STEPHEN FRANTZICH
U.S. Naval Academy

Who Makes Our Laws? The Legislative Effectiveness of Members of the U.S. Congress

Focusing on the distribution of power in the U.S. House of Representatives, this paper uses a decision-making approach and measures power by the ability of a member of Congress to get bills enacted into law. The findings reveal that, while a relatively large number of members expend effort in the legislative realm and have some success, this group can still be identified as a unique subset, which is only partially specified by the conventional wisdom defining congressional power holders. The analysis also points to the conclusion that legislative effort and success do not contribute to electoral strength and security. Legislating is an option largely reserved for those members with few electoral fears.

The job of the congressman is multifaceted. Among other things, congressmen are expected to pass legislation, oversee the bureaucracy, mediate between constituents and the bureaucracy, serve as a sounding board for ideas, symbolize democratic and open government, and run for political office. Individual congressmen differ as to the emphasis they give to various segments of the job. Given limited time and resources, it is unlikely that any one member will be able to perform all that is expected.

Despite variations in job expectations, all enumerations of the congressional task, whether posited by academics, congressmen, or the general public, include the writing and passing of legislation (Davidson, 1969, 1970). While one would be remiss to completely equate effectiveness of a congressman with his success at passing legislation, the promotion of legislation is quite significant. Given its primacy, it is important to know the strategies and resources that differentiate those who can move their legislation through the legislative labyrinth from those who are continually stymied in their attempts.

Determining the causes of legislative effectiveness will help to understand and predict the legislative output of the Congress. If the legislatively effective congressmen are not a random sample of the entire Congress, the

Legislative Studies Quarterly, IV, 3, August, 1979

0362-9805/79/0403–0409$01.00

legislative output will reflect the policy proclivities and biases of the effective subgroup. Despite the potential for substantive amendment, the original sponsor of a successful piece of legislation holds the strategic advantage of defining the contours of debate and affecting the general policy direction taken. However, current research lacks the ability to validly determine factors that provide the individual congressman with the power to be an effective legislator. Rather than treading the well-worn paths of analyzing the relative power of Congress as an institution, or defining the power blocs within Congress, this paper focuses on the relative power potential of individual congressmen.

Various subfields of political science have devised different methods of distinguishing the powerful members of a community from the powerless. The positional approach to identifying a power elite ascribes power to those in formal positions of leadership (Hawley and Wirt, 1968). Analysts of Congress have long equated power with position and assumed that effectiveness followed position:

> Members who occupy leadership positions . . . possess the greatest potential for influence in the chamber. Some may not be able to capitalize on that potential . . . . On the other hand, few members of the House become very influential without first occupying a formal leadership position (Fenno, 1973, p. 64).

Although gaining a party and/or legislative leadership position both requires and confers power resources, defining power as positional is unlikely to capture all powerful individuals and to include some who lack real power.

The reputational approach assumes that "knowledgeables" within a community possess enough awareness of power to identify a power elite. While congressional analysts have not performed a full-fledged reputational study of the congressional power distribution, conventional wisdom in both the academic literature and the press relies implicitly on reputationally based assumptions of power resources. Power is reputed to reside with members of the majority party (Gross, 1953), senior members (Dendiner, 1964, p. 17; Davidson, Koveneck, and O'Leary, 1966, p. 98), leaders (Froman, 1967, p. 35), ideological moderates, southerners (Wolfinger and Hollinger, 1970, p. 340), and those relieved of the constant pressure of re-election (Fenno, 1973, p. 70). Although each hypothesis concerning the sources of power comes complete with an elaborate rationale, little has been done to separate rationale from reality.

Political scientists stepping into the community power realm largely shifted their emphasis to the study of the consequences of power in the decision-making process. According to Robert Dahl (1961), in order for anyone to have power, their preferences must prevail regularly in a fair sample of important decisions. If a small, well-defined group prevails regularly, a power elite exists (Dahl, 1958).

In accepting the decision-making approach, this paper makes the basic assertion that power is not identifiable until it is manifested in situations where one congressman gets his colleagues to do something they would not otherwise do. This paper will operationally define power as the ability to move one's legislation through the decision-making labyrinth. A few words of explanation are necessary to legitimize such a definition. In the context of the traditional definition, the act of introducing a piece of legislation and requesting the Congress to act on it forces the members of the legislature to make decisions that would not otherwise be made. Members and/or chairmen of committees and subcommittees must decide whether or not to take up a particular piece of legislation. Once reported from a committee, the Rules Committee and the complete chamber must pass judgment, as must the president should it go through the entire legislative process.

