Examining Constituency Service: Evidence from a Census of US Federal Agencies

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Abstract

We demonstrate how elected officials' experience and power affects their propensity to provide constituency service. While there is a large literature that argues constituency service is a key component of representation and an important component of the incumbency advantage, no study has documented that current legislators hold an advantage over new legislators in the provision of constituency service or that as legislators acquire more power, experience, and institutional expertise they are able to translate this into increased service for constituents. To test how incumbents acquire and then expand their advantage on constituency service, we assemble a massive new database of nearly 350,000 Congressional requests to agencies between 2007 and 2017 obtained through over 395 FOIA requests, a near census of federal departments, agencies, and sub-agencies. Using this data set, we demonstrate that as legislators acquire power and experience in Washington, they deliver more constituency service to their constituents. We show that when legislators are promoted in the institution legislators offer more constituency service requests. Further, we show that legislators provide less constituency service in their first year in Congress and that when districts elect a new representative, there is a substantial decrease in constituency service provided. In a series of robustness checks we show that our findings are not the result of constituent demand, nor is it merely a result of more experienced legislators being more easily recognized. Rather than experienced and powerful legislators focusing their efforts in Washington and away from their district, we demonstrate that legislators use increased resources to provide more services for constituents.

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1 Introduction

One of the oldest traditions of legislative representation in American politics is that of constituency service—the ways in which legislators help to channel and articulate individual constituent's requests to the government. Constituency service is when Members of Congress "provid[e] help to individuals, groups, and localities in coping with the federal government" (Fenno, 1978). This tradition dates back to the first congresses when constituents sought assistance with Revolutionary War pensions (Eckman, 2017). Today constituents seek assistance with a wide range of topics from Social Security, Disability, and Veterans Benefits to Citizenship Applications to complaints about pollution and employment discrimination. Members also serve constituents by advocating on behalf of state or local governments or nonprofits who apply for federal grants, permits, or disaster recovery funds. Advocating on behalf of their constituents to federal agencies is an important facet of modern legislators' jobs, and its growth has been used to explain the presence of the incumbency advantage (King, 1991).

Yet despite the centrality of constituency service in theories of congressional representation, constituency service remains one of the most opaque and least understood congressional activities. Indeed, we are not the first to observe the relative lack of empirical attention to constituency service in the literature. Over thirty years ago Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina (1987) began their seminal book *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence* with that same observation, and much of what we know empirically today about constituency service is due to their surveys of legislators, legislative staff, and constituents.

We tackle these classic empirical questions about constituency service with a new approach—by looking at when legislators contact government agencies on behalf of their constituents. Recent work using data on congressional correspondence has yielded important findings regarding the policy strategies of cross-pressured legislators (Ritchie, 2017), distributive politics (Mills and Kalaf-Hughes, 2015), descriptive representation (Lowande, Ritchie and Lauterbach, 2018), and the role of ideology in congressional oversight (Lowande, 2018).

We build on this work in this paper to address long-standing questions about how legislators balance the pursuit of legislative goals in Washington with the provision of constituency service to constituents. There are competing theoretical expectations and public declarations about how legislators' experience and power in Washington will affect the amount of constituency service they provide constituents back home. On the one hand, we might expect that power and experience will increase the levels of service. Drawing on formal models of accountability, we might expect that if constituency service enables elected officials to demonstrate competence to their constituents, then increased power in Washington should result in increased levels of service to constituents–as legislators either siphon off some of their increased resources or use the increased

resources as a fungible mechanism to shift more effort to constituency service to satisfy their primary goal of reelection. Similarly, it could be that newly elected members of Congress incur startup costs when they enter office. If start up costs are present, then incumbent legislators have an advantatge, because their replacements—even if they will be more competent eventually—will necessarily provide less constituency service at the outset, but the level of service will rise as legislators hire staff and they establish a system for handling constituency caseload.

On the other hand, we might expect that as legislators spend more time in Washington and gain prestige they become less attentive to the district and their constituents and therefore decrease levels of service provided to constituents. This is articulated in theories of representation with a perceived trade-off between experienced legislators who wield institutional power within Washington and more recently elected legislators who are attentive to the district. As legislators acquire power in the institution, it is often asserted that they obtain "Potomac fever" and devote less attention to constituents back in the district (Fenno, 1978). A similar argument is made in the popular press (Edwards, 2005) and evoked in rallying cries to "drain the swamp" of politicians accused paying too much attention to Washington policy elite and not enough attention to their constituents back home (Rosenblatt, 2016). It seems intuitive that as they spend more time in Washington and assume more important roles in Congress, legislators would have less time for individual constituents. As attention drifts, we might also imagine that legislators allocate more of their resources towards their policy work. This might be particularly true as representatives occupy increasingly powerful positions in the institution—such as committee chairs or obtain seats on prestigious committees. While committee chairs have additional staff to handle legislative affairs, supervising these staff may direct a chairs' attention to policy work.

To test how legislators alter constituency service with increases of power and prestige, we use a massive new collection of constituency service requests to underestand how legislators provision of service changes as they gain expertise and experience in the institution. To demonstrate how institutional power affects district attention, we utilize a new data set of 319,790 correspodences between members of Congress and constituents we compiled through hundreds of freedom of information act requests. Using this new data set, we also establish some important stylized facts about when and how elected officials contact federal agencies. We show that letter writing is not evenly distributed. Some members simply use this tactic more than others, even within strata of institutional power. Furthermore, those who use this tactic use it broadly across issue areas and parts of the government. The conventional model, where oversight committee chairs are the most attentive to the parts of government under their jurisdiction largely holds in the House, where few rank and file members regularly lobby the bureaucracy, but less so the Senate, where many members are more active and often more attentive oversight committee chairs. In general, the legislators who engage

the bureaucracy do so broadly, across many agencies and advocate both for general policy and for individual constituents.

Our results demonstrate that as legislators spend more time in the institution they acquire expertise and access to resources that bolsters their constituency service advantage, rather than directing attention away from the district. Our most stringent specification is a within-legislator and agency difference-in-differences design, we show that newly elected legislators make fewer constituency service requests in their first two years in office, but after the third year there is no longer a difference. And as legislators spend more time in the institution, their constituency service requests do not decrease. This finding is consistent with observations from freshmen legislators is to hire staffers and to establish constituency service operations. We show that this difference is not due to selection in the sophomore election: legislators who lose in their sophomore election year do not provide systematically fewer constituency service requests than those who are retained (FIORINA CITATION HERE and Alt, BDM, and Stone). Recasting our results, we show that a district that elects a new legislator can expect to experience a XX% decrease in the number of constituency service requests the legislator files.

As legislators are promoted and acquire more resources in the institution, we similarly see an increase in their ability to provide service to constituents. We find that elected officials who acquire more power—become committee chairpersons or hold positions on more prestigious committees—increase the number of constituent service requests. Using a manual coding of the service requests on a large subset of our data, we find that this increase is found on the provision of service to constituents and on legislators' general policy issues.

Through a series of robustness checks and additional analyses, we show that the patterns that we observe is not the result of shifts in constituent demand. We might be worried that the differences in constituency service provision that we observe tell us more about who constituents decided to contact for help, rather than the efforts of elected officials. We show, however, that there is little evidence that individuals shift responses across offices after an incumbent loses reelection. When House members lose an election, there is no corresponding increase in constituency service requests from the state's senate delegation. To limit whatever remaining influence of constituent demand might be present, our specifications include district-level fixed effects that will account for latent district demand.

Our results provide important new insights into how political representation occurs in American politics. We demonstrate that incumbents' acquisition of experience and power in Washington not only enables them to transmit their constituents' views more effectively. It also enables these legislators to increase the service provided to the district. This suggests that constituents with experienced legislators are able to benefit from that experience and increased prestige. And it helps explain how constituency service can contribute

to the incumbency advantage: when constituents choose between legislators, they necessarily will be forced to receive lower levels of constituency service. It also shows that popular concerns of legislators who have spent too much time in Washington and have lost touch with the district are misplaced. Rather, it is the legislators who have acquired experience and power in Washington who are best placed to deliver service for their constituents.

