districts seek the latter.

This research suggests a rethinking of how committee self-selection occurs and theories of congressional organization. Note that I have made no attempt to determine the extent to which the partisanship on committees reflects partisanship in the chamber, that is whether committees are representative of the chamber writ large. This is an important, but complicated question in that some committees might be while some are not, and evidence that there is variation in the levels of committee partisanship is not dispositive. Instead, this research offers a step forward in thinking about the mechanisms behind committee self-selection and ultimately, their implications for theories of congressional organization.

Appendix

Appendix A

Table A1: Partisanship in Roll Call Voting on Standing Committees, 104th-114th Congresses

Committee	Avg. Difference in Partisan Voting	SD of Partisan Voting	Avg. Percentage of Low Party Line Votes	SD of Low Party Line Votes	Avg. Percentage of High Party Line Votes	SD of High Party Line Votes	No. of Votes
Agriculture	53.55	23.46	58.43	41.08	10.17	16.02	107
Appropriations	83.32	21.21	92.84	14.63	49.97	26.61	404
Armed Services	64.93	16.05	73.72	14.42	24.66	18.51	275
Financial Services	63.73	14.22	68.18	17.10	30.35	18.55	587
Budget	87.63	16.74	89.42	16.90	71.50	24.24	175
Education and the Workforce	90.45	4.70	93.38	2.82	71.50	12.07	537
Energy and Commerce	77.00	16.82	83.90	19.37	38.93	18.26	817
International Relations	61.90	19.86	70.71	23.18	26.37	31.49	204
Oversight and Government Reform	75.55	31.36	78.36	33.25	52.62	38.12	125
House Administration	95.06	11.26	95.06	11.26	95.06	11.26	75
Judiciary	83.75	6.19	88.58	4.33	55.25	18.33	1361
Natural Resources	77.96	12.89	89.43	10.66	26.51	20.21	498
Transportation and Infrastructure	75.04	20.66	78.13	20.38	41.08	38.11	74
Rules	94.10	8.50	97.51	3.31	81.66	23.30	3182
Science, Space, and Technology	88.30	14.66	92.21	12.98	62.46	35.89	148
Small Business	72.82	27.70	70.24	40.00	35.71	27.85	31
Veterans' Affairs	54.55	26.77	62.22	41.19	18.33	28.58	21
Ways and Means	85.28	7.82	89.18	8.23	62.50	10.50	550
Intelligence (Permanent)	46.61	35.13	46.12	38.28	34.46	30.98	78
Homeland Security	78.64	10.03	81.08	10.93	59.18	18.54	188
Sample Average & Total	85.51	*NA*	90.30	*NA*	60.24	*NA*	9437

Average difference in partisan voting is equal to the absolute difference between Democrats and Republicans voting "yea" on a given vote, averaged across all votes and across all congresses. Average percentage of low party lines votes is the percentage of votes within a committee, averaged across all congresses, in which greater than 50% of one party voted against 50% of the other party. Average percentage of high party line votes is the same measure using a 95% threshold. The standard deviation of each measure across congresses is also shown.

Table A2 shows each committee's rank across the three measures of committee partisanship. The final column averages each of the three measures to create a composite partisanship score for each committee, with committees ordered by overall level of partisanship. In the table, House Administration has the greatest difference, on average, between Republicans and Democrats voting "yea" on a given vote, the second highest percentage of low party votes, and the highest percentage of high party votes. Its average across all three measures is 1.33, meaning it is the most partisan committee in the dataset.

Table A2: Rank Ordering of Standing Committees by Three Measures of Partisanship, 104th-114th Congresses

Committee	Rank Order of Committee Based on... Avg. Difference in Partisan Voting	Avg. Percentage of Low Party Line Votes	Avg. Percentage of High Party Line Votes	Avg. Rank Ordering Across Measures
House Administration	1	2	1	1.33
Rules	2	1	2	1.67
Education and the Workforce	3	3	3	3.00
Science, Space, and Technology	4	5	6	5.00
Budget	5	7	4	5.33
Ways and Means	6	8	5	6.33
Appropriations	8	4	10	7.33
Judiciary	7	9	8	8.00
Homeland Security	9	11	7	9.00
Natural Resources	10	6	16	10.67
Energy and Commerce	11	10	12	11.00
Oversight and Government Reform	12	12	9	11.00
Transportation and Infrastructure	13	13	11	12.33
Small Business	14	16	13	14.33
Armed Services	15	14	18	15.67
Financial Services	16	17	15	16.00
International Relations	17	15	17	16.33
Intelligence (Permanent)	20	20	14	18.00
Veterans' Affairs	18	18	19	18.33
Agriculture	19	19	20	19.33

The table shows the rank ordering of each committee across the three measures of committee vote partisanship. See Table **??** for more details on each measure. Column four is an average of the rank order of each committee on the three measures, from most partisan to least partisan. The rows are ordered by level of partisanship, with House Administration being the most partisan committee and Agriculture being the least partisan committee.

