Stimulating Presidential Success: The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Presidential Pork, and Vote-Buying in Congress

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Abstract

The ability to provide electorally valuable goods to members is an important tool in winning support on key votes. Earmarks create credit-claiming opportunities and are used by party leaders to influence member behavior. Recent years have witnessed an expansion of the president's ability to strategically provide grants to advance political goals. The passage of the stimulus bill offers a unique opportunity to assess whether awards granted to members influenced their votes. Our results show that stimulus awards increased the probability of voting with the president among fellow Democrats and even moderate Republicans. These findings provide evidence suggestive of presidential vote-buying.

Keywords: earmarks, congress, president, pork-barrel, vote buying, stimulus

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Introduction

Prior to the passage of the $787 billion dollar American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)—more colloquially known as the stimulus bill—President Barack Obama and other administration officials emphasized that the legislation should contain no earmarks whatsoever. Obama vowed to oversee the passage of "an economic recovery plan that is free from earmarks and pet projects" (CSB News 2009). Upon being signed into law, Obama spokesman Robert Gibbs declared that such a goal had been realized, flatly stating that "there are no earmarks in this bill."[i] And while critics would later point to a number of spending provisions in the ARRA that could clearly be linked to particular districts or narrow interests, other observers, such as Republican Senator Jim Inhofe (R-OK) backed the Obama administration's claims that there were no congressional earmarks in the stimulus bill.

Inhofe's remarks, however, were not meant as a sanguine appraisal of the Obama-backed ARRA. Rather, the veteran legislator saw the absence of congressional pork in the bill as an abdication of Congress's authority to control the federal purse strings. As a result, "the stimulus bill," Inhofe would opine, "resulted in hundreds of outrageous expenditures that were doled out through presidential earmarks by unelected government officials" (2010). Though hardly a disinterested observer of Obama's policies, Rush Limbaugh would also make a connection between the ARRA and presidential pork—coining the term "Porkulus" to describe the act (Limbaugh 2009). While such observers may only concerned with the potential for spending on seemingly unnecessary projects in the name of economic stimulus, linking ARRA to presidential pork also implies that, like congressional earmarks, stimulus dollars could be used to reward partisans, build coalitions, and perhaps even buy support. For a bill pitched as necessary to speed America's recovery from the Great Recession to be used as currency in executive-legislative bargaining would dramatically

challenge our understanding of ARRA specifically, as well as the availability and means for presidential influence in the legislative process.

Rhetoric and labels aside, as a Republican legislator Inhofe may have had real cause for concern given that the funds authorized by the ARRA appear to have been distributed by the federal bureaucracy with political motives in mind (Gimpel, Lee, and Thorpe 2012; Hudak 2014; Young and Sobel 2013; though see Boone, Dube, and Kaplan 2014). A growing body of evidence also suggests that districts represented by members of the president's party receive a disproportionate share of federal outlays (Albouy 2013; Berry, Burden, and Howell 2010; Larcinese, Leonzio, and Testa 2006; cf. Boone, Dube, and Kaplan 2014; Dynes and Huber 2015; Gimpel, Lee, and Thorpe 2012). In turn, spending of any type provides legislators with credit-claiming opportunities (Mayhew 1974; Sellers 1997; Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2013), and it is quite common for legislators to play up their ability to funnel federal dollars toward their constituents (Hudak 2014, 19). Presidents certainly have an incentive to afford key legislators with the ability to claim credit for bringing home the bacon (Edwards 1989), as members whose districts receive greater amounts of federal spending are more likely to be reelected to Congress (Levitt and Snyder 1997). With more co-partisan allies in Congress the chances that the president's policy agenda will be shepherded through the legislative process by like-minded allies thereby increase precipitously.

While directing federal spending toward particular districts may have an indirect effect on presidential success in the legislative arena by shaping the outcomes of congressional elections, to our knowledge no study has examined whether there is a direct link between presidential particularism and presidential success in Congress. Directing federal funds toward particular districts may buy the president higher levels of success in Congress, however, and it is this proposition that we wish to test in this paper. Turning to the extensive literature on vote-buying for theoretical guidance (Snyder 1991; see Alexander, Berry, and Howell forthcoming for a review), we explore

whether stimulus spending in a legislator's district prior to a final passage vote on a bill favored by the president influenced how that legislator cast his or her vote. Previous empirical work on vote buying in Congress focused on aggregate demand and reward aspects of stimulus allocation in analyzing which legislators, by virtue of their ideological position relative to the chamber median, were most likely to receive federal monies (Alexander, Berry, and Howell forthcoming; Stratmann and Wojnilower 2015). Still, claims of executive use of stimulus dollars to win support hover over the legislative process in a post-earmark era and the potential to enhance the executive's ability to build coalitions, win votes, and buy support is untested. Here we use detailed data on the timing of monetary awards to districts—spending authorized by the ARRA—to examine whether member voting behavior is affected by presidential particularism. Specifically, we pair fine-grained data on federal spending from the stimulus with information on the president's preferences over legislative matters coded from Statements of Administration Policy matched to all roll-call votes from 2009 to 2013. Using this approach provides an unparalleled ability to assess the legislative impact of the president's strategic use of federal spending, and unique leverage with which to test and refine existing theories of vote-buying.

Congress, the President, and Distributive Politics in the United States

For generations of political scientists studying distributive politics in the U.S. context the focus has been squarely on Congress, and for good reason: Congress has long wielded almost complete control over the federal purse strings. Recent years, however, have witnessed something of a sea change in how federal funds are doled out in Washington. While members of power and constituency committees in Congress were once able to direct projects and dollars to their own districts and those of allies (see, for instance, Alvarez and Saving 1997; Evans 2004), more recent work has found little connection between membership in committees with a fair amount of sway over the budget process (e.g., Budget, Appropriations, and Ways and Means) and federal

disbursements to particular districts (Berry and Fowler forthcoming; Stratmann and Wojnilower 2015; see also Gimpel, Lee, and Thorpe 2012).[ii] Consequently, scholars began to shift focus away from Capitol Hill toward the White House, placing the onus on the president and the federal bureaucracy as the final arbiters of where federal monies are spent (Bertelli and Grose 2009).

In many ways this development has been one of Congress's own device, as pressures to cut down, and even eliminate, pork barrel spending and waste increased incentives for members to delegate authority over federal spending to the president and the broader bureaucratic apparatus. Such delegation preserves the opportunity for members to win awards for their districts, but potentially moved a valuable tool to build coalitions and win support from congressional leaders to the executive (Evans 2004; Frisch 1998; Shepsle and Weingast 1981). Watchdog groups, such as Citizens Against Government Waste (with their infamous Congressional Pig Book and top "Porker" lists), helped create a significant negative electoral cost to an activity that was once thought to bring with it pure political profit: particularistic spending brought to members' districts through legislative earmarks (at least for some legislators—see Crespin and Finocchario 2013). While legislators from the majority party may have once diverted funds toward their colleagues in the minority party to keep them from raising any alarms about wasteful government spending (see Balla et al. 2002; Chen 2013), in today's political environment—one replete with watchdog groups dedicated to rooting out government waste—minority and majority members alike have an incentive to appear as though they have taken a pass on the pork barrel. As is typically done when confronted by such a situation (see Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991), Congress has increasingly delegated authority over federal disbursements to the president and the bureaucracy—a process that culminated in the passage of a moratorium on earmarks by House Republicans in 2010. Noting that "pork is power," as Dick Armey (R-TX) once opined, Congress used to do battle with the White House over any perceived encroachments upon the former body's power of the purse (Deering 1996, 159). Recent years,

however, have seen Congress cede control over an even larger portion of the government's coffers. Earmarks, once a way for legislators to mandate spending on specific projects that the bureaucracy might not support, have been largely left to the executive by Congress itself. Consequently the potential political power that results from control over the pork-barrel (i.e., the ability to build coalitions (Evans 2004; Shepsle and Weingast 1988), reward fellow partisans (Carsey and Rundquist 1999; Engstrom and Vanberg 2010) and aid vulnerable members (Bickers and Stein 1996)), may also have shifted to the executive, thereby enhancing the president's toolkit to bargain with members of Congress.