The major limitation of using the legislative success of bill sponsorship as the measure of power is that there are numerous other ways to affect the content of public policies. The successful addition of amendments to legislation proposed by others often leads to the passage of a bill that is radically different and often antagonistic to the wishes of the original sponsor. Although most congressmen imply that the passage of legislation is their primary task, one cannot assume that all congressmen measure their success by the number of public laws listed after their name. Some members who recognize the existing power structure are satified to tinker with legislative handiwork of their more powerful colleagues. Some members of Congress see their goals as blocking rather than facilitating legislation. The numerous veto points in the legislative process where a determined minority can thwart the will of a less interested majority increase the potential for such impact.

Despite the above limitations, the fact remains that most congressmen have some legislative goals, and look with envy at those who can move their legislation through the process. While no one familiar with the congressional scene would argue that the passage of one's own legislation is the only manifestation of power in Congress, it surely is one if not the most important measure. Thus in operational terms one congressman is more powerful than another when he is more effective in the passage of legislation.

To avoid the problem of biased selection of decisions for analysis, all pieces of legislation introduced into the House by a random sample of 132 House members during the 94th Congress (1975-1976) will be used.[1] Rather than using perceptual motivations, the act of introducing a piece of legislation will be assumed to reflect a legislative goal for the individual congressman. Passage by the House of Representatives and enactment into law will serve as two different manifestations of getting the political community to do something it would not otherwise do.

Potential Implications

The approach embodied in this study does not rest on any inherent assumption that the power holders identified by the positional and/or reputational approaches do or do not have the power attributed to them. Its strongest charge is that these methods are fraught with potential shortcomings and promote operational definitions for identifying power holders that may have little or nothing to do with the actual exercise of power.

A major purpose of this study lies in comparing these power wielders identified by their legislative effectiveness with those identified or implied by other methods. Discovering a definite power elite and an overlap between the power holders identified by different methods could well be the outcome. If no identifiable elite and/or little overlap between the identified power holders and the expectations fostered by the other methods emerge, two conclusions are possible: either the different approaches are tapping different characteristics, or Congress has changed dramatically since the earlier studies. Many observers indicate the pervasiveness of the change Congress has experienced. The new breed of younger, more articulate congressmen are seen as fostering:

> . . . increased pressure for participation, more openness in the legislative process, more use of problem-solving approaches. They also mean less attention to House traditions, seniority and other artificial, although very effective, determinants of power (Murphy, 1974, p. 92).

Although the lack of time series data on legislative effectiveness mitigates against analyzing over-time change, this analysis will be able to assess the current status of power distribution.

Determining the sources of legislative effectiveness promises to greatly assist us to better understand power in Congress. The first step in the process is to determine whether effectiveness stems more from diligent effort or depends more on the resources associated with specific positions or characteristics.

Legislative Effort

While the House of Representatives as an institution serves a lawmaking function, individual members may or may not take this responsibility as one of their burdens. For the congressman, the decision to expend effort proposing and promoting legislation stands as a resource allocation problem. The time and effort required of the congressman and his staff must be balanced against the expected personal, political, and public relations payoffs. Numerous other activities subsumed under the multifaceted congressional job title may well assure more rewards.

Determining the cost-benefit ratio of legislative activity for each congressman would require discovering personal goals and assessing the consequences of legislative activity for satisfying each goal. This paper will accept Mayhew's (1975) general assertion that re-election looms as an overwhelming desire for most congressmen and will determine the utility of legislative activity toward this end.

The decision to introduce a piece of legislation lies completely within the control of the individual House member. All congressmen stand equal before the hopper into which proposed legislation is placed. The potential for passage of the legislation varies dramatically depending on the skill, perseverance, and resources of the sponsor, but any member can be credited with introducing legislation.

The introduction of legislation does not necessarily reveal commitment to its substance. At the request of others, congressmen introduce legislation with which they only marginally agree; "true feelings may be more readily discerned by a congressman's subsequent activities, if any, in behalf of the measure" (Clapp, 1963, p. 143). Legislation may be introduced for purposes unrelated to the desire to see it passed; that is, the act of introduction may serve personal and political goals in and of itself. Determining the kinds of congressmen who expend effort introducing legislation will not only contribute to our understanding of the legislative potential of the House, but also improve our understanding of member goals and strategic promises for reaching those goals.

Predicting the Propensity for Legislative Effort

Four somewhat interrelated theoretical strands point toward different levels of legislative effort by categoric groups of House members. While not in direct conflict, each theory implies different underlying goals and distinguishing characteristics of the groups.