Caltech paragraph here. Theoretical Expectations. Data Set. Stylized Facts About Constituency Service. Results: experience and power increase constiuent service. Conclusion.

2 How Does Experience and Power Affect Constituency Service?

A central tension in representation is how legislators balance their work on national level policy—such as passing legislation—and delivering particularistic goods to their constituents and district—such as providing constituent service. Legislators contact the bureaucracy to build support with constituents, because federal agencies have strong incentive to be responsive to elected officials. In fulfilling statutory missions, agencies must prioritize resources and use broad discretion, not only in processing visa, permit, and grant applications but in regulating private entities' compliance with, for example, environmental, health, and labor laws. For a vast range of demands involving public or private actors, a federal agency will often be able to help if it prioritizes that demand over others.

Legislators are in a position to influence agency decisions. As public servants, agency staff may assign special importance to the demands of elected officials. For example, many agencies tag congressional correspondence as "VIP" and agency protocols often require faster response deadlines and higher signature levels. Agencies also have strategic reasons to meet congressional demands. Ad hoc review of a social security disbursement, visa application, or pipeline permit may be inefficient and diverge from protocol but nevertheless, a small price to pay if it could help the agency gain a small advantage in securing desired authorizations and budgets. Bureaucrats have incentives to build relationships and reputations that enhance their standing among members of Congress and those who have their ear, and they actively do so (Carpenter, 2001). In short, complying with legislator request may help agencies achieve their own goals. If an agency aims to grow its coalition of political supporters, we would expect them to frequently accommodate congressional requests.

Legislators' experience in Washington, their on the job learning, and their acquisition of power in the institution, are likely to affect how they strike the balance between delivering service to constituents and working on broader legislation. But there are competing theoretical expectations of how increased experience and power will affect how much constituency service legislators provide constituents and the kind of service

they provide. On the one hand, formal models of constituency service predict that increased experience and power will cause legislators to bolster the amount of constituency service provided. Related to these models is the expectation that a new legislator will face significant start up costs as they hire new staff and establish the procedures that will effectively handle the constituency service case load. After these costs are incurred, constituency service would increase. On the other hand, concerns about legislators becoming fixated on careers in Washington lead to an expectation that power in Washington comes at the expense of constituences, as legislators allocate more of their resources and efforts to influencing national level legislation. In this section, we explicate the logic of these distinct theoretical expectations in this section and explain why it is unclear how legislators with greater experience or prestige will alter their constituecy service to constituents.

2.1 Why Experience and Power Could Decrease Legislators' Constituency Service Effort

As elected officials garner more experience in Congress and more in the institution, one set of theoretical models lead to an expectation that the amount of constituency service would increase. An influential set of formal theory papers argue that constituents are fundamentally engaged in a screening task: attempting to identify elected officials who are competent and able to effectively deliver representation to the district (ABDM, Gordon and Landa,). Under this model of representation, constituency service helps reelection minded legislators increase their chance of reelection if legislators are able to exceed constituent's expectations of the kinds of service that legislators will provide constituents.

Critically, constituents' demands for service and for legislators to demonstrate their competence do not go away, even as legislators acquire power in the institution. For example, after Richard Lugar (R-IN) lost a primary election to Richard Mourdock (R-IN) in 2012, analysts argued that "At its heart, LugarâĂŹs defeat was attributable to the fact that he broke the political golden rule: Never lose touch with the people who elected you". More generally, we might expect that even if constituents are supportive of the power their representative has over policy, they still expect that those elected officials will be attentive to the district and to demonstrate their competence. This would induce elected officials to continue to focus on providing goods to the district, in order to maining their chance at reelection.

The result is that these models predict that as a legislators' resources increase, they will increase their levels of constituency service (Proposition 1 Ashworth, Bueno De Mesquita). There are two mechanisms that will be observationally equivalent for our results. One mechanism is that legislators could redirect some of the increaesd resources that come with increased prestige to the provision of constituency service. A

second different mechanism would occur if legislators move policy focused efforts towards the newly acquired institutional resources. If the staff resources are fungible, then this would enable legislators to utilize their prior office resources for providing constituency service. The result of either mechanism is that the additional resources that come with increased prestige lead to more constituency service to constituents.

Building off of this similar logic leads to an expectation that newly elected legislators will provide lower levels of constituency service than returning incumbents, but that this difference will erase after an office establishes their constituency service operation. If elected officials face an unchanging demand from constituents to provide services to navigate the govenrment, then we would not expect legislators to decrease the service provided to constituents over time. Yet, newly elected officials are quite likely to pay significant start up costs when organizing their office after the election. Not only are the newly elected officials forced to hire a completely new set of staffers, they also have to establish protocols, priorities, and procedures in their office. They also lack many of the "standard" responses that more established offices will use to handle particular kinds of letters.

2.2 Why Experience and Power Could Decrease Legislators' Constituency Service Efforts

A different theoretical expectation is that as legislators spend more time in Wasington, they become detached from their district. This concern is presen the political science literature on Congressional careers. Richard Fenno documents that some members of Congress catch "Potomac fever". While newly elected legislators may remain primarily focused on re-election, more senior legislators may prioritize other goals. As legislators acquire power in Congress, it is often asserted that they "go Washington" and devote less attention to constituents back in the district (Fenno, 1978). It seems intuitive that as they spend more time in Washington and attain more influential institutional roles in Congress, legislators might focus on other priorities resulting in less attention paid to constituents. While Mayhew emphasizes re-election as the primary goal that motivates legislators, Fenno (1973) identifies five goals: re-election, power in the House, good public policy, a career beyond the House, and private gain. As Fenno describes in *Congressmen In Committees*, different institutional positions (congressional committees) can be more or less useful to accomplish these goals. Some committees may be more useful for achieving re-election, because they position you to be of service to your constituents, other committees may not be valued by constituents, but could be used to influence foreign policy, or still other committees might help a member achieve wealth or jobs in the future via lobbying positions or corporate board seats down the road.

A parallel argument about legislator behavior emerges in public advocacy for reforms in Washington,

in particular with activists who advocate for term limits. These activists argue that elected officials who are repeatedly re-elected to Congress become detached from their district. For example, Ted Cruz (R-TX) argued in favor of term limits in a Senate hearing, stating that the politicians at the time of founding traveled to Washington and then planned to return to their district. In its place, Cruz argued that "Today, members of Congress arenâĂŹt doing that. Instead, far too many of our politicians come to Washington to stay". Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez made a similar indictment against Joe Crowley in her successful primary challenge. She would regularly remind auidences that Crowley had "been there for 20 years" She would then ask, "What has this power been used for? ItâĂŹs not being used for us."

If members shift their focus from the district to a career in Washington, we should expect that their attention to constituent issues will also decrease. This would occur as more experienced legislators allocate staff to address broad legislation in Washington, or as legislators who acquire more power focus their efforts on law making, rather than delivering goods to the district.

2.3 Alternative explanation for Changes in Constituency Service: Constituent Demand

Our key theoretical puzzle is to understand how legislators' effort for constituents changes as they gain power and experience in Washington. But usually legislators depend on constituents to first ask for help navigating the federal bureaucracy. An alternative explanation for why legislators' rates of constituency service provision change is that they receive different amounts of requests from constituents. While this would still be interesting substantively, a constituent demand explanation for the provision of constituency service would suggest that varying levels of service provision do not inform debates about how legislators' effort varies over their time in Washington.

Of course, we should expect that constituent demand will inform what agencies legislators contact. For example, some districts will be comprised of groups—such as veterans or social security recipients—who will request particular kinds of constituency service from their representative. Our designs will attempt to limit the influence of this kind of constituent demand by examining how individual legislator's rates of contact changes within particular agencies.