For Senator Inhofe (R-OK) and other observers, the ARRA illustrated Congress's newfound willingness to delegate authority over federal spending to the president. Rather than load up the stimulus bill with earmarks geared toward funneling federal dollars toward particular districts and members' own pet projects, much of the political jockeying over stimulus funds appears to have happened after the bill had already passed. According to documents obtained by The Center for Public Integrity via a Freedom of Information Act request, members of Congress lobbied the bureaucracy for stimulus funds through letters and other communications *after* the ARRA had been signed into law. When queried about his letter to Transportation Secretary LaHood requesting federal funds for a project in his district in spite of his objections to the stimulus, Representative Pete Sessions (R-TX) indicated that he simply wanted to see that his district received "its share of the massive spending pot" (qtd. in Soloman and Mehta 2010). Even those members who voted against the ARRA, such as Sessions, nevertheless engaged in efforts to direct monies authorized by the act to their states and districts by writing letters and putting in phone calls to federal agencies urging them to fund particular projects. These activities are referred to in Washington circles as "lettermarking" (Mills, Kalaf-Hughes, and MacDonald Forthcoming; Soloman and Mehta 2010). Anticipating behind-the-scenes posturing by members of Congress, the White House instructed

agencies not to cave to pressure from lawmakers, and there is some evidence to suggest that members' efforts at influencing the bureaucracy though such means were largely unsuccessful (see Mills, Kalaf-Hughes, and MacDonald Forthcoming; see also Hudak 2014). While perhaps unintentional, this policy also strengthens the bargaining position of the executive by increasing the likelihood that any awards made for political ends would be at the discretion of the Administration (i.e., such posturing made more plausible that the executive would be able to set the terms of any bargaining agreement). President Obama's warning to the bureaucracy notwithstanding, though, both critics and supporters of the stimulus—Democrats and Republicans alike—availed themselves of every conceivable opportunity to lobby the bureaucracy (see Hudak 2014).

These revelations regarding the after-the-fact nature of Congress's efforts at securing particularistic spending for their home states and districts demonstrate that members were looking for ways to direct funds from the ARRA without having to go on record as having done so. Might members, having assumed a positive linkage between credit claiming opportunities and particularistic spending in their districts with their likelihood of being reelected (Levitt and Snyder 1997; Bickers and Stein 1996), not have also attempted to curry favor with the administration in other ways? With their ability to credit claim on the line, members of Congress would appear to have an incentive to "sell" their vote in exchange for federal funds. And while voting the "wrong" way on a high-profile bill like the ARRA can land members in hot water with their constituents (Nyhan et al. 2012), a vote that furthers another, less salient item on the president's legislative agenda might go relatively undetected.[iii]

Rather than offering their vote to congressional leadership in exchange for particularistic spending (see Cox and McCubbins 2005, 46-47; Carroll and Kim 2012), it was the president, as the head of the bureaucracy, who stood in a position to buy members' support through the geographic targeting of stimulus funds.[iv] The president's incentive to engage in efforts at vote-buying is obvious,

as it may provide the chief executive with the opportunity to rack up victories in Congress, while at the same time promoting other goals (such as stimulating the economy). In spite of the considerable impediments to doing so, we know that presidents do, at least on occasion, direct bureaucratic agencies to steer federal funds toward particular districts (Gordon 2011; see also Covington 1988; Hudak 2014; Stamp 2013). The president need not personally direct these efforts either (thereby neatly avoiding potentially running afoul of the Hatch Act), as his agents in the bureaucracy may anticipate the White House's position and act in such a way so as to promote their principal's legislative priorities. As Hudak writes, members of the bureaucracy who are responsible for doling out the "federal largesse" work to "produce policy outcomes that are consistent with the president's goals" (2014, 133). Discerning the president's position on legislation is typically an uncomplicated matter (see Bond and Fleisher 1990, 61; Hudak 2014), for members of Congress and bureaucrats alike, since the president often issues Statements of Administrative Policies (SAPs) that outline the administration's stance on a particular bill before Congress.

The means therefore exist to connect members' votes on a given bill with the president's position on the same piece of legislation. However, previous investigations into whether the president is able to buy support in Congress by directing discretionary spending toward particular states and districts have focused on which legislators, by virtue of their ideological leanings, are most likely to be the targets of such efforts (Alexander, Berry, and Howell Forthcoming; Stratmann and Wojnilower 2015). This approach is necessitated by the fact that data on federal monies obligated to particular states or congressional districts is typically reported by year or, at best, by fiscal quarter. Without fine-grained measures of government spending, researchers are forced to use aggregate measures of legislator behavior as the outcome variable of interest, thereby limiting the scope of the investigation to attributes of members that exhibit very little, if any, change over time. Insofar as members "die in their ideological boots" (Poole 1998, 3), we should expect very little movement in

members' behavior as a function of federal spending in their districts—which makes it difficult to ferret out whether the president actively engages in vote-buying.

There are a number of other limitations with existing efforts at connecting federal dollars doled out at the insistence of the executive on legislative behavior—not the least of which being that it is difficult to discern whether presidents are targeting particular legislators or key groups of voters with outlays from the federal purse (Dynes and Huber 2015). Additionally, many observers of presidential-congressional relations have argued in favor of "analyzing interaction at the roll call vote stage of the process" (Bond and Fleisher 1990, 67): something that simply is not possible with existing aggregate measures of both federal spending and legislative behavior. Rather, being able to match dollars to individual roll calls is necessary to assess whether there is evidence of vote-buying.

Previous investigations have been limited to explorations of whether financial rewards are directed toward particular districts at the behest of the president or the bureaucracy in response to changes in member ideology (Alexander, Berry, and Howell forthcoming). Existing studies are therefore unable to distinguish presidential reward, partisan bias in allocation, and electoral motivation from each other and from presidential vote-buying. That is to say that such research is largely limited to showing that dollars are correlated with members of a certain "type." Canonical statements of how distributive spending is used to "grease the wheels" of the legislative process, however, describe a different sequence of events which begins with a commitment from a member to vote in a given way in exchange for a reward, proceeds to a conferral of particularistic benefits, and culminates with a member following through on his or her promise (Evans 1994; 2004; see also Jenkins and Nokken 2008).[v]

Additional evidence on this process can be found in work detailing the Office of Congressional Relations' efforts at generating "a sense of obligation" among legislators who had received favors from the president (Holtzman 1970, 252, qtd. in Covington 1988). According to

Stanley Kelly, favors from the White House are granted to legislators "with the understanding…that a comparable service will be performed in return at some time in the future" (1969, 271, qtd. in Covington 1988). What is more, members of Congress appear to know that they take on a debt upon receipt of a favor from the president. Thus the potential for the executive to engage in vote-buying, as we discuss it here, may not be as ethically murky as it might seem at first blush in that dollars are awarded with the hope of inducing loyalty. However, unlike a finding showing aggregate support for the party correlates with more dollars/awards, which could be a result of demand, networks, or reward for previous behavior, vote-buying requires an award to occur more proximately prior to a desired behavior.