Appendix B: Relative Partisanship of Committee Memberships in Committee and on the Floor, 104th through 113th Congresses

In the figures below, each committee is ordered from least to most partisan based on the average difference in party voting *within the committee*, and moving right to left on the x-axis indicates that the committee has larger average difference in party voting. The vertical bars represent the *difference* between the committee value for average difference in party voting and the chamber difference, or:

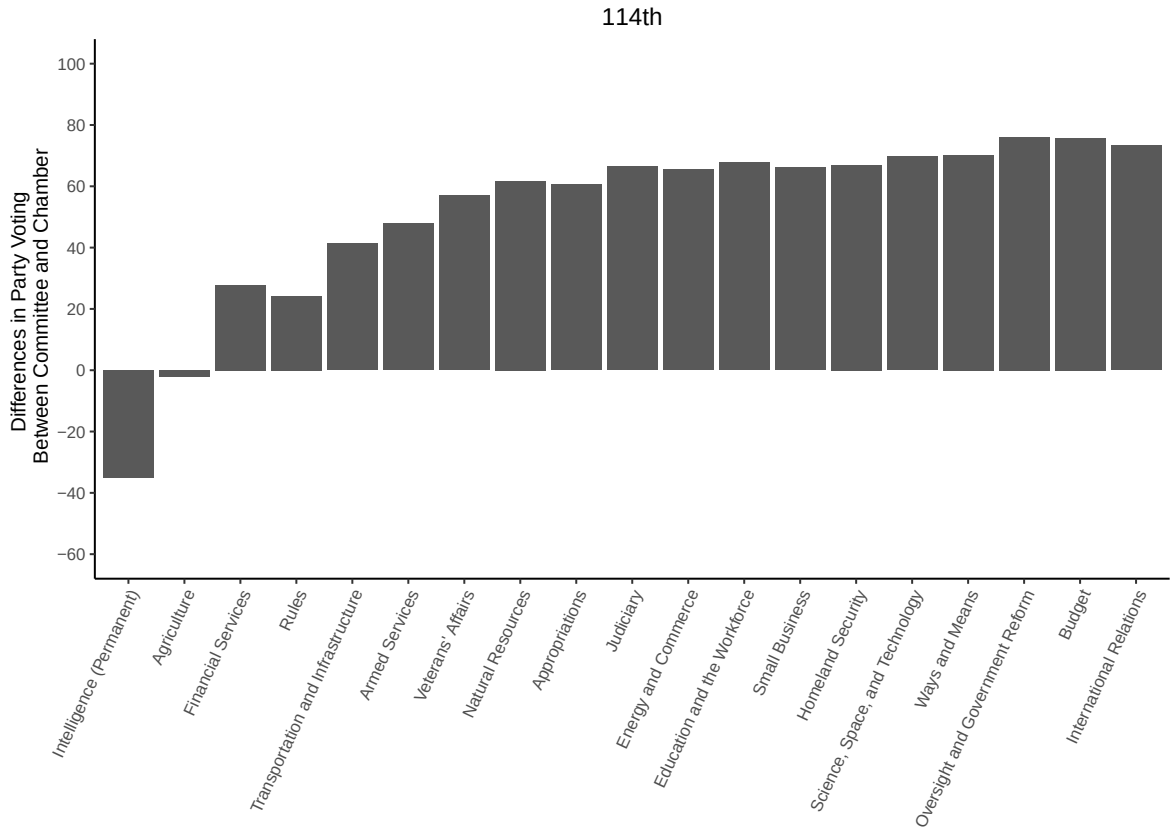
$$\begin{aligned} &\textit{Differences in party voting between committee and chamber} = \\ &\textit{Party difference for committee j in congress k -} \\ &\textit{Party difference for committee j membership in congress k on House floor votes} \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

where the party difference for the membership of committee j in congress k on House floor votes is the sum of the absolute values of percentage of Democratic committee membership voting yea minus the percentage of Republican committee membership voting yea divided by the total number of House floor votes.[22] If the bar is below zero, it indicates that the committee membership voted, on average, in a more bipartisan manner on the committee than they did on the floor. As the bar approaches 100% a committee's membership is more partisan relative to its membership's voting behavior on the floor.