Constituents could also direct their requests to particularly powerful or experienced legislators. For example, as legislators acquire more power in Washington they are more easily recognized by their constituents and therefore more likely to receive constituency service requests. Constituents might also expect that more powerful legislators could more effectively provide constituency service and as a result direct service requests towards those legislators. Similarly, it could be the case that as legislators gain more experience in Wash-

ington they are more easily recognized by constituents and, as a result, more likely to receive constituency service requests.

While we will assess implications of constituency demand for our results, we note that constituency demand could also be closely related to legislator effort. Elected officials can encourage requests for help navigating the federal bureaucracy through workshops, newsletters to constituents, and even stories in local papers. If the prevalence of these stories reflects legislators focus on the district, then increases in requests from constituents could reflect the effort of elected officials.

3 A Comprehensive Data Set of Constituent Service Requests

To test how experience and power affect the provision of constituent service, we utilize an original collection of constituent service requests, collected from 395 FOIA requests made to federal agencies and sub-agencies. Through our collection process, we have received data on 383818 instances of members of Congress contacting federal agencies. We focus on requests made from 2007-2018, resulting in a data set of 364,946 indivudal constituency service requests.

3.1 Hundreds of FOIA Requests to Assess Congressional Communication with the Bureaucracy

To assess when and how members of Congress communicate with the bureaucracy, we conducted—to the best of our ability—a census of federal agencies and sub-agency communication. Specifically, we identified all departments, agencies, and sub-agencies and submitted requests for all communication with members of Congress from 2007-2018. To date, we have received records from every department other than the Department of State. While the specific the length of records to our response might vary over time, our most stringent specifications will include legislator-by-agency fixed effects, which ensures that our comparisons are made within agency. This limits the opportunity for left-censoring to affect our conclusions.

Variation in Responses to Identical FOIA Request Responses to our FOIA requests varied significantly. Most agencies offered logs of congressional correspondence, which record a date, sender, and summary of each contact. Logs generally include any written requests, as well as many phone and email records. For example, Between May 2015 and December 2017, the Department of Justice Office of Administrative Law Judges received 132 emails, 109 telephone calls, and only 54 letters. Between 2007 and 2017, the Postal Regulatory Commission received 100 emails, 30 faxes, 173 letters, 118 calls. In this paper, we use "contacts" and "letters" interchangeably to refer to all modes of correspondence. Small agencies or regional offices

had staff search their email history or provided hand-written records that we had transcribed. Department Secretary offices generally queried a correspondence tracking database designed to track all correspondence, but our FOIA requests to sub-departmental components almost always recovered additional records of communication that was not in central databases. As one central office FOIA officer put it "Legislative Affairs is supposed to be the front door for the department, but if somebody knows somebody, well..." (personal communication, Feb. 21, 2018). Because of such idiosyncratic relationships, capturing patterns of correspondence that "go around" a Department Secretary's office is key to avoiding erroneous inferences about legislator behavior. For example, when chairs of the Homeland Security committee wrote about immigration enforcement issues, they almost always contacted the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) office of the Executive Secretary, but, at the same time, the Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) component of DHS directly received thousands of contacts from a different set of legislators. Our census approach ensures that we capture the totality of legislators' behavior.

Upon receiving the records, we extracted names matching variations of legislators' names and then merge in data about their position in Washington, district, and career. In Appendix A we provide our procedure for converting the raw files from federal agencies into the a data set appropriate for analysis. For approximately half of our contacts we also use the brief description included in the data set to classify the reason for contacting federal agencies. Our coding process began with the authors coding a representative sample of records. We then trained undergraduate and graduate RAs. The first several thousand letters or log entries were double coded. For example, of over 10,000 log entries for the Environmental Protection Agency, the first 2,500 were double-coded. Our overall inter-coder agreement was 0.78, which rose to 0.9 when we subsetted our analysis to coding decisions where the coders had a great deal of certainty. Throughout the hand-coding process, we also developed subagency-specific coding rules where certain regular expressions indicated certain types of correspondence. For example, where "rulemaking" consistently indicated that a legislator's request involved an agency rule, all cases yet uncoded by hand for that agency are assigned to be type "Policy-Rulemaking" for the present analysis.

We have classified a sample of correspondences, 194,251, into five categories: "Individual Constituent Service" (i.e. casework or advocacy on behalf of a group such as employees of a company), "Nonprofit or Local Government Constituent Service" (e.g. help with a grant application), "Corporate Constituent Service" (e.g. help with a contract), "Corporate Policy" (e.g. policy explicitly aimed to benefit a specific industry), and "Policy" (general policy work related to legislation, budgets, or rulemaking). We define constituents broadly such that they need not be in a member's district. For example, Representative Tauscher of Wisconsin wrote to the Defense Commissary Agency on behalf of the Jelly Belly Candy Co., based in California. Jelly Belly was then "given a chance to resolve issues" with their contract. This was coded as "Corporate Constituent

Service" and included in our broader measure of constituent service. We also consider constituent service as broader than casework. For example, Senator Rubio asking the IRS for special treatment for residents of hurricane-affected parts of Florida was coded as "Individual Constituent Service." We note these "hard cases" to illustrate the boundaries of our coding scheme. Most contacts were more easily parsed into either individual casework or policy work related to hearings, regulations, and legislation.

3.2 Who Contacts the Bureaucracy?

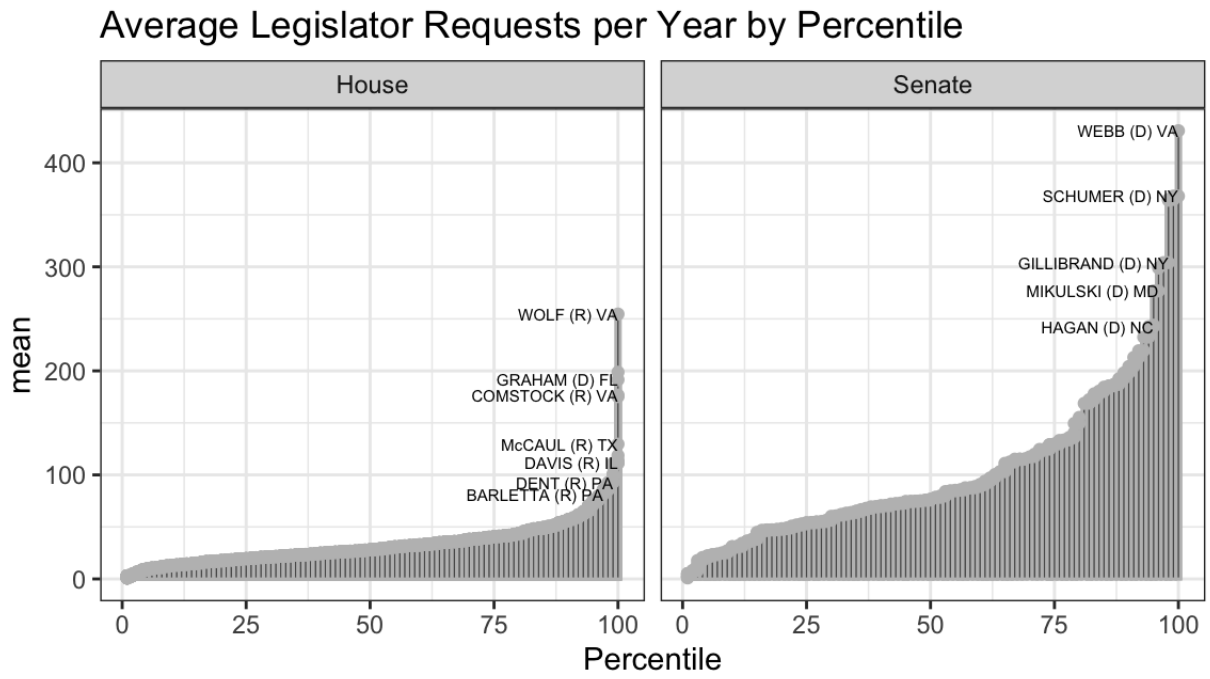
Before testing how legislators' efforts to provide constituency service change as they acquire prestige and experience, we first use our extensive data set of constituency contacts, to establish novel facts about how legislators contact federal agencies and why they contact those agencies. Overall, we demonstrate that there is considerable variability in the rates legislators contact federal agencies, but we find surprising consistency in the purpose of the communication: when legislators contact federal agencies, they are primarily focused on providing constituency service, with only a small fraction focused on policy. And we show that legislators are responsive to demographic characteristics of their constituency, but there is still considerable variability in contact rates within quite similar districts.