Distinguishing vote-buying from simple reward therefore requires information on federal funds awarded to a given district prior to a roll-call vote on which the administration's position is known. We therefore turn to two underutilized sources of data that, when combined with roll call data, afford perhaps the ideal opportunity to investigate whether the president can stimulate greater degrees of success in Congress with the use of particularistic spending directed through the bureaucracy. First, we coded all SAPs in Obama's first six years to identify the bills where the Administration notified Congress of its position as well as the direction of the executive's preferences. Second we collected fine-grained information on where, and especially when, the funds authorized by the ARRA were allocated by extracting and adapting quarterly reports from Recovery.gov. Crucially, these reports include the date on which a given award was granted as well as the congressional district primarily benefiting from the award. The data and research design employed in this paper are covered in greater detail after we detail our hypotheses.

Hypotheses

We couch our expectations in previous work on vote-buying and particularistic spending, distilling from the existing literature the following quartet of competing hypotheses.

(1) *The Rhetorical claim (Null)* – New stimulus dollars and awards prior to a roll-call are unrelated to voting with the direction stated by the administration. Given President Obama's directive that awarding agencies should not heed members' requests for stimulus dollars, systematic links between awards and votes should be largely non-existent. Also, since votes on which the president has issued an SAP are potentially more likely to be salient (and therefore scored by interest groups and party leadership) vote-buying might be too risky for all sides (Nyhan et. al. 2012)

(2) *Vote buying* – the more dollars and awards granted prior to a vote where the administration has staked out a clear position will increase the likelihood of voting in the direction of the executive's preferences.

(3) *Partisan conditionality* – To the extent that vote buying occurs it should be more prominent among Democrats. Given the high degree of partisan polarization in Congress (see Theriault 2008), and the potentially greater degree of salience among those votes where the president's position is known, many Republicans would be less likely to support the president's position under any circumstances.

(4) *Ideological conditionality/peripheral supporters*– to the extent that vote-buying occurs it should be most pronounced among moderates in both parties. As with any exchange, both parties must be willing to bargain. Strong ideologues and partisans of both parties should be more constrained in their voting behavior and less able to bargain. Conversely, moderates may have more room to negotiate.

Data and Methods

In spite of the utility of SAPs to the study of presidential influence in Congress, few scholars have employed these documents in their efforts to gauge support for the president's legislative agenda (Marshall 2012). SAPs are absolutely essential to the present inquiry, and serve as a useful

measure of the president's position on pending legislation.[vi] Over the time period under observation here (2009-2013), the Obama administration issued nearly 400 SAPs. Since the chief executive often takes the opportunity to relay the White House's preferences on multiple bills in a single SAP, the total number of bills on which we could determine the president's position is slightly higher. For instance, during the run-up to the government shutdown in 2013, President Obama (or his agents in the bureaucracy) used a single SAP to relay his position on ten different House Joint Resolutions that the Congress was considering. None of which, the president noted, would fully fund the government. He therefore expressed his opposition to each. We coded the president's position on each bill (either support or oppose), the clarity of that position (as determined by the strength of the language surrounding statements regarding the president's position), whether the president threatened to veto a particular piece of legislation if it got to his desk, and the date on which the SAP was issued.[vii]

These data were then merged with roll-call data (and scaled roll call data in the form of DW-NOMINATE scores) on all bills or resolutions for which a vote for final passage could be identified. If a final passage vote could not be identified, the last recorded legislative action on the bill was used, provided that doing so made sense in the context of our efforts to explore whether members were voting in line with the president's policy preferences. Even though presidential initiatives often receive action in Congress (Bond and Fleisher 1990), there were still a small handful of bills mentioned in Obama's SAPs over this time period that saw no recorded votes in Congress. Ultimately there were 276 final passage votes from 2009-2013 that were associated with SAPs.[viii]

We focus on individual roll call votes as the outcome of interest, as Congressional Quarterly's (CQ) presidential support scores and other aggregate measures of legislator behavior are likely too coarse to pick up on any evidence of presidential vote-buying, if indeed there is any to be found (Bond and Fleisher 1990, 64; see also Edwards 1985). Roll call votes were used, at least at one

point, by the administration's Office of Congressional Relations to measure support for the president by individual members of Congress (Covington 1986). The White House therefore appears to keep tabs on how members vote, rather than on "box scores" calculated by CQ or other outside observers—a fact which, we believe, justifies a closer examination of members' roll call votes rather than aggregate measures of support for the president.

Inducements to vote in accordance with the president's policy agenda are measured with reference to the (logged) dollar amount from the stimulus that was awarded to a member's district through the day prior to each final passage vote associated with SAPs. Then, by differencing the stimulus dollars awarded between these roll call votes we focus on the effect of new spending on members' voting behavior. This differencing process has two advantages. First, by focusing on new dollars since the last vote we are narrowing the time period where vote-buying could reasonably occur (i.e., we would not expect dollars granted prior to an earlier vote to carry over.). Second, though cumulative dollars could also predict voting at a later stage, this is more akin to aggregate analyses and is highly subject to temporal effects since cumulative dollars will always increase toward a plateau or constant value. Consistent with the nuanced approach that we take to vote-buying in this paper, our measure of new dollars varies by vote and conservatively isolates the analysis to the potential effect of new grants in anticipation of behavior on a specific vote.

We also calculated the total number of awards given to each district prior to a given roll call vote as an alternative measure of distributive benefits (see Hudak 2014). This measure is similarly calculated so as to capture the effects of new stimulus awards handed down between roll call votes. As an alternative to new dollars, this measure better captures the currency in vote-buying in terms of credit-claiming opportunities since it may well be the case that members place less importance on the dollar figure of awards. Still, in terms of the conclusions that we are able to draw from our analyses it makes precious little difference which variable we include in the model after omitting

some clear outliers from the dataset (see Table A and Figure A in the Appendix). These data are publicly available from the recipient and agency data posted on the government's official website devoted to ARRA spending (Recovery.gov).[ix]

Our key dependent variable takes on a value of one if a member voted in accordance with the president's preferred position (as coded from SAPs) and a value of zero otherwise. Abstentions are coded as missing. Different constructions of the dependent variable that deal with abstentions in other ways (such as treating them as a vote either for or against the president's position) point to precisely the same substantive conclusions (results not shown).

We also include a number of both member and district-level characteristics as controls in all model specifications. Crucially these are measures for party identification (coded as Democrat or not), member ideology using DW-NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal 2000), and a multiplicative term that interacts member ideology and party with ARRA spending at the district level. This is done in an effort to explore what might be termed the "peripheral supporters" hypothesis (Covington 1988). We know, for instance, that federal funds are often directed toward more moderate (Alexander, Berry, and Howell forthcoming) or cross-pressured members of Congress (Covington 1988), but there is little evidence that such members are especially receptive to such inducements when it comes to providing support for the president's position in exchange for stimulus dollars. As Covington (1988) shows, though, southern Democrats were particularly responsive to the president's legislative agenda after receiving an invitation to a social function at the White House. In this paper we therefore test whether something similar happens among more moderate legislators with respect to the receipt of credit-claiming opportunities in the form of federal spending.