Members on the least partisan committees are also much less partisan within the committee as compared to their voting behavior on the floor, while on the most partisan committees, members vote in a much more more partisan manner as compared to their behavior on the floor. (The results for all other congresses are similar, figures are shown below.) The reason for this is there is a near-constant level of partisanship on floor voting behavior across committee memberships. Put differently, all committee memberships, regardless of the partisanship of their particular committee, vote in roughly similar ways on the floor. The result is that members on bipartisan committees appear much more moderate compared to their chamber behavior, while the opposite is true for for members on partisan committees, whose voting behavior in committees appears much more extreme compared to their voting behavior within the chamber.

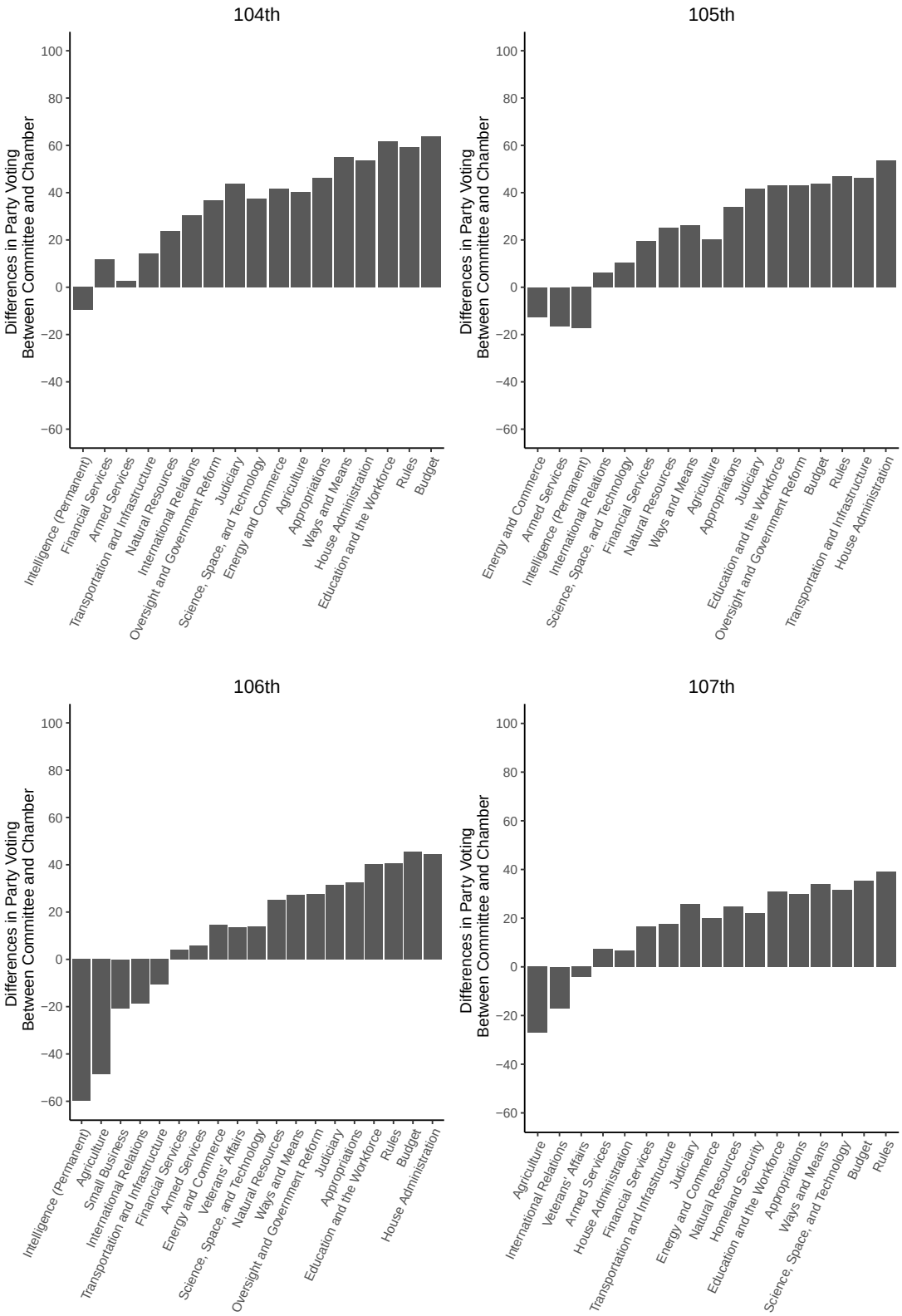
[22] This is the identical to the construction of committee party differences shown in Equation 1 but using the committee membership's House floor votes instead of committee votes.