3.2.1 Rates of Contact with Federal Agencies

We begin with a description of how often legislators, on average, contact federal agencies per year. Figure 1 shows the average number of contact rates per year for House members (left-hand panel) and senators (right-hand panel). This shows considerable variability in the average number of constituent service requests that elected officials make each year. Consider first the Senate, where Robert Byrd (D-WV) has the average rate of constituency service provision of 433 constituent service contacts per year. On average, senators contact federal agencies 86 times per year—but there is considerable variability across legislators in the amount of contact, with some senators contacting federal agencies rarely, while other contacting at rates similar to Byrd.

We see similar variation in the House, but with overall lower rates of contact—reflecting the demographic and resource differences across the two institutions. Frank Wolf (R-VA) had the highest rate of contact with federal agencies, averaging 306 contacts per year. Overall, House members averaged 29.4 contacts with federal agencies per year. But like the Senate we considerable variability in the rates of contact across House members.

Figure 1: Variation in Across Legislator Contact Rates

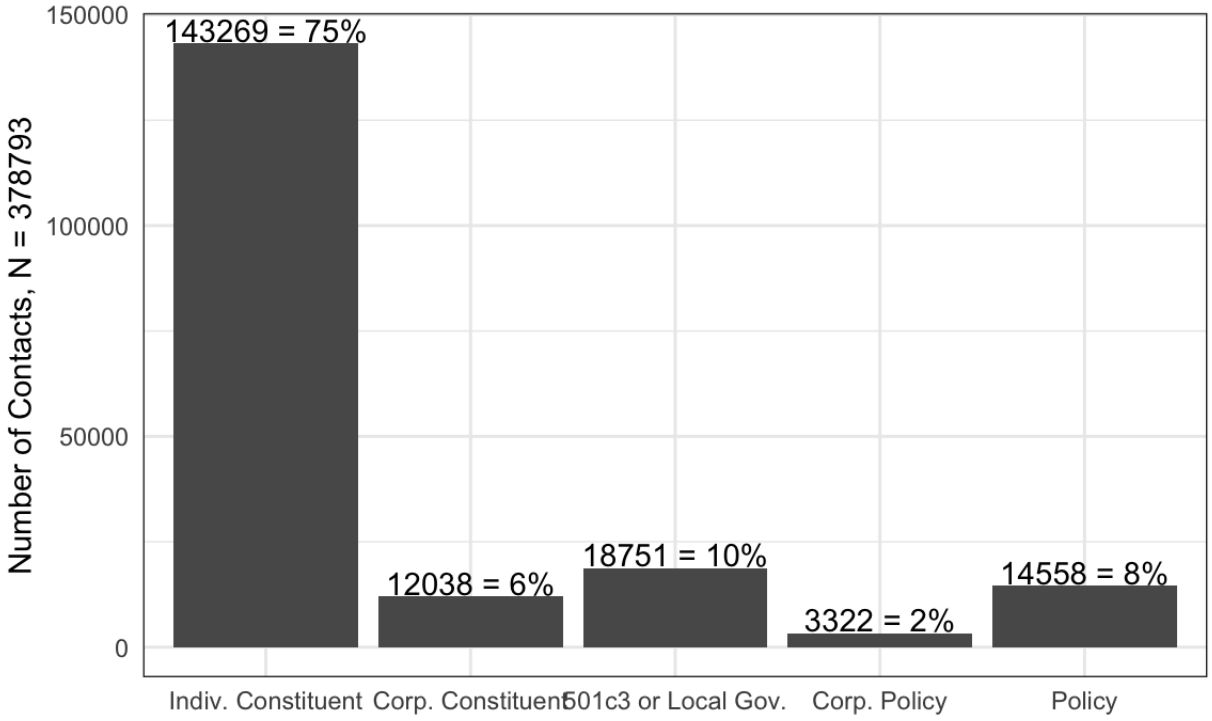


This figure presents the average number of contacts with federal agencies per year for House members (left-hand panel) and senators (right-hand panel), where the legislators' counts are sorted by their per year percentile rank. This reveals that senators and House members regularly contact federal agencies, but there is considerable variation in the rates of contact across legislators.

3.2.2 Legislator's Contact with Federal Agencies are Focused on Constituency Service

Not only do our data enable us to make inferences about how often legislators contact federal agencies, our sample of coded contacts enables us to understand why legislators are contacting federal agencies. Figure **??** uses our most granular five-part coding scheme to assess why coders contact federal agencies. Using this coding scheme, we find that the vast majority of contact with federal agencies is focused on constituency service.

Figure 2: Distribution Across Types of Congressional Requests 2007-2017



1) Historgrams on types 2) Show that the types of communication doesn't vary substantially by legislator 3) Perhaps do some text analysis on legislators' communication

3.2.3 Constituent Characteristics and the Provision of Constituency Service

Descriptive section to make the argument that we are observing, by and large, constituency service.

Include pictures of logs to give individuals a sense of what the data are that we are observing.

Average number of letters per member per year.

Descriptive data on who contacts and when they contact.

Foia requests: 395

383818

Table 1: Contacts From Members of Congress to Federal Agencies

Department	Components FOIAed	Records received	Coded	N
Department of Agriculture	29	29	11	9641
Department of Commerce	19	18	10	8510
Department of Defense	49	10	7	8005
Department of Education	1	1	1	3973
Department of Energy	8	2	1	6119
Department of Health and Human Services	15	8	5	29195
Department of Homeland Security	14	12	12	35183
Department of Housing and Urban Development	2	1	1	31852
Department of Justice	23	3	2	2379
Department of Labor	22	11	7	51836
Department of State	1	0	0	0
Department of the Interior	11	7	6	5731
Department of the Treasury	7	5	5	12785
Department of Transportation	10	6	6	20497
Department of Veterans Affairs	6	3	2	76295
Independent Agencies	77	39	26	81817
Total	294	155	102	383818

4 Assessing The Effect of Changing Positions in Washington on Constituency Service

In this section we assess how legislators' changing position in Congress affects their provision of constituency service. Our primary models will be a series of difference-in-differences regressions, which are similar to the specifications in Berry and Fowler (2006). Our most stringent specification will make examine changes that are within legislator and agency. Specifically, we will estimate regressions of the form:

$$Y_{ijt} = \beta \text{Committee Position}_{it} + \gamma_{ij} + \delta_t + \sum_{s=1}^{S} \eta_s \text{tenure}_{it} + m_{it} + p_{it} + \epsilon_{ijt} \quad (1)$$

Where Y_{ijt} represents the number of requests legislator i makes to agency j in year t, so our analysis in this section takes place at the legislator-agency-year level. γ_{ij} is a fixed effect for the legislator-agency dyad. This fixed effect accounts for individual characteristics of legislators, such as legislators who are more skillful at filling constituency service requests than other legislators. Critically for our research design, this fixed effect also enables us to account for time-invariant constituent demand for constituency service with an agency. This ensures that our comparisons take into account the latent demand constituents have for

constituency service in a particular area. It also accounts for characteristics such as the population of a state, demographic characteristics, and local industries. δ_t is a year fixed effect, takes into account common shocks across legislators in the provision of constituency service. There are time varying characteristics of legislators that can affect their provision of constituency service as well.