Outside of a basic model with the key measures of new ARRA dollars, party, and ideology, we aim to account for a robust assortment of additional factors which might correlate with receipt

of dollars as well as voting with the president as indicated in an SAP. Among the additional member-level controls we include in larger model specifications are whether a legislator was a member of the Committee on Appropriations (and whether he or she chaired an Appropriations subcommittee), whether the member held a leadership position in Congress, and whether the member was serving in their first term (freshman status), to account for a greater propensity to receive dollars and awards due to positions of influence (Hudak 2014) as well as effects of seniority and status on propensity to vote in accord with an SAP. Other member-level controls serve to capture the potential for electoral and constituent forces to influence voting behavior and ARRA awards. These include whether the member was unopposed in the previous general election, the Democratic percentage of the presidential vote in each member's district, the number of hospitals and other medical facilities in a district, the percent unemployed, median income, the percent foreign born, the percent black, the percent over the age of 65 in the district, the percent employed in manufacturing jobs, and the percent Latino.[x]

Finally, additional variables in the model serve to account for vote-specific factors which might influence member voting. These include whether the vote was close (using a 20 vote threshold) and the day the vote was taken. We also include fixed effects for Congress. Since our data span two Congresses, this variable is effectively a dummy for whether the vote took place in the 111th or the 112th Congress. Many of these controls are the same as those employed by Hudak (2014) in his detailed work on presidential particularism.

Results

This section builds toward the analysis of the model with all of the various controls predicting whether members supported the president on individual bills in Congress. Yet, before delving into those results it is useful to describe the data, exploring the average stimulus receipt and the average number of awards over the time period under observation (from the start of the

stimulus in 2009 until Congress repealed the reporting requirement for Recovery Act awards). First, it is clear that the total amount of awards plateaued relatively early into the time period under consideration. This underscores the value of analyzing the effect of new dollars since the last vote since the cumulative total for all members would peak early and swamp the possibility that a proportionally small award was influential in voting behavior. Furthermore, consistent with the narrative that the funding authorized by the ARRA was disproportionately directed toward districts represented by members of the president's party (Albouy 2013; Larcinese, Leonzio, and Testa 2006), Figure 1 illustrates that Democrats received larger monetary awards and more awards on average than Republicans. This observation acts as a type of "gut check" on the use of ARRA spending as a stand-in for other types of discretionary federal spending, as studies using other data sources (such as the Federal Assistance Awards Data System—FAADS) have similarly found that awards have been systematically targeted toward the president's co-partisans in Congress (e.g., Berry, Burden, and Howell 2010). What we do not yet know, however, is whether the awards authorized by the ARRA bought the president any measure of success in the legislative arena.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

Descriptively there is some evidence to suggest an affirmative answer to that question. As Figure 2 illustrates, across parties, members who voted with the president's stated position received more stimulus dollars on average than did those who voted against the administration.[xi] This relationship is especially dramatic among Democrats, as average ARRA spending was much higher in those districts whose members supported the president's legislative agenda. With one exception (awards among Republicans) all observed differences in the figure are statistically significant at conventional levels.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

While Figure 2 suggests that ARRA dollars may well be connected with presidential support, such an aggregate analysis is subject to the same limitations we highlight in previous research. Namely, such a pattern could be the result of anticipatory awarding (vote-buying), reward for previous behavior, other confounds, or some combination of these factors. To further investigate whether the monies distributed through the ARRA are associated with greater degrees of support for the president's position we estimated a pair of logistic regressions predicting whether members' votes on all final-passage roll calls associated with an SAP were in line with the president's preferences as a function of the log of ARRA receipts since the last vote in this series. Table 1 displays estimates from these models. The first is a basic model that only includes logged new ARRA dollars, a control for party, member ideology (as measured by DW-NOMINATE), and a three-way interaction that allows us to examine the effects of new spending, conditional on both party and ideology. All constituent components of this three-way interaction are statistically significant at conventional levels. Before interpreting the substantive effects of this complex interaction, it is important to account for the many other potential confounding factors related to voting with the president's position and ARRA receipts.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

The second column in Table 1 reports estimates from a model including the member and vote level controls discussed earlier. Several of these district-level controls reach conventional levels of statistical significance, and serve as a sort of "gut-check" on the validity of our approach. For instance, the Democratic share of the two-party presidential vote in the district is positively associated with voting with the administration's position on a particular vote. Similarly, support for the president's position on legislation also drops during the 112th Congress—after the GOP took control of the House. Other variables similarly perform as one might expect, with close votes negatively associated with support for the president. However most importantly, their inclusion does

not dramatically change the magnitude, direction, and significance of the effect of ARRA dollars and the interactions with party and DW-Nominate.

Curiously, though, features of the SAP, such as the presence of a veto threat and the clarity of the president's position (as relayed through the SAPs) drive down support for the administration's preferred stance on a particular vote. We suspect that this result may reflect the influence of two countervailing forces, with Democratic members exhibiting greater degrees of support for the president when his position is made clearly and forcefully, as when it is punctuated by a veto threat, and Republican members acting in the opposite manner so as to force the president on record as opposing their legislative initiatives. This relationship might therefore be explained with reference to the "loss is a win" strategy that has become such a prominent feature of the legislative environment in recent years (Smith 2007). Forcing the president to exercise a negative check on legislation may provide members of the opposition party with ample fodder for the campaign trail. Votes on bills that the president has threatened to veto are also likely to be more salient, more partisan, and exhibit a greater degree of conflict than votes that are not accompanied by a veto threat.

Crucially, nearly all of the constituent components of a three-way interaction that allow us to explore the effect of new ARRA spending, conditional on both party and ideology, are statistically significant at conventional levels even in a saturated model that includes numerous member and district-level controls.[xii] The singular exception is the main effect for DW-Nominate, which is no longer significant in the model with the full set of controls. As it can be difficult to interpret the impact of an interaction term in a logistic regression, and in particular a triple interaction, we plotted the marginal effect of different levels of ideological extremity across a range of ARRA spending. For ease of presentation, we examine this relationship separately for Democrats and Republicans. The left panel in Figure 3 focuses exclusively on Democrats and explores the interactive nature of the

effect of ideology on voting with the president across a wide range of (logged) stimulus receipts. The figure depicts that, much as one might expect, more conservative Democrats are less likely to support the president's position on a given bill than are average or liberal Democrats across the observed range of new stimulus spending. Across the board, though, new stimulus spending prior to a roll call vote increases the predicted probability that a Democratic member votes with the administration. This effect is most pronounced for moderate Democrats in the House, which could be a result of ceiling effects with respect to the voting behavior of liberal Democrats. Still, the fact that new stimulus dollars has the largest effect on more conservative Democrats also suggests that these members were most likely to be in a position to bargain over their votes and that the provision of stimulus awards was more likely to have a measurable effect.

[Insert Figure 3 here]

Things look somewhat different on the Republican side of the coin. Like the moderates in the Democratic caucus, the effect of new ARRA dollars is positively associated with support for the president's administrative position. Although more muted in its magnitude relative to moderate Democrats, this result is also consistent with the expectation that those Republicans who are most likely to be in a position to bargain with their votes are the least conservative in the Republican conference. Yet, the biggest difference from the Democratic results is that more conservative Republicans decrease their probability of voting with the president's expressed position as ARRA spending in their districts increases. While, one might expect there to be no effect of stimulus dollars due to partisan floor effects (like the ceiling effects noted among more liberal Democrats), this particular result parallels findings at the mass level reported by Einstein and colleagues (forthcoming).[xiii] We would also note that that many of these members represent extremely conservative districts with extremely high demand for stimulus. In some cases taking stimulus dollars was politically unpopular at home though beneficial to the district. Thus it is also possible

that the negative effect stems from members actually being more likely to vote against the president as a means to further distance themselves from the administration and maintain a strong record of voting against Obama to counterbalance potential negative effects of being associated with the stimulus.