Partisan Perquisite. Although pure party government is far from a reality in the United States Congress, members of the majority party are viewed, and view themselves, as having somewhat more responsibility for the legislative output of the chamber than do members of the minority. Analysts of legislative roles reveal that majority party members (Democrats) in the House of Representatives most often tend to view themselves as "ritualists" (Davidson, 1969, p. 90) who pay more attention to the drafting and passage of legislation. Aside from a feeling of duty, members of the majority party may well also foresee their advantage in controlling the legislative process and be encouraged to put their ideas into law. This propensity will be enhanced by the fact that Democrats are both the majority party and the party committed

to expanded programs of government. During the period under study, partisan perquisite theory would lead us to expect that Democrats would stand out as the initiators of legislation.

Positional Perquisite. A second possible explanation for legislative effort rests on the assertion that leaders in the House of Representatives are called upon by interest groups, the president, or fellow congressmen to introduce legislation (Berman, 1964, p. 119; Wright, 1976, p. 152). Junior members also find that their best legislative ideas are commonly appropriated by committee chairmen and committee-authored bills carry the chairman's sponsorship. If these assertions are correct, we would expect the legislative effort of committee leaders to supersede that of the rank and file.

Experience and Political Security. The more years a member serves in the House, the less he must worry about electoral defeat and the more effort he can safely expend on internal legislative activities rather than externally oriented re-election activities (Davidson, 1969, p. 92). Increasing seniority also brings with it the substantive and procedural expertise that suggests new legislation and facilitates the ability to use rules and procedures. If these assertions prove true, most of the legislative activity will be borne by the more senior and electorally secure members.

Electoral Strategy. According to the electoral theory suggested by Mayhew (1975, pp. 52, 122), insecure congressmen use bill introduction as a method of advertising their good points, position-taking on positively evaluated issues, and claiming credit for doing what was expected of them. Secure members have established patterns of protecting their re-election stakes and exhibit no motivation to become policy innovators. Marginal members see legislative effort as a vehicle for changing or expanding a losing or shrinking base of electoral support (Volger, 1977, pp. 88-90).

The very act of introducing a great deal of legislation on a wide variety of subjects also protects the insecure congressman from charges of inaction or ineffectiveness. One congressman commented: "I do like to be able to say when I get cornered, 'Yes, boys, I introduced a bill to try and do that in 1954.' To me it is the perfect answer" (Clapp, 1963, p. 141).

The patterns associated with the electoral theory model indicate that legislative effort in the form of bill sponsorship will be undertaken largely by marginal and/or junior members of Congress. This conflicts with what we might anticipate using the other theories.

A Portrait of Legislative Effort

Bill sponsorship is relatively widespread in the House. A majority of members introduced more than 25 pieces of national legislation during the 94th Congress (see Table 1) with the average member introducing almost 50.

In addition to sponsoring legislation on their own, members took full advantage of the opportunity to co-sponsor legislation introduced by others. The average member lent his name to over 100 pieces of legislation as a co-sponsor. The propensity for legislative effort seems to be general rather than specific to one type of activity. Members with a high propensity to sponsor legislation also tend to be involved with co-sponsorship to a high degree. The data in the remainder of this paper reflect only bill sponsorship, since such bills can be most clearly associated with a particular congressman.

TABLE 1
Level of Bill Sponsorship During the 94th Congress

Number of Bills Sponsored	N	%
0-25	48	36
26-50	47	36
51-75	22	17
76-100	5	4
over 100	10	8

The validity of the above theories of legislative effort can be tested by looking at a member's seniority, party, leadership, and electoral marginality as they relate to his level of bill sponsorship. Since these four main variables are clearly interrelated, we will control for the most obvious alternative explanations by combining marginality with party, and leadership with seniority. The logic behind combining marginality and party lies in the fact that the election prior to the 94th Congress from which the data were drawn was a particularly trying one for Republicans. In 1974, many of them found their margins severely depressed. By looking at marginality and party combined, it is possible to assess the impact of each factor independent of the other. Since few junior members of Congress gain leadership positions, we have combined seniority and leadership to sort out the independent impact of each. Where appropriate, other controls will be introduced to rule out spurious relationships.

The most dramatic difference between the theories relates to bill sponsorship and marginality. Electoral theory implies that marginal members will take extraordinary efforts to display legislative activity, while the other theories indirectly imply that politically insecure members would not seek out extensive bill sponsorship.