Figure A1: Relative Committee Partisanship as Compared to Floor Partisanship—114th Congress



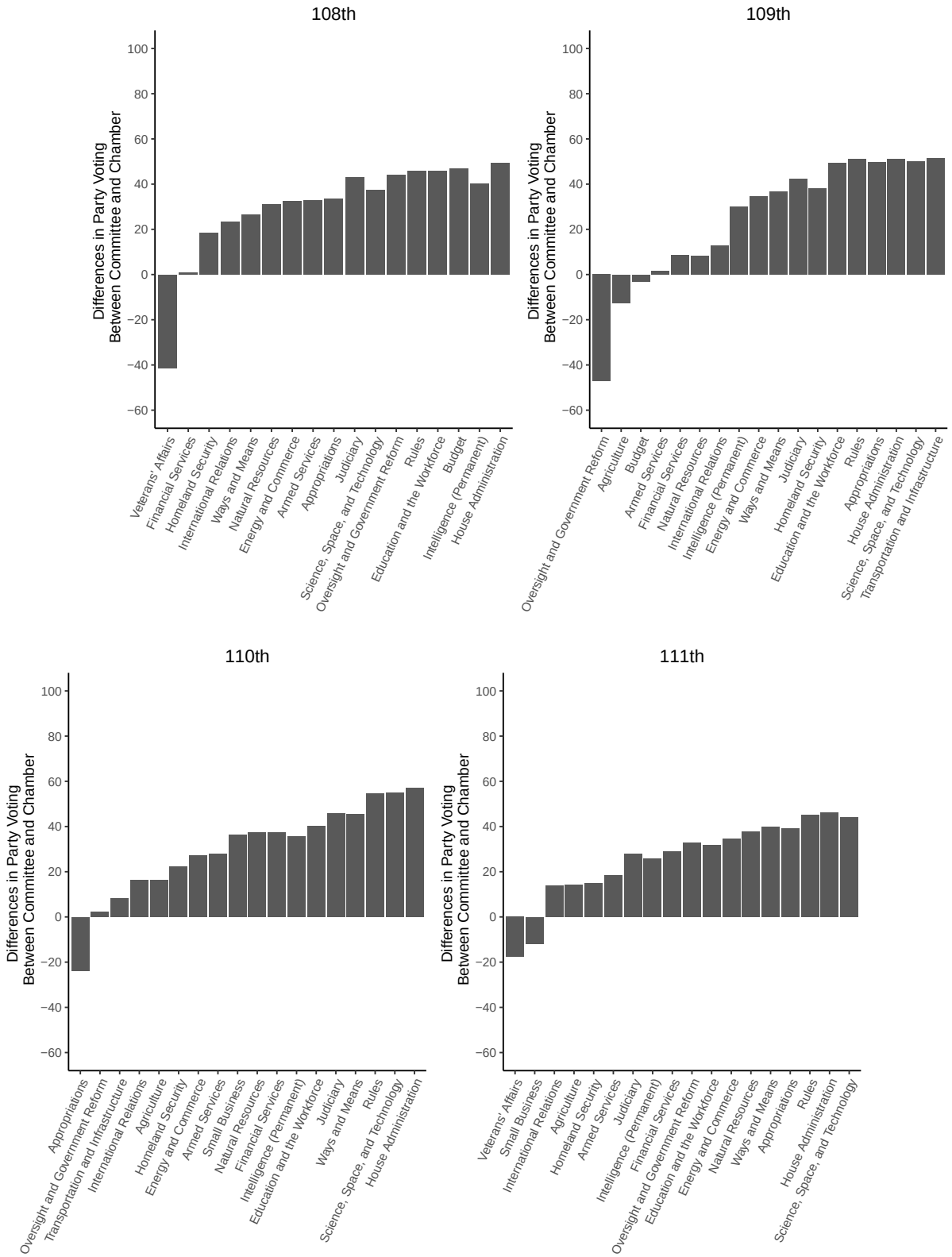
Note: X-axis orders committees from least to most partisan in members' voting behavior. Negative values indicate committee membership was less partisan in committee voting as compared to floor voting, zero represents no difference in partisanship in committee voting as compared to floor voting, positive values indicate committee membership was more partisan in committee voting as compared to floor voting.