Again, the results presented in Figure 3 find that moderates in both parties actually respond more positively to the president's agenda after receiving high levels of ARRA receipts. Looking at the change in probability of supporting the president's statement of administrative policy over the full range of new ARRA dollars we observe (0 to 22 on the logged scale of new dollars) both a moderate Democrat's and Republican's predicted probability of supporting the president increasing almost 15% (from 70% to nearly 85% for Democrats and 33% to 48% for Republicans). Thus, among these moderate members most likely to be open to bargaining and potentially most likely to be needed on a close vote, the results demonstrate the potential for the executive to strategically use stimulus dollars to shore up support for votes where it has expressed a clear preference. This constellation of findings very much fits with existing findings that have emphasized the targeted nature of distributive spending (Alexander, Berry, and Howell forthcoming), but also extends previous work by showing that presidents can expect some returns in the legislative arena, at least at the margins and perhaps beyond.

Discussion and Conclusion

A handful of recent studies have found evidence that the president targets federal spending toward districts represented by co-partisans (Albouy 2013; Berry, Burden, and Howell 2010; Larcinese, Leonzio, and Testa 2006; cf. Boone, Dube, and Kaplan 2014; Dynes and Huber 2015; Gimpel, Lee, and Thorpe 2012). Apart from a possible indirect effect on the success of the White House's legislative agenda as a function of the partisan composition of the legislature, however, it is unclear what the president stands to gain through such efforts at particularism. What is more, at

least one group of scholars has gone so far as to suggest that the president funnels federal dollars toward moderate legislators—members of Congress who are likely to be crucial to the accomplishment of the president's legislative agenda (Alexander, Berry, and Howell Forthcoming; cf. Stratmann and Wojnilower 2015).

Such work has raised the specter that the chief executive explicitly engages in vote-buying. Existing studies, however, have been plagued by a number of difficulties (Dynes and Huber 2015), and have proven unable to distinguish between federal funds delivered to particular districts in an attempt to buy votes from monies doled out as a reward for prior support. What is more, all such work has employed aggregate measures of legislator behavior. Theories of vote-buying in Congress, by contrast, emphasize the importance of examining individual roll call votes (Evans 1994; 2004; Jenkins and Nokken 2008).

To the best of our knowledge ours is the first study to systematically and empirically explore whether the president can buy support for his policy positions by directing federal funds toward particular states and districts (though see Jenkins and Nokken 2008). Moreover, by leveraging the finely grained, temporal aspects available in the ARRA stimulus awards data, matched to final passage votes on which we coded the executive's preference from SAPs, our data and results are uniquely capable of assessing whether stimulus dollars granted by the executive influenced member behavior. In other words, we sought to answer the question: What does the president get in return for engaging in distributive politics? Using awards data from the ARRA—an economic stimulus package that most observers agree was largely devoid of congressional earmarks—we examined the effects of presidential particularism on support for the president's position on individual roll call votes. Using these data we provide evidence suggesting that the president can buy support in Congress through the disbursement of federal monies. Across a variety of different model specifications we find that ARRA receipts are associated with higher levels of support for the

president's position among members who are ideologically more centrist, increasing the probability of their support by roughly 15% among members of both parties. That is, moderate legislators, in particular, grow more receptive to voting with the president's position as their districts see more stimulus spending. While increasingly rare in today's polarized political environment, liberal Republican legislators and conservative, Blue Dog Democrats still exist, and move closer to the president's expressed position in response to awards from the ARRA. Thus, in Obama's first term the stimulus package strongly opposed by Republicans ironically may have provided the administration an important tool to bargain with members of both parties, promote its agenda, and further weigh in on the legislative process.

To our knowledge this research is the first to assemble the data necessary to make a determination about presidential vote-buying in recent years—an era marked by the existence of a moratorium on pork-barrel spending and Congress's broader abdication of the "power of the purse." Although such developments have engendered a considerable amount of hand-wringing from professional observers of Congress, these changes have also opened a window into the phenomenon of vote-buying—the existence of which often must be inferred from data on the targeting of federal funds. Our approach, however, assembles several disparate sources of data, each with its own strengths, that afford one of the most complete looks to date at presidential influence in the legislative arena.

Nevertheless, several questions remain. For one, it is entirely possible that presidents do not pay up-front. Rather, stimulus dollars (and other federal spending directed through the bureaucracy) may be used as a reward for supporting the president's legislative agenda, not vote-buying. Future research should address the alternative hypothesis that it is particularistic spending allocated *after* a given vote that chiefly matters for explaining the degree to which members support the president. While federal expenditures could be offered as a reward, the fact that the results above show a

significant increase in support as a function of new dollars awarded in-between key votes offers some of the clearest evidence to date of vote-buying. It could also be the case that vote-buying only occurs on bills that the White House has deemed to be essential to its agenda and vision for the country. Political capital may play a role as well (see Bond and Fleisher 1990), in which case we might expect to see a drop-off in the ability of stimulus dollars to move legislators' votes after costly battles with Congress. This possibility is suggested in our results by the significant negative effect of support for the President's position in the last two years of his first term in office (i.e., after the passage of the Affordable Care Act, budget battles, and subsequent shift to Republican control of the House).

Another possibility is that the effect of new dollars is conditional on the policies under consideration in a vote. Though our results show that stimulus dollars have both an aggregate and systematic effect on individual votes, the potential for more nuanced and conditional effects remains open to future study. A final interesting possibility is that the decision to make awards to influence voting behavior was solely driven by specific bureaucratic agencies to promote their unique goals. Thus by looking at the effect of stimulus dollars under the purview of a specific department, future research could investigate expenditures as a tool of bureaucrats rather than the administration at-large. These questions, and more, can be addressed using the approach that we have taken in this paper.

While not without drawbacks, our approach allows a rare look at vote-buying in Congress. The existence of this phenomenon has most often been inferred from evidence that is indirect at best. By contrast, the data that we employ in this paper affords a near-complete look at most, if not all, of the constituent components of the vote-buying story (see Jenkins and Nokken 2008). With these data we find some evidence that, at the margins at least, presidents can stimulate support for their legislative agenda through the exercise of a power that Congress effectively ceded to the

executive in the hopes of avoiding scrutiny for dipping into the pork barrel. In doing so, members may have done much to break the traceability chain connecting their actions in Congress with particularistic spending. As we show here, however, avoiding having their name appear in the "Pig Book" for a given year is not wholly without cost for members of Congress, as they may have to pay for such credit claiming opportunities in other ways—ways that provide the president an inroad into the legislative arena.

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Table 1: Voting with the President/SAP as a Function of New Stimulus Money Awarded

VARIABLES	Basic Model	Member and Vote Controls
Log of New ARRA $	0.11***	0.079***
	(0.0068)	(0.0068)
DW-Nominate 1st Dim.	-0.46***	-0.17
	(0.089)	(0.11)
ln(New ARRA$) X DW1	-0.19***	-0.20***
	(0.014)	(0.014)
Democrat	1.52***	1.61***
	(0.15)	(0.13)
Dem. X ln(New ARRA$)	-0.036***	-0.035***
	(0.014)	(0.013)
Dem. X DW1	-1.08***	-1.16***
	(0.34)	(0.31)
Dem X ln(New ARRA$) X DW1	0.11***	0.14***
	(0.037)	(0.035)
Clarity of SAP		-0.31***
		(0.031)
Veto threat in SAP		-0.78***
		(0.050)
Was Vote Close? (<=20)		-0.38***
		(0.050)
Date of Vote		0.00045***
		(0.000051)
112th Congress		-0.79***
		(0.23)
Appropriations sub-comm chair		0.14*
		(0.073)
Appropriations member		0.0097
		(0.042)
Party leadership position		-0.050
		(0.23)
Freshman member		0.13***
		(0.036)
No opponent in most recent election		0.17*
		(0.087)
Dem share of dist. pres. vote		0.012***
		(0.0022)
Number of medical facilities		-0.00082*
		(0.00046)
Pct. over 65 in district		1.01*
		(0.52)
Pct. foreign born in district		0.16
		(0.42)
Pct. employed in manufacturing in district		-0.95
		(0.75)
Pct. Unemployed in district		-1.00
		(0.94)
Median income in district		3.7e-06***
		(1.4e-06)
Pct. Latino in district		0.061
		(0.16)
Pct. Black in district		-0.16
		(0.16)
Constant	-0.82***	-9.07***
	(0.048)	(0.95)
Observations	66,809	66,809
Pseudo R-squared	0.26	0.28
Number of clusters	548	548
Number of Votes in Analysis	159	159
Pct. of votes correctly classified	77.5%	77.5%

