

Congressional Committee Influence

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Agenda

- Committee Policy Influence
- Data
- Trends
- Conclusions

Committee Policy Influence

Committee Policy Influence

- What is the role and authority of congressional committees in influencing federal policy?
- A measure of how influential each committee is among various issue areas in federal policy over time does not exist
- Using the United States Code, we propose a *committee influence score* that gauges the policy influence of committees at a more granular level

Data

United States Code (USC)

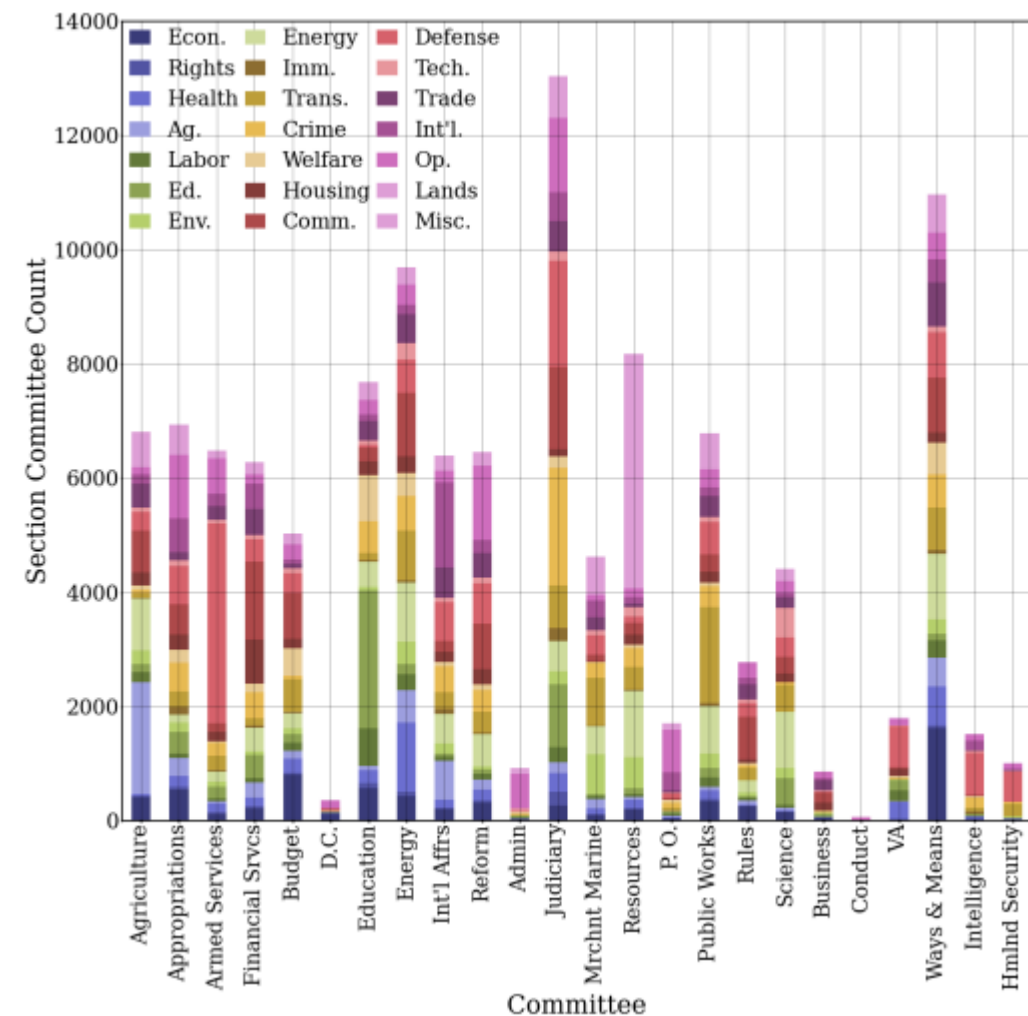
- Comprised of "general and permanent laws of the United States", broadly organized by subject matter into several dozen titles
- Contents of public law are categorized hierarchically using the Statutes at Large compiled at the end of each congressional session
 - Titles, subtitles, chapters, subchapters, sections, etc.
- Parsed XHTML files provided by the OLRC into provision-level data spanning 1994-2018 (103rd-115th Congresses)
- Used CAP coding scheme at the chapter level to categorize ~60,000 sections within the USC's 54 titles