Table 2 points out the relatively weak negative relationship between marginality and bill sponsorship. Marginal congressmen exhibit less likelihood

TABLE 2
Legislative Effort Among Various Subgroups of House Members

Groups of Members	*Number of Bills Sponsored*[a] Low N	Low %	High N	High %
Average for all Members	48	36	84	64
Marginal[b] Republicans	13	48	14	52
Marginal Democrats	7	35	13	65
Secure Republicans	7	35	13	65
Secure Democrats	21	32	44	68
		Chi Square = 2.11 p > .20 Gamma = .179[c]		
Junior[d] Nonleaders	23	49	24	51
Junior Leaders[e]	2	20	8	80
Senior Nonleaders	7	29	17	71
Senior Leaders	15	36	35	64
		Chi Square = 5.80 p < .20 Gamma = .26[c]		
Experienced Members[f]	44	44	56	56
Nonexperienced Members	2	7	28	93
		Chi Square = 14.07 p < .00 Gamma = .83[c]		
Conservative Members[g]	14	47	16	53
Moderate Members	26	36	47	64
Liberal Members	8	28	21	72
		Chi Square = 2.35 p > .20 Gamma = .24[c]		

[a] "Low"= less than 25 bills sponsored in 94th Congress; "High"= 25 or more bills sponsored.
[b] Less than 60 % of the vote in the previous (1974) election.
[c] Gamma has been used even though the row variables are not strictly ordinal. The categories for the row variables have been organized in logical order according to theory as to which congressmen would be most likely to exhibit legislative effort and effectiveness compared with those least likely to evidence such traits.
[d] One to three terms in Congress.
[e] Party leaders, committee chairmen, subcommittee chairmen, and ranking minority members on committees.
[f] Member of a state legislature or on a congressional staff before entering Congress.
[g] Based on Americans for Democratic Action scores for 1975 as reported by *Congressional Quarterly*.

of heavy effort than do their more secure counterparts. Clearly the electoral theory of legislative effort is not borne out in practice. Whether this stems from lack of resources or different strategic premises than the electoral theory would imply is open to speculation.

The partisan perquisite theory indicates that members of the majority party who can control the policy process will evidence more legislative effort. Whether it stems from ideology, role expectations, or from the strategic realization that the partisanship of the House is more likely to reward them with legislative success, Democrats (the majority party) are somewhat more likely to expend legislative effort than Republicans (the minority party) regardless of their electoral security (see Table 2).

The positional perquisite approach predicts that leaders stand out as sponsors of legislation. As indicated by Table 2, House leaders are somewhat more likely to rank high on bill sponsorship than nonleaders. Although the numbers are rather small, the most active members are low seniority leaders. Perhaps it was their extraordinary commitment to legislative effort that moved them into leadership positions ahead of the normal schedule. Among the leaders, those most directly on the legislative firing line—the subcommittee chairmen and the subcommittee ranking minority members—were most likely to sponsor legislation; 79 percent of the subcommittee leaders were high in bill sponsorship compared with 57 percent of the other leaders and 58 percent of nonleaders.

The experience theory assertion that gaining seniority in the House leads to a more legislative orientation is borne out by Table 2. Senior members are somewhat more likely to sponsor large numbers of legislation than are their more junior colleagues, although there is some decline among the most senior members. This is true whether the individual is a leader or not.

Using our four basic variables, it is clear that the causes of legislative effort are not simple. The clearest finding is that we can rule out electoral motivation as the driving force for extensive legislative effort; marginal members are less likely to introduce legislation than their more secure colleagues. Party does help differentiate between those undertaking extensive legislative effort and those who do not. Republicans introduce less legislation than Democrats at all levels of seniority and electoral security. Leaders introduce more legislation than nonleaders, with much of this accounted for by subcommittee chairmen. Legislative effort clearly increases with seniority, but the pattern is not uniform.

Some Alternative Explanations. Two other factors not directly associated with the above competing theories help describe those who take the sponsorship of legislation most seriously. The strategy decision of whether to introduce legislation probably stems partially from one's evaluation as

to whether the effort will reap rewards or not. Members' perceptions of futility seem to be learned early and change little. House members having long experience dealing in the frustrating world of political compromise learn to temper their appetites for legislative success much more than political neophytes. As Table 2 clearly reveals, House members entering the chamber with no previous political experience consistently introduce more legislation than do their peers with wide previous experience in other offices.

The introduction of new legislation usually requires change in standard methods of doing things. We would expect innovation to appeal more to liberals than conservatives, as is borne out in the data showing House members with liberal voting records as playing a more active role in bill introduction than conservatives (see Table 2). Much of the difference between the legislative effort of Republicans and Democrats stems from the ideological differences between the two groups. Among moderate Republicans and Democrats a slight partisan differential maintains, but conservative Republicans and Democrats are equally low in effort and liberals of both parties are quite similar in their legislative effort.

Consequences of Legislative Effort

A congressman's decision to opt for a particular level of legislative effort will likely affect his or her legislative success rates and political fortunes. Junior congressmen develop strategic premises as to the costs and benefits of different activity levels, based on advice from more senior members and later from their own experiences. During a political career we might expect variations in legislative effort based on these strategies.