Figure A2: Relative Committee Partisanship as Compared Floor Partisanship—104th-107th Congresses



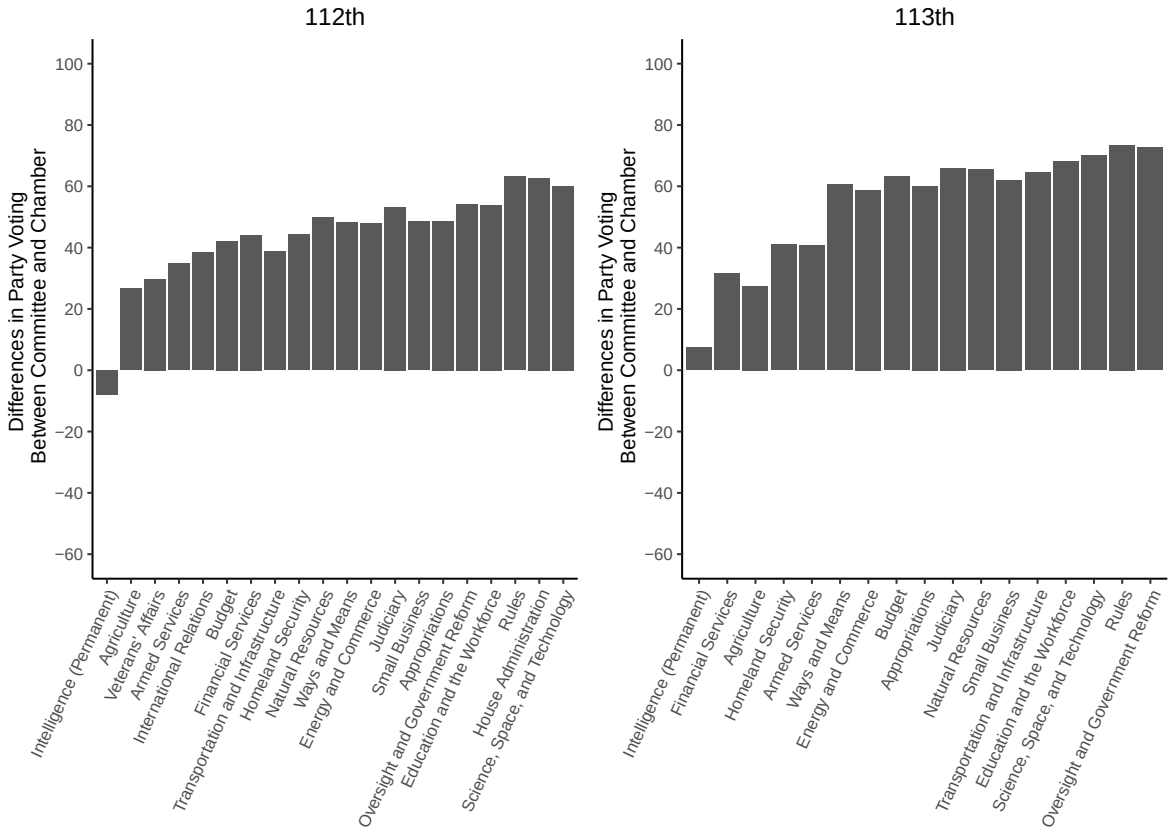
Note: X-axis orders committees from least to most partisan in members' voting behavior. Negative values indicate committee membership was less partisan in committee voting as compared to floor voting, zero represents no difference in partisanship in committee voting as compared to floor voting, positive values indicate committee membership was more partisan in committee voting as compared to floor voting.