Committee Influence Score

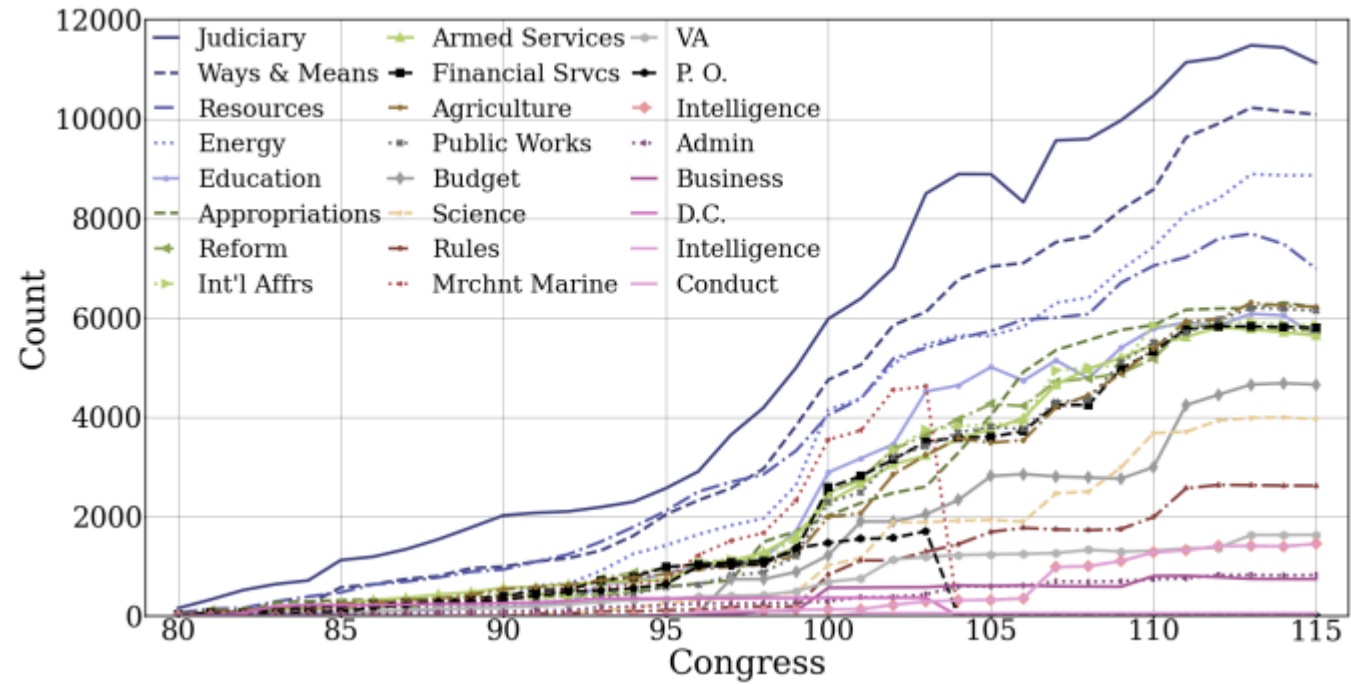
- Based on the linkage between public laws and sections of the US Code ("source credit")
- A House committee (or multiple committees) gets credit for influence over a USC section if the committee was referred a bill that became law and that law either enacted or amended a section
- A committee gains influence over a section starting with the earliest law referred to the committee that altered the section
- A section may have more than one committee attributed to it
- A committee is never dropped from a section even if a different committee amends that section in a subsequent year
- If a section is dropped from the USC, it is no longer counted as an influenced section by the relevant committee(s)

Trends

Policy Areas Attributed to Sections



Distribution of Committee Influence Over Time



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Table 1: Committee Sections in the 104th and 115th Congress

| | Prop. in 115th | Prop. in 104th | 115th Rank | 104th Rank | Grosecwart |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Ways & Means | 0.1022 | 0.1144 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Energy | 0.0942 | 0.1012 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Judiciary | 0.0886 | 0.108 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| Appropriations | 0.0697 | 0.0587 | 4 | 7 | 3 |
| Budget | 0.0652 | 0.0631 | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| Education | 0.0641 | 0.0776 | 6 | 4 | 15 |
| Gov't Reform | 0.0615 | 0.0632 | 7 | 5 | 14 |
| Agriculture | 0.0602 | 0.0462 | 8 | 12 | 16 |
| Trans. & Infra. | 0.057 | 0.0535 | 9 | 11 | 12 |
| Financial Svcs | 0.0565 | 0.0565 | 10 | 9 | 6 |
| Int'l Affrs | 0.0531 | 0.0539 | 11 | 10 | 5 |
| Resources | 0.0526 | 0.0582 | 12 | 8 | 13 |
| Armed Services | 0.042 | 0.0421 | 13 | 13 | 7 |
| Rules | 0.0366 | 0.0316 | 14 | 14 | 4 |
| Science | 0.0359 | 0.025 | 15 | 15 | 18 |
| Intelligence | 0.0157 | 0.0046 | 16 | 19 | NA |
| VA | 0.0151 | 0.0167 | 17 | 16 | 17 |
| Small Business | 0.0123 | 0.0131 | 18 | 17 | 20 |
| Hmlnd Security | 0.0081 | NA | 19 | 21 | 19 |
| House Admin | 0.0079 | 0.0056 | 20 | 18 | 10 |
| Ethics | 0.0007 | 0.0013 | 21 | 20 | 9 |

Conclusions

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- The USC provides a substantial amount of information about lawmaking over time and in several policy areas
- Coupled with the CAP coding scheme, we created a committee influence score that captures the influence congressional committees have over federal policy and how this varies over time
- Our measure suggests there are no dominant committees consistently exercising control over federal policy; however, some do expand their influence, while others ebb and flow over time

Thank you! Questions?