The dependent variable is whether member voted in direction of President Obama's Statement of Administrative Position (SAP) on final passage. Cluster-robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 1: Average Total ARRA Receipts and Average Total Awards Over Time

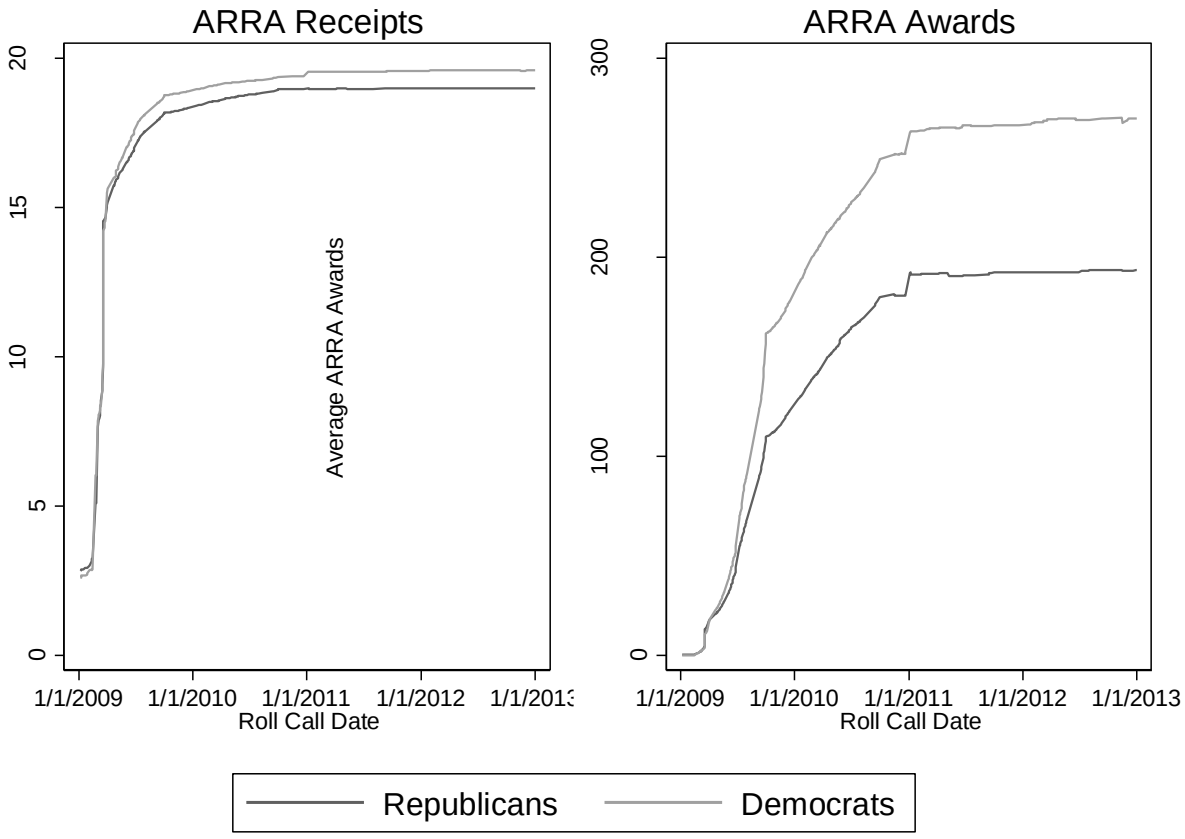
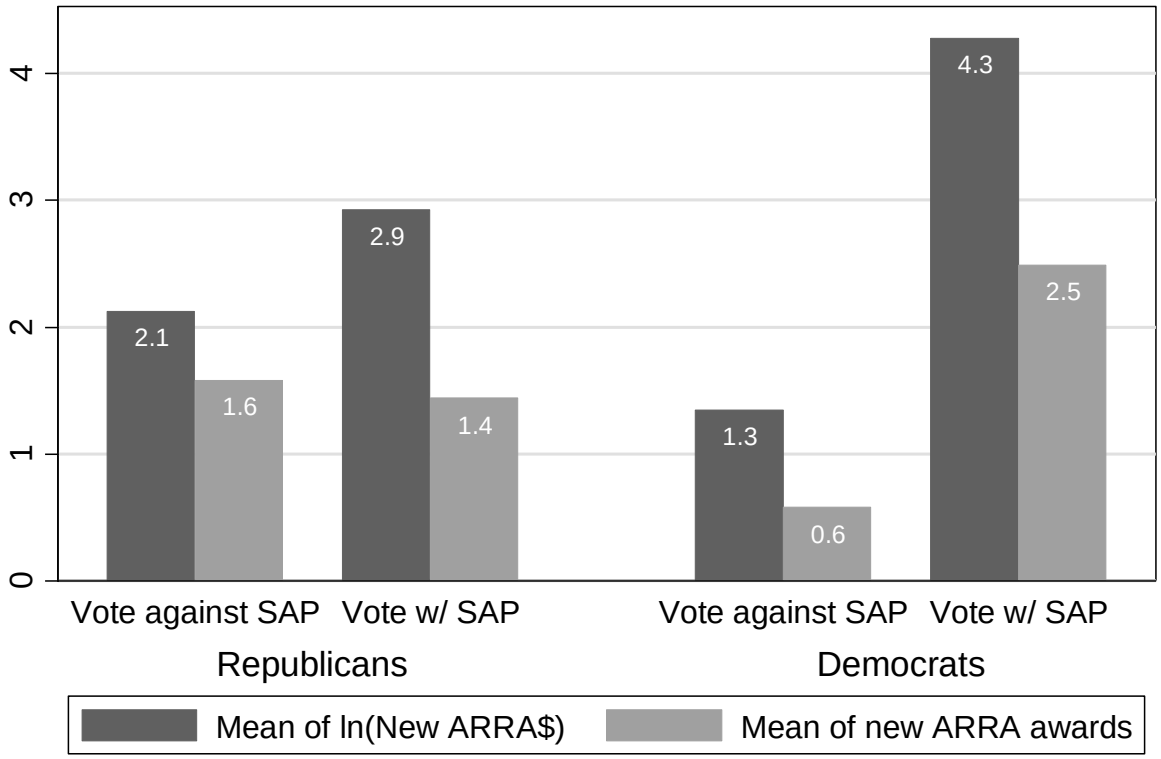
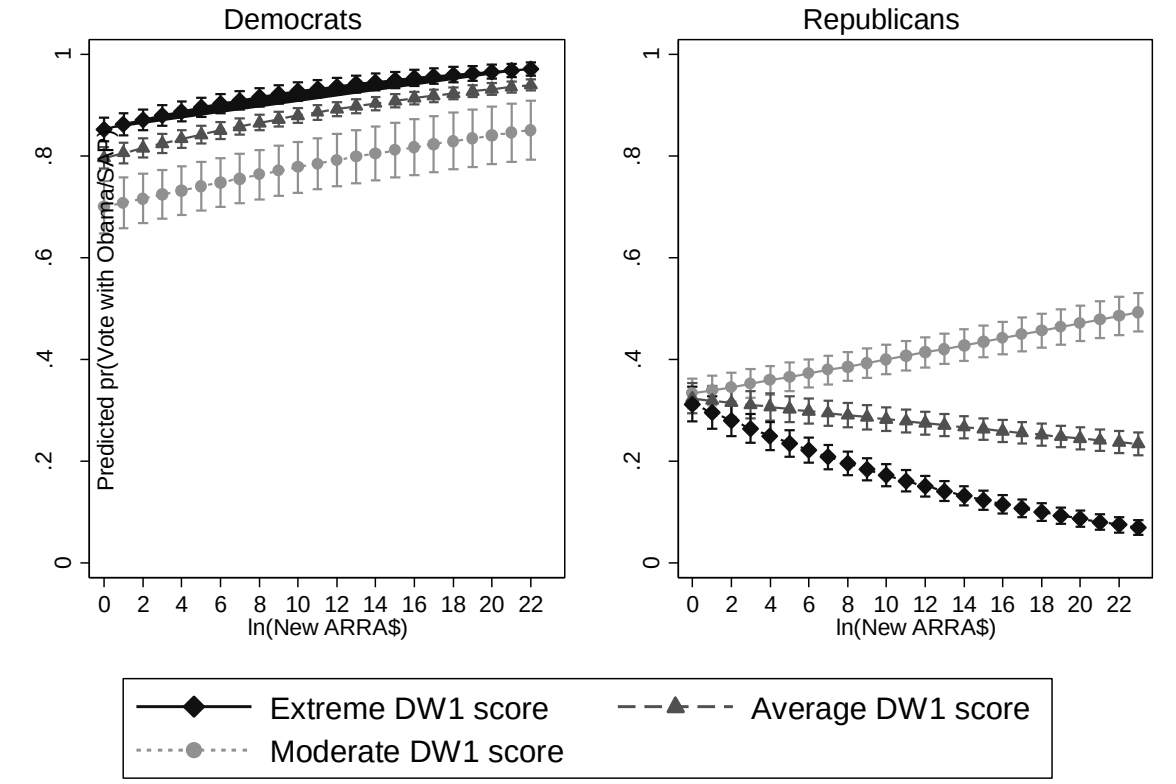