Figure A3: Relative Committee Partisanship as Compared Floor Partisanship—108th-111th Congresses



Note: X-axis orders committees from least to most partisan in members' voting behavior. Negative values indicate committee membership was less partisan in committee voting as compared to floor voting, zero represents no difference in partisanship in committee voting as compared to floor voting, positive values indicate committee membership was more partisan in committee voting as compared to floor voting.

Figure A4: Relative Committee Partisanship as Compared Floor Partisanship—112th-113th Congresses



Note: X-axis orders committees from least to most partisan in members' voting behavior. Negative values indicate committee membership was less partisan in committee voting as compared to floor voting, zero represents no difference in partisanship in committee voting as compared to floor voting, positive values indicate committee membership was more partisan in committee voting as compared to floor voting.

Appendix C: The Relationship Between District Partisanship and Committee Partisanship

Table A3: Mixed Effects Estimate of District Partisanship on Partisan Committee Membership—Average Difference in Percentage of Each Party Voting Yes

	(1)	(2)
Member-Level Predictors		
Logged Kernell District Partisanship	0.39*	
	(0.19)	
Logged Presidential Vote District Partisanship		0.40*
		(0.19)
Committee Party Seniority Rank	-0.08*	-0.09*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Gender (Female=1)	0.30	0.24
	(0.59)	(0.59)
Majority Party Member (Yes=1)	0.46	0.59
	(0.62)	(0.62)
Member Party (Dem.=1)	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Chair or Ranking Member of Any Committee	-0.20	-0.26
	(0.62)	(0.62)
Committee Overall Seniority	-0.18*	-0.17*
	(0.08)	(0.08)
Committee-Level Predictors		
Maj. Party Percent of Committee Seats	32.29*	32.55*
	(6.42)	(6.41)
Grosewart Committee Value	-1.31*	-1.32*
	(0.31)	(0.31)
Policy Committee	5.36*	5.26*
	(0.49)	(0.49)
Prestige Committee	15.80*	15.74*
	(0.71)	(0.71)
Constant	55.12*	53.64*
	(4.29)	(4.29)
Random Effects Parameters		
Congress Var.	46.56	46.13
	(20.07)	(19.88)
Residual Var.	311.24	310.97
	(5.04)	(5.02)
Wald Chi-squared	170.68 (p<0.00)	786.15 (p<0.00)
AIC	65626.18	65971.99
N	7641	7682

Note: *p<.05, #p<.1. The dependent variable is the average absolute difference in percentage of each party voting "yea." Kernell district ideology uses the Kernell measure of district partisanship while Presidential Vote District Partisanship uses the absolute difference between the Democratic presidential candidate national vote share and district vote share. Committee categories are taken from Frisch and Kelly (2004), constituent committees excluded. Models are mixed effects regression nested by congress.

Table A4: Regression of District Partisanship on Partisan Committee Membership—Average Difference in Percentage of Each Party Voting Yes

	(1)	(2)
Logged Kernell District Partisanship	0.38*	
	(0.19)	
Logged Presidential Vote District Partisanship		0.39#
		(0.20)
Committee Party Seniority Rank	-0.08*	-0.09*
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Gender (Female=1)	0.28	0.23
	(0.57)	(0.57)
Majority Party Member (Yes=1)	0.45	0.58
	(0.63)	(0.63)
Member Party (Dem.=1)	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Chair or Ranking Member of Any Committee	-0.19	-0.25
	(0.62)	(0.62)
Committee Overall Seniority	-0.18*	-0.17*
	(0.07)	(0.07)
Maj. Party Percent of Committee Seats	31.52*	31.78*
	(6.52)	(6.52)
Grosewart Committee Value	-1.31*	-1.32*
	(0.25)	(0.25)
Policy Committee	5.36*	5.26*
	(0.50)	(0.50)
Prestige Committee	15.82*	15.76*
	(0.73)	(0.73)
Constant	51.05*	49.55*
	(3.71)	(3.70)
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes
AIC	65579.98	65925.83
N	7641	7682

Note: *p<.05, #p<.1. The dependent variable is the average absolute difference in percentage of each party voting "yea." Kernell district ideology uses the Kernell measure of district partisanship while Presidential Vote District Partisanship uses the absolute difference between the Democratic presidential candidate national vote share and district vote share. Committee categories are taken from Frisch and Kelly (2004), constituent committees excluded. Models are mixed effects regression nested by congress.

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