Assuming that legislators' trends contacting agencies to provide constituency service follows parallel paths, β represents the average effect of changing prestige on a legislator's provision on constituency service. We focus on three measures of a legislator's committee position: whether they are a committee chair, whether they are members of a prestige committee, and whether they have a position on oversight. We focus on these three positions because each represent different ways a legislator's career could become more focused on their time in Washington. As a legislator becomes a committee chair, they are often pushed to focus on the creation of policy in the institution. Similarly, legislators who join more prestiguous committees are given the opportunity to shepherd national level policy through the legislative process.[1] And oversight committee members are charged with oversight of the executive branch and the conduct of government in Washington, which could pull their focus away from the district.

As Berry and Fowler (2006) note, changes in legislators' committee assignments are often due to circumstances outside of the legislator's control, such as changing majority status, retirements on committee, or exclusion due to losses from a prior election (Grimmer and Powell, 2013). For the parallel trends assumptions to be violated, it would need to be the case that legislators differentially altered their rates of constituency service in anticipation of joining particular committees. To make this assumption more plausible, we include a series of controls that capture time-varying characteristics of a legislator that might confound our inference about the effect of committee prestige. Specifically, we flexibly include a measure legislator's seniority (with a series of dummy variables that we reprsent with $\sum_{s=1}^{S} \eta_s \text{tenure}_{it}$), an indicator for whether the legislator's party is the majority in year t, m_{it} , and if the member of Congress is from the same party as the president in year t, p_{it}. We collect these controls and their estimated coefficients into $\boldsymbol{\eta}\boldsymbol{X}_{it}$ in Equation 1. Throughout, we cluster our standard errors at the legislator x agency level.[2]

Table 2 demonstrates that as legislators' acquire more prestige, their rates of constituency service increase. This is true in a cross-sectional comparison of legislators. The first column of Table 2 excludes the legislator $\times$ agency fixed effects and the year fixed effects, but does include controls for seniority, majority status, and being from the same party as the president. Table 1 shows that committee chairs, members of prestige committees, and members of the oversight committee provide substantially more constituency service than other legislators. These estimates, though, conflate legislators' overall ability with their posi-

[1] We say that a House member is on a prestige committee if they are on Appropriations, Ways and Means, Rules, Budget, or Armed Services and if a senator is on Rules, Foreign Relations, Commerce, Bueget, Armed Services, or Appropriations.

[2] Throughout, our results are robust to clustering at the legislator level as well.

tion in Washington. If legislators who are overall better at their jobs are also selected for more prestigious committees, then the estimates from the first column of Table 1 confuse legislators' overall ability with their institutional position.

Table 2: Estimating the Effect of Increased Prestige on Constituency Service Provision

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Committee Chair	0.448	0.196	0.196	0.0278
	(0.0797)	(0.0760)	(0.0760)	(0.00612)
Prestige Committee	0.444	0.0796	0.0796	0.0187
	(0.0331)	(0.0269)	(0.0269)	(0.00467)
Oversight Committee	0.420	0.160	0.158	0.0563
	(0.0296)	(0.0190)	(0.0192)	(0.00324)
Tenure	✓	✓	✓	✓
Majority, President's Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislator × Agency Fixed Effects		✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects		✓	✓	✓
All Legislators	✓	✓		
Serve At Least Second Term			✓	
Dependent Variable	Count	Count	Count	Log(Count + 1)
Observations	337610	337610	330215	337610

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at legislator x agency level

Table 1 is descriptive, Table 2 is diff-in-diff. Table 3 is only those that survive, Table 4 is a log-DV

To address this confounding, the estimates from Column 2 of Table 2 include Legislator× Agency fixed effects and year fixed effects, while also including controls for a legislator's seniority, their majority party status, and president's party. Consider first the effect of being a committee chair. We estimate that becoming a committee chair causes an increase of 0.16 constituency service requests per agency (95-percent confidence interval [0.01, 0.31]). Across all agencies, this represents an increase of approximately 10.1 additional constituency service requests or a shift of about 0.15 standard deviations in the overall number of constituency service requests per year. Membership on the Oversight Committee causes a similar increase in constiuency service—a 0.16 per agency increase. But there is a smaller increase for individuals who join a Prestige Committee, which causes a 0.07 per agency increase in the number of constituency service contacts a member of Congress makes.

The findings in Table 2 are robust to alternative specifications. Consider the third column of Table 2 which shows that we obtain the same results if we restrict our analysis to individuals who survive at least one term (ensuring that we are not merely eliminating individuals based on their tenure in office). The final column shows that we find qualitatively similar results if we take the $\log(Y_{ijt} + 1)$, with an across the categories increase in the amount of constituency service provided.

DISCUSSION HERE of RESULTS. Key insight is that as legislators acquire more power in the institution,

they increase their provision of constituency service. This is true even for positions that require the individual to contact the agency more.

4.1 Changes in the content offered as legislators become chairs

5 How Experience Affects the Provision of Constituency Service

As legislators acquire more power in Washington, we find that they increase their provision of constituency service. While this suggests that more powerful legislators are paying more attention to their constituents, it could still be the case that as legislators gain experience in Washington, they decrease their provision of constituency service. To test this hypothesis, we use a similar empirical approach that we used in the previous section, but now focus on the first years of an individual's service in Washington. Specifically, we estimate a difference-in-differences regression of the form:

$$Y_{ijt} = \sum_{s=1}^{6} \beta_s \text{tenure}_{s[it]} + \gamma_{ij} + \delta_t + m_{it} + p_{it} + \epsilon_{ijt} \quad (2)$$

where we include fixed effects for each legislator-agency pair, a time fixed effect, and indicators for a legislator's status in the majority or in the president's party. Our key effect of interest is $\beta_1, \beta_2, \ldots, \beta_6$ which describes how a legislator's provision of constituency service differs from legislators who serve beyond 7 years. We focus on the provision of constituency service over the first 6 years of a legislators tenure in Washington in order to assess how the provision of service from a legislator changes over their initial years in Washington. While as analysts we are interested in both the changes in the provision of constituency service over the first few years of a legislator's service in Washington and how this compares to much longer tenured legislators, making within-legislator comparisons implies that we are ill equipped to compare the provision of service from shorter and longer tenured legislators. This because our data provides few opportunities to observe how legislators' provision of constituency service varies over longer time frames. But we are well equipped to observe how legislators' provision of service changes over their first years in office. The particular number of years that we include in this specification are not consequential for the inferences we make about a legislators' first years in office, which we show in Appendix ZZ. To examine what happens when there is a transition from a longer tenured legislator to a new representative, Section **??** examines how the amount of constituency service provided at the district level changes when there is a new representative.

The first column of Table 3 is a cross-sectional regression that compares the provision of consttiuency service across legislators' first 6 years, while also including indicator's for a legislator's majority party status

and whether they are members of the president's party. This cross-sectional regression shows that legislators in their first year provide substantially lower levels of constituency service than their colleagues in their second year of service in Washington: legislators in their first year provide about 0.14 fewer constituency service requests per agency than legislators in their second year and 0.2 fewer requests than legislators in their third year. Of course, this first column represents both differences that occur as legislators acquire experience in Washington and differences in legislators' abilities.