Legislative Strategy. Although much legislation is introduced with the realization that passage by the House and/or enactment into law is impossible, all congressmen would prefer to have more rather than less legislation bearing their name.

Two opposing strategic premises exist concerning the most effective way to assure legislative success. The "rifle" approach suggests that a congressman should choose a limited number of legislative ideas, draft them carefully, express one's deep interests to the leadership, and focus all efforts on that limited objective. This approach fits well with the specialization norm of the House and makes it easier to improve one's "batting average" of bills introduced versus bills passed.

The competing approach resembles a "shotgun" pattern in which the congressman introduces more legislation with wider substantive focus, hoping that the law of averages will carry some of the legislation through the process. The congressman exerts effort and may do it quite selectively, but loses the

parsimony justification for passing the "crucial" legislation.

Although the legislative process involves many stages, this paper focuses on only two of them, passage in the House and final enactment into law. The best strategy for getting one's legislation past these points is to use the shotgun approach. As is evident from Table 3, congressmen evidencing extensive effort in bill introduction consistently get their legislation passed. Members exhibiting extensive effort obtain a double payoff; that is, more pieces of legislation passed, and a higher percentage of what they introduce.

Fellow representatives reward the congressman who takes the initiative in submitting an extensive range of legislation. Or as we shall see later, congressmen with high expectations of legislative success may be encouraged to introduce more legislation.

TABLE 3
Relationship Between Legislative Effort and Legislative Effectiveness

	Number of Bills Sponsored			
	Low		High	
Legislative Effectiveness	N	%	N	%
Number of Bills Passed by the House				
Low (none or one)	31	65	29	35
Medium (2-3)	11	23	25	30
High (more than 3)	6	13	30	36
	Chi Square = 12.63 $p < .00$			
	Gamma = .52			
Number of Bills Enacted into Law				
Low (none)	38	79	46	55
Medium (one)	5	10	24	29
High (more than one)	5	10	14	17
	Chi Square = 8.27 $p < .01$			
	Gamma = .45			
Percentage of Introduced Bills Passed by the House				
Low	31	65	28	34
Medium	3	6	33	40
High	14	29	22	27
	Chi Square = 18.93 $p < .01$			
	Gamma = .31			

Political Strategy. While some congressmen introduce legislation for altruistic purposes, more desire some degree of political payoff from their efforts among their constituents. The desired payoff fails to accrue in the form of increased electoral strength, as pointed out in Table 4. The route to strengthening one's electoral base does not lie in expending legislative effort. At least for Democrats, congressmen with low legislative effort are more likely to increase their margins and less likely to decrease them than those members who introduce a great deal of legislation. The pattern is clearest among junior members. Despite the fact that junior members are more likely to increase their margins from one election to the next, members not introducing a great deal of legislation are considerably more likely to improve their margins regardless of seniority.

TABLE 4
Relationship Between Legislative Effort and Changes in Electoral Strength Among Subgroups of House Members

	Changes in Electoral Margin Between 1974 and 1976					
	Increased Margin		No Significant Change[a]		Decreased Margin	
Groups of Members	N	%	N	%	N	%
Average for all Members	39	36	54	49	16	15
Republicans with Low Effort[b]	8	50	6	37	2	13
Republicans with High Effort	11	48	10	43	2	9
Democrats with Low Effort	9	43	11	52	1	5
Democrats with High Effort	11	22	27	54	12	24
			Chi Square = 10.39 $p < .06$			
			Gamma = .37			
Junior Members with Low Effort	16	67	7	29	1	4
Junior Members with High Effort	11	37	15	50	4	13
Senior Members with Low Effort	1	8	10	77	2	15
Senior Members with High Effort	11	26	22	51	10	23
			Chi Square = 18.41 $p < .01$			
			Gamma = .43			

[a]Less than 5% change in margin.
[b]Based on the number of bills introduced; members with "low" effort introduced less than 25 bills.

While this data cannot prove a causal relationship between low legislative effort and electoral security, it does validate the tendency for marginal congressmen to curtail their legislative efforts in favor of a sounder investment of their limited time.

Determinants of Legislative Effectiveness

Conventional wisdom concerning Congress implies that power is dispersed among a relatively small group of individuals, each controlling a specialized fiefdom of legislative perogative. The size of this power elite has been estimated at fifty to seventy-five members (11 to 17 percent of the total membership) (Lockard, 1976, p. 129).

Using legislative effectiveness as the measure of power, the number of powerful members increases somewhat as revealed in Table 5; 54 percent of the congressmen had enough internal power in Congress to get more than one piece of legislation through the process and 36 percent were able to get legislation enacted into law. While power is obviously not distributed evenly throughout the membership, the dispersion seems extensive enough to rule out all but the most lenient definitions of what constitutes an omnipotent power elite.