Figure 2: Average New ARRA Spending/Awards by SAP Support and Party



N=66,817 individual votes on 159 speicific final passage votes where an SAP applied.
There are 548 unique members members across the 111th and 112th Congresses
with 277 unique Democrats and 271 unique Republicans)

Figure 3: Predicted Marginal Effects of New Dollars on Probability of Voting with the President/SAP by Ideological Extremity and Party Affiliation



90% confidence intervals

[i] The transcript of Gibbs' remarks is available here:
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=85706

[ii] The chairs of the Appropriations subcommittees, however, do appear to hold some sway over the distribution of pork barrel spending (Berry and Fowler forthcoming).

[iii] Similarly, even on high profile votes where a member is torn between competing forces (Kingdon 1989), or when their district is divided, perhaps being able to advertise securing a million dollar stimulus grant or new project might break the "tie."

[iv] This paper variously describes the president as seeking success and seeking support through the strategic disbursement of federal monies from the stimulus. We recognize, however, that the former (success) is primarily associated with presidential victories in the legislative arena, while the latter (support) typically refers to the president's margin of victory in Congress (Prins and Shull 2006). We use such terms to refer to an outcome where a member of Congress votes in accordance with the president's stated position on a given bill.

[v] It is important to note that we are not making a normative judgment in this paper. What is described as a quid pro quo could simply be an investment in the future, as promises need not be made in order for the executive to calculate that it is in the administration's best interest to target particular legislators with federal monies. This narrative is plausible given the large coffers of the federal budget. Were it smaller and grants more likely to be viewed as zero-sum, then perhaps the executive would be more inclined to pursue cash on delivery and reward-only strategies.

[vi] For decades, scholars have debated over how best to gauge the president's position on particular pieces of legislation being considered in Congress (see, most prominently, Covington 1986 and Edwards 1985). We employ SAPs as a measure of presidential preferences over other available measures, such as CQ's Presidential Support Scores (included in the DW-NOMINATE data), for several reasons. For one, CQ's Presidential Support Scores and SAPs are likely capturing somewhat different things altogether, as CQ appears to take great pains to focus on votes "on which the president has taken a personal stand" (Edwards 1985, 671). By contrast, SAPs often reflect the preferences of the administration as a whole (Kernell 2005). As vote-buying by the president, to the extent that it happens, is a collaborative effort involving both the president and the bureaucracy (Hudak 2014), SAPs therefore provide a closer conceptual match to our outcome of interest. Moreover, our coding of SAPs is easily replicated by other researchers, whereas the methods employed by CQ in calculating Presidential Support Scores are opaque (Covington 1986). Nevertheless, there is substantial overlap between our SAP coding and CQ's measure, as one might expect, and the two measures correlate at .91 ($p<.01$) across all votes at final passage for all bills on which both measures exist (119,497 member votes on 276 bills).

[vii] Intercoder reliability was quite good across all variables of interest. We double-coded 25 percent of all SAPs at random (Lacy and Riffe 1996) and used ReCal (Freelon 2010) to compute reliability statistics. Chance-corrected measures of inter-rater agreement for the president's position on the bill and the clarity of the signal to Congress were well above the most-commonly cited minimum acceptable values (Cohen's Kappa=.96 and .844, respectively). Percent agreement on both variables was higher still (98 percent and 93.9 percent). The clarity of the president's position was determined with reference to modifiers surrounding expressions of support or opposition. Most commonly, the

president's agents would describe the president's position as being "strong." Strong support or opposition was coded as being a clear message from the chief executive.

[viii] The roll-call dictionary files available on voteview.com were used to merge the SAP data to votes. Contextual analysis of each vote was then conducted to identify final passage votes and votes to approve a resolution. There were only 19 out of the almost 400 SAPs that did not readily match a specific bill. Six of these were able to be matched to bills and votes upon further investigation of the SAP and the roll-call descriptions. Surprisingly only 13 SAPs were issued on pending bills that did not come up for a final passage vote (some had related rules packages but these are excluded since we did not want to assume the president's position on the rule for a bill). This is further suggestive of the value of SAPs as an indicator of the executive's preferences since they are almost universally associated with measures that came to a vote on the floor of the House.

[ix] Available here:
http://www.recovery.gov/arra/Transparency/RecoveryData/Pages/QuarterlySum.aspx.

[x] Presidential election data by district was generously provided by the authors of *Change and Continuity in US Elections Series* (Abramson et. al. 2015). Demographic data was collected by the authors using American Community Survey estimates provided by the US Census via American FactFinder (factfinder.census.gov).

[xi] It should be noted that we exclude from this figure the votes from 2013 to mirror the analysis that follows since many of the demographic variables were unavailable and incompatible for the 113th Congress due to 2012 redistricting Furthermore, as Figure 1 clearly shows few new awards, and consequently small new dollar amounts, were granted after the end of 2012.

[xii] As the estimates displayed in the third column in Table C in the Appendix demonstrate, these results hold even after taking into account the hierarchical structure of the data (using the random effects estimator), with votes nested within legislators over time. Employing the fixed effects estimator produces similar results, even though the use of legislator fixed effects precludes the inclusion of ideology in the model specification (see the first column in Table C in the Appendix).

[xiii] Specifically, they found that stimulus spending targeted toward more Republican counties actually backfired, decreasing Democratic vote shares.