Table 3: Estimating Effect of Tenure on Constituency Service Provision

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
First Year	-0.478	-0.179	-0.183	-0.0317
	(0.0349)	(0.0347)	(0.0351)	(0.00527)
Second Year	-0.344	-0.0665	-0.0630	-0.000440
	(0.0375)	(0.0335)	(0.0337)	(0.00510)
Third Year	-0.274	-0.00694	-0.00697	0.00662
	(0.0376)	(0.0328)	(0.0328)	(0.00482)
Fourth Year	-0.237	0.0200	0.0200	0.0126
	(0.0409)	(0.0310)	(0.0310)	(0.00470)
Fifth Year	-0.238	0.000539	0.000506	-0.000442
	(0.0388)	(0.0296)	(0.0296)	(0.00434)
Sixth Year	-0.220	0.0204	0.0204	0.00242
	(0.0401)	(0.0278)	(0.0278)	(0.00414)
Majority, President's Party	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislator × Agency Fixed Effects		✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects		✓	✓	✓
All Legislators	✓	✓		✓
Serve At Least Second Term			✓	
Dependent Variable	Count	Count	Count	Log(Count + 1)
Observations	337610	337610	330215	337610

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at legislator x agency level

This table shows. Model 1: no fixed effects. Model 2: legislator x agency and year model 3: only those legislators who survive their first election.

To address this confounding, the second column of Table 3 estimates the difference-in-differences specification in Equation 2. This demonstrates that legislators provide less constituency service in their first year in office and as they acquire experience in Washington, they provide additional service. Legislators in their first year in office provide 0.09 fewer constituency service requests per agency than legislators in their second year (95-percent confidence interval [-0.13, -0.06]) and 0.16 fewer requests than legislators in their third year (95-percent confidence interval [-0.21, -0.11]). The increase in number of constituency service requests from a legislator's first to third year is similar in size to the increase that comes from becoming a chair of a committee: resulting in about 10.1 more constituency service requests per-year, representing an increase of about 0.15 standard deviations.

As before, the findings in Table 3 are robust. For example, a reasonable concern is that the changes in

constituency service across legislators' tenure is a combination of the experience and expertise that comes from more years in Washington and comparing individuals who are able to serve a third year—a combination of senators and House members who win reelection. To address the potential different samples in each year, the third column of Table 3 assesses the changes in constituency service for legislators who serve in Congress for at least three years. This reveals a very similar pattern: legislators initially providing less constituency service in their first year, then more constituency service in their subsequent years. Column 4 in Table 3 shows that the results are robust to alternative formulations of the dependent variable.

5.1 Assessing the Effect of a New Representative on Constituency Service Requests

Using a within-legislator comparison, we have found that legislators provide less constituency service in their first year in office, but the levels of service quickly increase. In this section we investigate a related question: how does the provision of constituency service to a district change after the election of a new representative? This question is different, because the comparison will not be made within legislators as they acquire more experience. Here, instead, we will examine how the levels of constituency service change when their is a transition from an incumbent legislator to a new representative.

In order to make this comparison, we change the level of our analysis and focus now on the number of constituency service requests made from the representative of a particular state or district i in a year t, Y_{it}. As in the prior sections, we will use a difference-in-differences approach to take into account the specific characteristics of districts and over time changes in how legislators provide constituency service. Specifically, we estimate regressions of the form:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_1 \text{New Member}_{it} + \sum_{s=2}^{6} \beta_s \text{tenure}_{s[it]} + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \epsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

Where γ_i is a district specific fixed effect that takes into account the particular demographic characteristics of the district, along with the levels of demand from district residents. δ_t is a year fixed effect that takes into account common shocks. Our key effect of interest β_1 is average effect of a district electing a new representative. In order to understand how the effect of a new representative changes over time, we also estimate the district level differences for a legislators second (β_2) through sixth-year (β_6).[3]

The first column of Table 4 provides a simple difference-in-means for districts represented by a new

[3]It is worth noting that this treatment is fundamentally different for a district. In each election the district faces the choice of either allowing their incumbent to acquire another term of tenure in the chamber or replacing a new member. This is different than the within legislator comparison, because legislators are only able to acquire more tenure or leave the chamber.

member and then for legislators through their first six years in office. In this descriptive comparison, districts represented by new legislators receive substantially fewer constituency service requests to federal agencies. On average, districts with a new representative have 24.5 fewer constituency service requests made on their behalf. The magnitude of this difference shrinks for districts represented by legislators in their second year (18.3 fewer constituency service requests) and then reaches a relatively stable number for districts represented by legislators in their third through sixth years.

Table 4: The Effect of New Members on Number of Requests at the District Level

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
New Legislator	-27.40	-20.08	-7.591	-90.99
	(4.034)	(3.118)	(1.719)	(12.79)
Legislator 2nd Year	-18.61	-12.01	-2.975	-57.31
	(4.012)	(2.899)	(1.829)	(12.58)
Legislator 3rd Year	-13.89	-5.174	0.295	-34.31
	(4.168)	(3.095)	(1.774)	(15.66)
Legislator 4th Year	-9.636	-2.895	2.093	-18.66
	(4.299)	(3.070)	(1.873)	(15.42)
Legislator 5th Year	-13.91	-3.713	-0.0498	-18.40
	(3.664)	(2.381)	(1.500)	(10.90)
Legislator 6th Year	-9.269	-2.484	-0.368	-4.244
	(4.183)	(3.122)	(1.666)	(15.97)
District Fixed Effects		✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects		✓	✓	✓
All Districts	✓	✓		
House Only			✓	
Senate Only				✓
Observations	5961	5961	4832	1129

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at district level

This table shows. Model 1: no fixed effects, district x year change. Model 2: All districts, district, year fixed effects 3: only those legislators who survive their first election.

To account for differences in district size, demographics, and demand for constituency service, the second column estimates the difference-in-differences from Equation 3. In this specification we see a large causal effect of a new member taking over: electing a new member causes a decrease of 20.6 constituency service requests (95-percent confidence interval [-26.69 , -14.57]). This represents a change of approximately 0.35 standard deviations, a sizable decrease in the provision of service. The effect of electing a new representative, howeveer, dissipates quickly. Districts represented by a legislator in her second year of service receive only 9.8 fewer constituency service requests. After the second year the differences are smaller in size and we fail to reject the null that the provision of service is no different than legislators who represent the districts more than 6 years. This same pattern is present for House districts (column 3) and within states after senators are elected (column 4).

The Costs of Newly Elected Members Taken together, our results demonstrate that new legislators experience substantial startup costs when newly elected and that when a new legislator represents a district, they receive much less constituency service. Legislators in their first year provide much less constituency service than they do in their second year and reach a stable level of service in their third years. Further, when districts elect a new representative or senator, they experience a sharp decrease in the amount of constituency service requests made on their behalf. Rather than experienced legislators forgetting about their districts, then, our evidence suggests that newly elected legislators struggle to provide the levels of service that experienced legislators deliver to their constituents.

6 The Limited Effects of Constituency Demand

An alternative explanation for our results is that the amount of constituency service legislators provide is largely determined by constituency demand. Our empirical strategy in Sections XX and YY account for static amounts of demand. For example, districts composed of veterans might see more requests for assistance with the Veterans' Administration, or districts with older residents might have greater demand with the social security administration. Because our analyses take into account either legislator-agency or district fixed effects, we compare how the levels of constituency service change holding constant these characteristics of the district.

Yet, we might expect that constituents could be driven by a legislator's changing power in Washington or prestige to direct more service requests at legislators. In this section, we present evidence that the effects of constituent demand are likely minimal, even though we have shown that there is a correlation between the demographics of a district and the number of requests legislators send to particular agencies. We demonstrate the limited effects of constituency service using two distinct approaches. Building off the theoretical discussion in Section MM, we might worry that legislators' increasing prestige leads them to have higher name recognition, causing constituents to direct more constituency service requests to them. We show, however, that as legislators acquire more institutional power in Washington it does not cause an increase in name recognition. While more experienced legislators do higher name recognition, we show that the increases in name recognition do not align with the increases in constituency service that legislators provide their constituents.