Power elite definitions include expectations both of the size and composition of the ruling minority. An elite is expected to be a well-defined group with common policy goals and ideological outlooks. Table 5 analyzes the legislative effectiveness of various ideological groups in Congress and discovers that while moderates record most legislative success followed by liberals, none of the ideological groups exhibit hegemony. The power elite, if it exists, encompasses the complete range of ideological persuasions.[2]

Reputed Power Resources

Experience. New members of Congress are likely to suffer great frustration in their attempts to create a strong legislative record. "It takes awhile for a man to learn, and get established and gain his full influence. He doesn't reach his full influence in his first term or two" (Davidson, Koveneck, and O'Leary, 1966, p. 98).

Long tenure brings with it not only the status inherent in an institution where seniority determines current and future leadership positions, but also increases the probability that the senior members will be sought out to sponsor legislation and will have developed political, procedural, and substantive expertise, earning them deference from colleagues.

Table 5 points out the dramatic difference between junior and senior members in terms of legislative effectiveness. The majority of junior members consistently have their legislative goals thwarted while a majority of senior

TABLE 5
Legislative Effectiveness Among Various Subgroups of House Members

Groups of Members[a]	*Number of Bills Passed by the House* Low (none or one) N	%	Medium (two or three) N	%	High (more than three) N	%
Average for all Members	60	46	36	27	36	27
Marginal Republicans	19	70	6	22	2	7
Marginal Democrats	14	70	5	25	1	5
Secure Republicans	11	55	9	45	0	0
Secure Democrats	16	25	16	25	33	51
			Chi Square = 41.87 $p < .01$			
			Gamma = .64			
Junior Nonleaders	36	77	9	19	2	4
Junior Leaders	4	40	4	40	2	20
Senior Nonleaders	8	33	10	42	6	25
Senior Leaders	12	24	12	24	26	52
			Chi Square = 40.04 $p < .01$			
			Gamma = .64			
Conservative Members	19	63	7	23	4	13
Liberal Members	14	48	7	24	8	28
Moderate Members	27	37	22	30	24	33
			Chi Square = 6.78 $p < .15$			
			Gamma = .17			

members do record some legislative success. Gaining a leadership position early in one's career mitigates some of the difference, but does not erase it. Senior members consistently do better at getting legislation through the process than junior members, regardless of leadership status.

Positional Perquisite. The positionally identifiable leaders in Congress, whether in the committee or House structure, control access to many resources that can lead to power over other members, and can therefore be translated into legislative effectiveness. In their own committees and subcommittees, committee leaders (chairmen and ranking minority members) control the agenda and can facilitate favorable or unfavorable action through the structure and content of hearings. Committee leaders can also parlay committee-based resources into power over members outside the committee.

TABLE 5 (Continued)
Legislative Effectiveness Among Various
Subgroups of House Members

Groups of Members[a]	*Number of Bills Enacted into Law* Low (none) N	%	Medium (one) N	%	High (more than one) N	%
Average for all Members	84	64	29	22	19	14
Marginal Republicans	25	93	2	7	0	0
Marginal Democrats	15	75	4	20	1	5
Secure Republicans	14	25	5	25	1	5
Secure Democrats	30	46	18	28	17	26
			Chi Square = 23.49 p < .01			
			Gamma = .63			
Junior Nonleaders	38	81	8	17	1	2
Junior Leaders	7	70	2	20	9	38
Senior Nonleaders	14	58	9	38	1	4
Senior Leaders	24	48	29	22	16	32
			Chi Square = 24.96 p < .01			
			Gamma = .50			
Conservative Members	23	77	4	13	3	10
Liberal Members	18	62	5	17	6	21
Moderate Members	43	59	20	27	10	14
			Chi Square = 4.59 p < .33			
			Gamma = .19			

[a]See Table 2 for definitions of categories

Bills introduced by the leaders in Congress often carry with them the added power resources of other political actors. The president and key interest group leaders often ask congressional leaders to sponsor legislation while they continue to work in the background urging its passage (Kingdon, 1973, pp. 182-188).

The seniority system assures that members in leadership positions come into their position with enough experience to master the complex rules of the chamber, and to have a strategic sense of what will "go" in the House and what will not. This experience gives them the opportunity to use the rules for drafting strategies on behalf of their own legislation (Fenno, 1973, p. 70).

Table 5 points out that the leadership ranks include some of the most effective congressmen. Low seniority leaders are five times as likely as low seniority nonleaders to rank high on the number of their bills that have passed the House or that were enacted into law. Among members with high seniority, leaders are twice as likely to get a high number of bills passed and eight times as likely to have a high number of their bills enacted into law. Thus leadership carries with it more than status and control over one's committee—it contributes to the ability to make one's mark legislatively.