Appendix

Table A: Voting with the President/SAP as a Function of New Unique Stimulus Awards with and without Extreme Values

VARIABLES	All Observations	Excluding Extreme Values
Number of new ARRA awards	0.028***	0.13***
	(0.010)	(0.015)
DW-Nominate 1st Dim.	-0.51***	-0.38***
	(0.12)	(0.12)
New ARRA awards X DW1	-0.086***	-0.29***
	(0.028)	(0.034)
Democrat	1.61***	1.64***
	(0.13)	(0.13)
Dem. X new ARRA awards)	-0.014	-0.061*
	(0.018)	(0.036)
Dem. X DW1	-0.62**	-0.83***
	(0.31)	(0.31)
Dem X new ARRA awards X DW1	-0.050	0.16
	(0.062)	(0.13)
Clarity of SAP	-0.30***	-0.30***
	(0.031)	(0.031)
Veto threat in SAP	-0.80***	-0.80***
	(0.051)	(0.050)
Was Vote Close? (<=20)	-0.38***	-0.37***
	(0.049)	(0.049)
Date of Vote	0.00043***	0.00044***
	(0.000051)	(0.000051)
112th Congress	-0.73***	-0.71***
	(0.27)	(0.25)
Appropriations sub-comm chair	0.14*	0.15*
	(0.083)	(0.080)
Appropriations member	0.032	0.020
	(0.045)	(0.045)
Party leadership position	-0.14	-0.11
	(0.26)	(0.25)
Freshman member	0.16***	0.15***
	(0.044)	(0.041)
No opponent in most recent election	0.19*	0.19**
	(0.098)	(0.095)
Dem share of dist. pres. vote	0.013***	0.013***
	(0.0023)	(0.0023)
Number of medical facilities	-0.00074	-0.00089*
	(0.00047)	(0.00048)
Pct. over 65 in district	0.90*	1.11**
	(0.55)	(0.54)
Pct. foreign born in district	0.038	0.071
	(0.44)	(0.43)
Pct. employed in manufacturing in district	-1.07	-0.86
	(0.79)	(0.78)
Pct. Unemployed in district	-1.15	-1.20
	(0.97)	(0.97)
Median income in district	3.4e-06**	3.7e-06***
	(1.4e-06)	(1.4e-06)
Pct. Latino in district	0.033	0.083
	(0.17)	(0.17)
Pct. Black in district	-0.17	-0.13
	(0.16)	(0.16)
Constant	-8.51***	-8.77***
	(0.94)	(0.94)
Observations	66,809	66,236
Pseudo R-squared	0.28	0.28
Number of clusters	548	548
Percent correctly classified	77.4%	77.4%

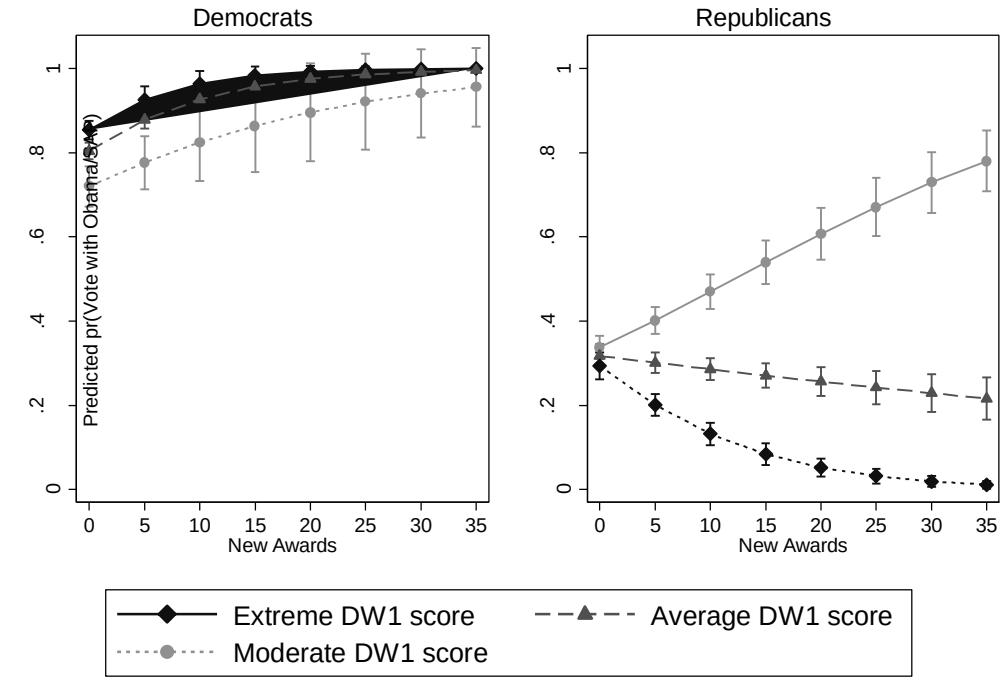
The dependent variable is whether member voted in direction of President Obama's Statement of Administrative Position (SAP) on final passage. Cluster-robust standard errors are in parentheses. For the model excluding extreme values of new awards the cutoff was 35, which includes 99.5% of all observations. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table B: Comparison of Fixed and Random Effects Analysis

VARIABLES	Fixed Effects	Random Effects simple	Random Effects complex
Log of New ARRA $	0.063***	0.071***	0.075***
	(0.0080)	(0.0078)	(0.0079)
DW-Nominate 1st Dim. (DW1)		-0.45***	-0.12
		(0.13)	(0.13)
ln(New ARRA$) X DW1	-0.15***	-0.18***	-0.19***
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Democrat		1.53***	1.74***
		(0.097)	(0.097)
Dem. X ln(New ARRA$)	-0.0019	-0.024**	-0.027**
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Dem. X DW1		-1.40***	-0.99***
		(0.22)	(0.22)
Dem X ln(New ARRA$) X DW1	0.15***	0.13***	0.14***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Clarity of SAP	-0.31***	-0.31***	-0.31***
	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.023)
Veto threat in SAP	-0.78***	-0.79***	-0.79***
	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Was Vote Close? (<=20)	-0.39***	-0.38***	-0.38***
	(0.038)	(0.037)	(0.037)
Date of Vote	0.00046***	0.00046***	0.00046***
	(0.000060)	(0.000060)	(0.000060)
112th Congress	-0.83***	-0.85***	-0.82***
	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.18)
Appropriations sub-comm chair			0.24***
			(0.080)
Appropriations member			0.042
			(0.046)
Party leadership position			-0.025
			(0.18)
Freshman member			0.089**
			(0.044)
No opponent in most recent election			0.17***
			(0.061)
Dem share of dist. pres. vote			0.013***
			(0.0022)
Number of medical facilities			-0.00087*
			(0.00046)
Pct. over 65 in district			1.22*
			(0.63)
Pct. foreign born in district			-0.087
			(0.51)
Pct. employed in manufacturing in district			-0.95
			(0.83)
Pct. Unemployed in district			-1.05
			(1.01)
Median income in district			3.8e-06**
			(1.6e-06)
Pct. Latino in district			0.11
			(0.18)
Pct. Black in district			-0.20
			(0.16)
Constant		-8.28***	-9.21***
		(1.09)	(1.11)
Observations	66,125	66,809	66,809
Number of idno	532	548	548
Number of groups	532	548	548

The dependent variable is whether member voted in direction of President Obama's Statement of Administrative Position (SAP) on final passage. Cluster-robust standard errors are in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure A: Predicted Marginal Effects of New Awards on Probability of Voting with the President/SAP by Ideological Extremity and Party Affiliation



90% confidence intervals