As a second approach, we show that when a district is represented by a new legislator, other members of Congress and same-state senators do not have an increase in the amount of constituency service provided. This suggests that constituents are not merely redirecting their service requests to more experienced legislators. Rather, members of Congress' are able to both solicit and fulfill constituency service requests when

they have adequate staff. As their staff budget expands, they able to fulfill more requests.

6.1 The Limited Effects of Prestige and Tenure on Name Recognition

To assess how changing prestige and tenure affects legislator's name recognition, we use the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) cumulative file. This collects a set of survey responses from 2006-2018, providing a total of 452,755 total individual level responses. All respondents were asked if they approve of their representative in the US House and both senators. If the respondent provided an assessment of the elected official, we coded the respondent as recognizing the legislator's name. If, however, the respondent selected the option that they had never heard of the representative, or were not sure, then we code them as not recognizing the legislator.

Given our focus on how legislators alter their name recognition among constituents, we estimate the average name recognition for each legislator in each survey Y_{it}, or the proportion of respondents who provide an evaluation of the legislator. We then use cross-sectional and difference-in-differences regressions to assess how legislators name recognition changes as they acquire more experience and as they increase their institutional prestige.

Table 5: Limited Changes in Name Recognition

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Second Year	-0.0385	-0.0230			-0.0277	-0.0219
	(0.00642)	(0.00641)			(0.00652)	(0.00664)
Fourth Year	-0.0263	0.000275			-0.0207	-0.00265
	(0.00646)	(0.00682)			(0.00655)	(0.00697)
Sixth Year	-0.0281	-0.0112			-0.0221	-0.0128
	(0.00676)	(0.00634)			(0.00663)	(0.00646)
Eighth Year	-0.0132	0.00132			-0.0103	-0.00313
	(0.00663)	(0.00674)			(0.00653)	(0.00678)
Prestige			0.0262	-0.000190	0.0231	-0.00247
			(0.00508)	(0.00668)	(0.00517)	(0.00685)
Chair			0.0341	-0.00640	0.0232	-0.00791
			(0.00768)	(0.00566)	(0.00782)	(0.00582)
Oversight Committee			0.00523	-0.0143	0.00599	-0.0133
			(0.00590)	(0.00537)	(0.00574)	(0.00531)
Majority Party			-0.00484	-0.00102	-0.000993	-0.000893
			(0.00370)	(0.00287)	(0.00367)	(0.00294)
President's Party			0.0248	0.0221	0.0240	0.0212
			(0.00315)	(0.00311)	(0.00306)	(0.00302)
Legislator Fixed Effects		✓		✓		✓
Year Fixed Effects		✓		✓		✓
Observations	3667	3667	3667	3667	3667	3667

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at legislator level

The first column of Table 5 shows average levels of name recognition of legislators' tenure in the House and Senate. This demonstrates that legislators who are newer to Congress have lower-levels of name recognition. Further, we continue to see lower-levels of name recognition for legislators at the end of their second year, then for legislators serving in their 10th year and beyond. Yet, both the persistence of this difference and the rate at which is it resolved suggest that name recognition is likely to have only a limited explanation for why legislators receive more requests after their first year. This is because even second-year legislators—when the decrease in constituency service has already begun to be resolved—continue to have lower name recognition.

The third column of Table 5 shows that, on average, legislators who hold more power in Washington do have higher name recognition back in the district. Yet, once we use a difference-in-differences design to make within-legislator comparisons, we see that these differences disappear. Column 4 shows that when legislators acquire more power in Washington, it has little effect on their name recognition with constituents. And finally, columns 5 and 6, which includes both tenure controls and prestige, shows the same basic pattern: increasing prestige in Washington does little to affect name recognition back in the district. This suggests that the increase in constituency service from legislators in Washington is unlikely to be driven by higher name recognition in the district.

6.2 No Evidence Constituents Redirect Requests Away from New Legislators Towards Incumbnet Legislators

In this section we engage in a more direct test of whether constituent demand explains variation in how legislators provide consituency service. If constituents are merely redirecting their requests for constituent service in response to characteristics of legislators, then we should expect that the number of requests that incumbent legislators make will increase when there are new representatives in their state. We would expect an increase if constituent demand explained our results beacuse constituents would direct their service requests away from the new legislator and towards incumbent legislators. If this spillover occurs, then the most natural target for the constituent requests would be one of the senators representing the constituent's state, but a different House member could also receive the request.

To assess the whether constituents direct requests towards incumbent legislators when new members represent them, we examine how incumbent legislators' constiutency service requests change in response to having new representatives in their state. We measure the presence of new member in the state in two ways: either the proportion of House members and senators in the state who are new or an indicator for whether there is a new House member or senator in the state. As in Section MM we measure the number of constituency service requests that are made from a districts representative in a particular year. Using this

dependent variable, we then estimate a series of difference-in-differences regression where the treatment is the measure of new members in the state and we include district and time fixed effects. Further, we retrict the regression to incumbent legislators only.

Table 6 presents the estimates of this regression. The first two columns are estimated on all incumbent legislators and show that neither the proportion of new members nor the presence of a new member significantly affect the constituency service requests for other legislators. In fact, the effect of changing the proportion of new legislators is in the opposite direction than would be expected if constituents direct service requests towards new members, though the difference does not approach conventional significance levels.

Table 6: Little Evidence of Spillovers from New Legislators

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Proportion New Legislators	-3.032		-24.56	
	(5.753)		(14.33)	
At Least One New Legislator		-0.0522		-3.826
		(1.307)		(3.719)
District Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Senators Only			✓	✓
Observations	5507	5507	1076	1076

Robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered at district level

Columns 3 and 4 of Table 6 reveal the same pattern when examining senators only. Again, we see that the estimated effect of having a new legislator in the state and the proportion of new legislators is in the opposite direction than expected if spillover is occurring and does not approach statistical significance.

7 Conclusion

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A Contact Codebook

We provide the following codebook to a team of handcoders to code the content of Congressional contact with legislative agencies and for extracting information about the legislator. The codebook provides a series of steps to move from raw correspondence logs to data formatted for the analysis conducted here.

A.1 Codebook for Coders

Guidelines for turning congressional correspondence logs into useful data:

The first step is to identify the columns that contain the member of Congress (or Committee), the date that the member initiated correspondence, and the column that best describes the subject. These should be named FROM, DATE, and SUBJECT. We should also have empty columns named TYPE, CERTAINTY, ALT_TYPE, POLICY_EVENT, EVENT_NAME, EVENT_DATE, and NOTES.

Our aim is to classify the subject of correspondence between members of Congress and government agencies. This may be done using keywords (potential keywords in italics below), but may also require googling subject lines (e.g. what does this acronym mean in this context!?) and inferring why the request is being made. This may require identifying a member's relevant policy positions. For example, if the subject is "mining regulations" or "open internet," a member's voting history on related bills or donations from the industry may help us infer if the letter was policy work on behalf of the industry (type 4) or not (type 5). Limiting your search to a date range around the letter letter date may yield relevant public statements. If you have questions, find something interesting, or, in your efforts to classify a confusing correspondence, you discover information like a related public statement, note it in the NOTES column. In some cases, columns other than the SUBJECT may offer helpful information. This may be difficult at first, but will get easier.

The outcome is a spreadsheet with the first columns being FROM, DATE, SUBJECT, TYPE, CERTAINTY, ALT_TYPE.

At the end of this codebook there are two tools:

1) An example for how to auto-apply these codes in R.

2) A list of specific coding decisions for cases that required discussion among our team–please read through and add to this list as you encounter difficult cases.

Below are 5 potential codes for the TYPE and 3 potential codes for your level of CERTAINTY that it is this type. If you less than Very Certain (i.e. if only Fairly Certain, or Toss Up), also record your second best guess as ALT_TYPE, otherwise leave this column blank. Only leave NOTES if you think it would be helpful for the team to revisit the entry.