The positional method of identifying power holders in Congress misses up to 40 percent of the most effective congressmen, and attributes power to some noneffective congressmen; however, in general it provides an effective and quite accurate picture of who is likely to get their way and who is likely to opt out and/or become frustrated by the legislative process.

Electoral Security. For most congressmen, the desire for re-election controls behavior. The marginal member redirects his activity toward nonlegislative behavior that will have a larger political payoff (see Table 2) and watches his support and opposition of legislation introduced by others so as not to upset the wishes of his constituents. In an institution heavily imbued with reciprocal norms of favors granted and favors paid back, "all things being equal, a member who has flexibility to maneuver in the House will be more influential there than one whose constituency obligations leave him without elbow room" (Fenno, 1973, p. 71).

Table 5 shows that marginal members are much less likely to be legislatively effective than secure members. The importance of this relationship is highlighted by the fact that it holds even when party, seniority, and leadership are controlled.

Partisan Perquisite. Legislation serves as the pawn in the party power game in Congress. On the aggregate level, the parties attempt to create a legislative record that will convince the electorate that their party should be rewarded at the polls. To this end, each party seeks to control the legislative process (Murphy, 1974, p. 115). With its numerical advantages and control of major leadership positions as well as the personal, political, and/or ideological affinity among its members, the majority party can create a winning majority for legislation sponsored by favored individual party members. Realizing the partisan nature of bill consideration, members of the minority often seek out majority party members to sponsor their crucial legislation (Gross, 1953, pp. 183-184).

The partisan advantage of Democrats who held the majority in the 94th Congress becomes dramatically clear in Table 5. The advantage is especially true for electorally secure congressmen, where Democrats were significantly more likely to be highly effective than were Republicans. While being a

Democrat in a Democratically controlled Congress does not assure legislative effectiveness, being a Republican in the same setting almost completely precludes it.

An Alternate Explanation. To a large degree, groups of congressmen distinguished by their legislative effectiveness are the ones we previously identified as being the most active in terms of introducing legislation. Since we have already discovered that extensive bill sponsorship increases the likelihood of bill passage, the relationship to legislative effectiveness could be predicated on bill sponsorship.

In order to check for this, we looked at each of the above relationships through a control on bill sponsorship. Rather than simply looking at the number of bills passed, the percentage of bills introduced and then passed was used. In all cases except for ideology, statistically significant relationships existed for the key variables, indicating that their legislative effectiveness was not based solely on their legislative effort of introducing a great deal of legislation. Although it can not be proven by this data, the causality may lead in the opposite direction. Foreseeing the likelihood of success, senior, Democratic leaders from nonmarginal districts may be inspired to introduce more legislation. In the case of ideology, moderates were still somewhat more likely to achieve legislative success, but the extensive bill sponsorship of liberals reduced their advantage over conservatives in terms of the percentage of bills passed.

Each of the reputed power resources helps our understanding of which congressmen are likely to be legislatively effective. Even though electoral marginality, party, leadership, and seniority are interrelated, each has an independent effect on legislative effectiveness. None of the original bivariate relationships changes significantly when controlling for the other three variables.

Consequences of Legislative Effectiveness

As with legislative effort, legislative effectiveness fails to provide substantive electoral rewards to congressmen. Table 6 reveals that those congressmen with impressive records in getting their legislation passed by the House and enacted into law were more likely to see a decrease in their electoral margin than those with less success in the legislative arena. This relationship holds when controlled for seniority, leadership status, marginality, and party.

Congressmen desiring to improve their electoral fortunes would be well advised to stay away from legislative activity and pursue other behavior patterns that constituents will reward. This data points out one more reason why the brunt of legislative activity falls on the shoulders of nonmarginal congressmen who can afford to have their electoral strength decreased. In

TABLE 6
Relationship Between Legislative Effectiveness and Changes in Electoral Strength Among Subgroups of House Members

Groups of Members	*Changes in Electoral Margin Between 1974 and 1976* Increased Margin N	%	No Significant Change N	%	Decreased Margin N	%
Average for all Members	39	36	54	49	16	15
Number of Bills Passed by the House						
Low (none or one)	26	52	17	23	7	14
Medium (two or three)	7	23	20	65	4	13
High (more than three)	6	21	17	59	6	21
			Chi Square = 12.16 $p < .01$ Gamma = .36			
Number of Bills Enacted into Law						
Low (none)	32	45	30	42	9	13
Medium (one)	5	22	14	61	4	17
High (more than one)	2	13	10	63	4	25
			Chi Square = 8.72 $p < .07$ Gamma = .42			

the final analysis, the congressional legislative mill is dominated by those congressmen who have the least motivation or need to faithfully represent the shifts in constituent opinions and desires.

Conclusion

According to the data presented in this paper, the power of an individual congressman to reach his legislative goals is relatively widely distributed in Congress. This fact, combined with the wide ideological differences among the legislatively effective congressmen, mitigates classifying the congressional community as dominated by a strict power elite.

Despite the relatively wide distribution of power, not all congressmen have the same potential for legislative success. Although inadequate as methods of measuring power, the positional and reputational research methods of defining the potential for power do a good job of identifying those likely to

have power in the decision-making realm. Using legislative success as a concrete measure of power, it is possible not only to test the impact of various resources but also to measure their relative importance. Democrats, leaders, senior members, electorally secure, and ideologically moderate congressmen are all overrepresented among the legislatively effective members. While these characteristics are interrelated, each contributes independently, if not equally, to legislative effectiveness.

In terms of the initial theoretical clues to legislative effort and effectiveness, electoral theory is clearly rejected by this data. Electorally insecure congressmen not only introduce less legislation, but also have less success in legislation they introduce and/or pass than do their more secure colleagues. The data on bill sponsorship, although not dramatic, does rather consistently indicate that the partisan perquisite, positional perquisite, and experience theories are borne out in practice. Democrats, leaders, and senior members do expend more effort in introducing legislation.

Turning to the realm of legislative effectiveness, the partisan perquisite, positional perquisite, electoral security, and experience theories stand up as having independent and almost equal impact on a member's ability to affect the legislative process. The more a member shares the characteristics of being electorally secure, senior, a leader, and/or a Democrat, the brighter his legislative prospects seem, although each of these factors contributes independently and almost equally to legislative success. Controlling for the other factors shows that success most often goes to Democrats and leaders. Since legislative success does not contribute to external political strength, legislative effort tends to be limited to those electorally secure enough and those whose efforts have some likelihood of success.

Overall, the legislative function of Congress and the rewards associated with legislative success accrue to a nonrandom subsample of the House. The wailings of frustration expressed by junior members and those from the minority party find manifold justification. All congressmen are not equal in potential or actual power.

NOTES

1. Data on legislation for this study came from the computerized Bill Status System of the U.S. Congress. All non-private legislation introduced by each member of the sample was followed through the legislative process and categorized according to the steps it completed.

2. In the community power terminology, the data indicate that Congress more clearly resembles a pluralist pattern than a ruling elite. The pluralist model asserts that power is relatively widely distributed throughout the political community, with the power of specific individuals being limited to a particular substantive sphere. Power

resources are unevenly divided among community members, but differences in the skill and will to use the resources allow individuals with lesser resources to at times dominate those more favorably endowed.

REFERENCES

Berman, Daniel. 1964. *In Congress Assembled*. New York: The MacMillan Co.

Clapp, Charles. 1963. *The Congressman*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

Dahl, Robert A. 1958. "A Critique of the Ruling Elite Model," *American Political Science Review* 52 (June, 1958):463-469.

_____. 1961. *Who Governs?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Davidson, Roger. 1969. *The Role of the Congressman*. New York: Pegasus.

_____. 1970. "Public Prescriptions for the Job of Congressman," *American Journal of Political Science* 14 (November, 1970):648-666.

Davidson, Roger, David Koveneck, and Michael O'Leary. 1966. *Congress in Crisis: Politics and Congressional Reform*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Press.

Dendiner, Robert. 1964. *Obstacle Course on Capitol Hill*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fenno, Richard. 1973. "The Internal Distribution of Influence: The House," in David Truman, ed., *Congress and America's Future*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, pp. 52-76.

Froman, Lewis. 1967. *The Congressional Process*. Boston: Little Brown and Co.

Gross, Bertram. 1953. *The Legislative Struggle*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hawley, Willis and Frederick Wirt. 1968. *The Search for Community Power*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Kingdon, John W. 1973. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*. New York: Harper and Row.

Lockard, Duane. 1976. *The Perverted Priorities of American Politics*. New York: The MacMillan Co.

Mayhew, David. 1975. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Murphey, Thomas P. 1974. *The New Politics Congress*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.

Volger, David. 1977. *The Politics of Congress*. Boston: Allyn Bacon.

Wolfinger, Raymond and Joan Heifitz Hollinger. 1970. "Safe Seats, Seniority and Power in Congress," in Leroy Rieselbach, ed., *The Congressional System*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Press, pp. 68-90.

Wright, Jim. 1976. *You and Your Congressman*. New York: Capricorn Books.