A.1.1 TYPE

1 = Personal Service

Individual, non-commercial constituent service

Examples: Help with a government form, passport, visa, back pay, military honor, enlistment, criminal case, request for personal information (e.g. oneâĂŹs FBI file), disability application, worker compensation, personal complaint, discrimination case, job application, health insurance, financial services complaints, etc.

2 = Commercial Service - Transactional

Anything related to a specific individual case by a business (including business owners like farmers and consultants) Help with a grant application, payment, loan or contract (buying anything from or selling anything to a government agency) Help with an individual case of tax assessment, fine, or regulatory enforcement action Help with public relations on behalf of a business

Examples: allocation of radio spectrum, case against a company, tax dispute, contract for purchase of military surplus, crop insurance distribution, debt settlement, foreclosure assistance, a fine for a law violation, etc.

3 = Government and Nonprofit Service - Transactional

Same as for (2), but for municipal or state governments (including cities, counties, etc.) or non-business-oriented non-profit organizations (i.e. NOT ones that represents an industry or trade association)

4 = Commercial Service - Policy

Anything applying to a class of commercial activity or businesses (e.g. shipping, airlines, agriculture). This could include legislation, bills, acts, appropriations, authorizations, etc.

Authorization of or appropriation to a government program that is targeted towards a particular industry or industries Regulation of an industry or commercial practice or competition

Examples: Milk prices, insurance or loan eligibility criteria, purchasing policies, crop insurance rates, pollution criteria, classification of products for trade or taxation, conservation appropriation, worker visa types, restrictions, or caps, etc.

5 = Policy Work - NOT in the service of any individual, business, specific industry

Examples: Lawmaking

Request for policy-relevant information. This includes prospective legislation, legislation under consideration, or already implemented legislation that requires oversight.

Oversight

Committee requesting a report or testimony at a hearing Requesting clarity on an agency rule

Lobbying administrative policy

Agency rulemaking with non-commercial implications (comments on agency rulemaking may often be (3))

Political work

Meeting with organized constituent groups (e.g. workers, people with disabilities, environmentalists) about policy (meetings with industry groups generally fall under (4)).

Media requests

6 = Other

Suggest a new category in the NOTES column, only if it cannot be fit under 1-4. For example, requesting dirt on one's political opponents could be called "partisan" as it is none of the above. Other specific types: thank you (for thank you notes with no other information), congratulations (for congratulatory correspondence on appointments or retirements with no other information), family member (for correspondence on behalf of a family member)

0 = Really no idea, no guesses, completely unclear

A.1.2 CERTAINTY (regarding TYPE)

1 = Very Certain (¿95% sure)

2 = Fairly Certain (between 95% and 50% sure)

3 = Toss Up (¡50% sure)

A.1.3 POLICY.EVENT

If the correspondence is about policy (TYPE 4 or 5), does it reference a specific government action or event? If so record all that apply separated by a semicolon. Leave this blank for individual constituent services or general policy suggestions.

âĂIJbudget allocationâĂİ (allocating funds to a particular purpose or program)

"decision" (e.g. a ruling, order, or adjudication between parties, e.g. a company seeking a permit resolving a dispute between an employer and union, between two companies. Or two parties present alternative policy interpretations before a commission.

âĂIJDisasterâĂİ (reaction to a sudden event that causes great damage. Examples could include a hurricane, flood, oil spill, or shooting)

âĂIJearmarkâĂİ (a provision in a piece of Congressional legislation that directs specified federal funds to specific projects, programs, organizations, or individuals)

"enforcement" (a putative action, e.g. a company being fined or a license being revoked or a state being found not in compliance with federal law, NOT for individual actions such as military discharge, deportation, or criminal proceedings)

âĂIJfacilitiesâĂİ (anything related to a facility or buildingâĂŤopenings, closures, conversions of spaces, cleanups of military bases, etc.)

"grant" (allocation of government funds)

"hearing" (e.g. a committee or budget hearing, NOT a court hearing or administrative hearing for an individual, for example about benefits)

âĂIJInformationâĂİ (gathering information in some matter, not exactly related to a piece of legislation. Examples would be, but are not limited to, a study, investigation, and/or report)

âĂIJinviteâĂIJ - e.g. to a non-governmental function, conference, fundraiser, or rally

"lawsuit" (a recent or upcoming court case, litigation, or settlement)

"legislation" (an upcoming or recent bill or resolution, often members will be asking for information)

âĂIJmediaâĂİ (a request made in reference to a news story)

"meeting" (e.g. an upcoming or recent meeting with agency staff, NOT a meeting with a constituent)

"rule" (a proposed regulation, agency rulemaking, agency guidance, notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM, SNPRM, ANPRM), or request to extend a public comment period)

A.1.4 EVENT.NAME

If there is an EVENT, copy text from the log or letter about the event such as the date of a hearing or meeting, the name of a bill or agency rule, the company or state subject to an enforcement action, or the court or parties involved in a lawsuit.

A.1.5 EVENT.DATE

If there is an EVENT, add the date in a day-3 letter month-year, e.g. 01-Jan-2018, format.

If there is no date, type "past" or "future" with respect to the date of the correspondence.

If unclear if it is in the past or future, leave this blank.

A.1.6 CONSTITUENT.TYPE

If the correspondence is from an individual constituent (or unorganized group of constituents, i.e. TYPE 1), we capture more information about these constituents where possible. In many agencies constituents are members of larger groups, like veterans, homeowners, LGBTQ, etc.–these groups are not mutually exclusive; a constituent may be both a veteran and disabled.

There are two ways to code constituent variables:

1) This sheet lists constituent types and keywords for identifying that type. Add a new line to this sheet for each new CONSTITUENT.TYPE identified. All letters containing those keywords for that agency will be tagged as representing this type of constituent.

2) In the R scripts in the agencies folder.

A.1.7 CONSTITUENT.CLASS

Where possible, we also code the economic class of constituents in the same way.

1 = "lower"

2 = "middle"

3 = "upper"

If you become confident that all entries containing a certain word or phrase are all one TYPE, we can save time by automatically applying this to all entries. This can be done in two ways:

1) If you are comfortable R, write a script, [agency].R that applies your rules. See example below.

2) If not, write classification rules in some standard intuitive way in the github issue for that agency. (For example, If "contract" in SUBJECT, TYPE = 2, CERTAINTY = 1.) Then ignore all future entries that meet your criteria (we will automatically apply your codes later).

Example from `USDA_RD.R`

```
options(stringsAsFactors = FALSE)
library(tidyverse)
library(magrittr)
library(googledrive)

gs_ls() # log in to google drive
data <- gs_title("USDA_RD") %>% gs_read()   # get data from google drive

unique(data$SUBJECT) # view unique SUBJECT strings

data %<>% mutate(TYPE =
                       Ifelse (SUBJECT %in% c(
                         # i.e. if SUBJECT is exactly one of these strings:
                         "Payment Assistance",
                         "Delinquency ",
                         "Insurance ",
                         "General Servicing",
                         "Foreclosure",
                         "Debt Settlement",
                         "Escrow  ",
                         "Recapture Receivable Account",
                         "Payoff "),
                         2, TYPE)) # then make it TYPE 2

# Or, for imperfect matches (notice how some words above had random spaces added), use "regular expressi
?regex
?grepl

data %<>% mutate(TYPE =
                       ifelse (grepl(
                        # i.e. if SUBJECT contains:
 # (& means "AND",  | means "OR")
                           "Payment|
```

```
Delinquency|
Insurance|
Servicing|
Foreclosure|
Debt Settlement|
Escrow|
Recapture Receivable Account|
Payoff",
                        SUBJECT),
                        2, TYPE))  # then make it TYPE 2, otherwise keep TYPE

# Notice how the odd spaces are no longer needed to return a match
# Also notice how "Payment Assistance" is now matched with just "Payment"

cbind(data$SUBJECT, data$TYPE) # view results
```