# Gov 1539: Section 1

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# The plan for today

- Krehbiel reading was hard, and didn't have enough time to go over it in depth during lecture yet. We will on Tuesday.
- But it's tough! So today we'll go through Krehbiel's **Pivotal Politics** model.
- Today's section will be a little more like a lecture than they will be in general.
- But please ask any and all questions! Interrupt me - this is a review that is supposed to help you understand this model for exams.
- But don't worry about 100% mastering everything:
- Also don't worry about writing all of this down - I can post slides.

# The goals for today

- What you should be aiming for:
  1. understand the assumptions behind the model.
  2. know the relevant players and sequence (i.e. order of movement) of the model.
  3. start understanding how to use the model to assess a political situation (more on Tuesday).
  4. understand how the model might change if assumptions or players changed.
- We'll revisit the model on Tuesday!

# What is a (formal) model?

- Theories like Krehbiel's Pivotal Politics are normally called **formal models**. What's a formal model?
  - a workable definition: an abstract (generally mathematical) representation of some process (i.e. a choice, institutional procedure, etc.) used to explain a theory.
  - generally, people will use models to formalize an argument - mathematically describe each step in a process.
- These models will make predictions about the world. Authors will generally then collect data and use it to test the predictions of their model.
- You've probably heard of other formal models before!
  1. Many are used in **Game Theory** (so you'll often hear models called *games*, also why the actors are called *players*).
  2. Cameron and Park 2008 reading had a model on burden sharing.
  3. The **Median Voter Theorem** is normally expressed as a model.
  4. So is the **Prisoner's Dilemma**.

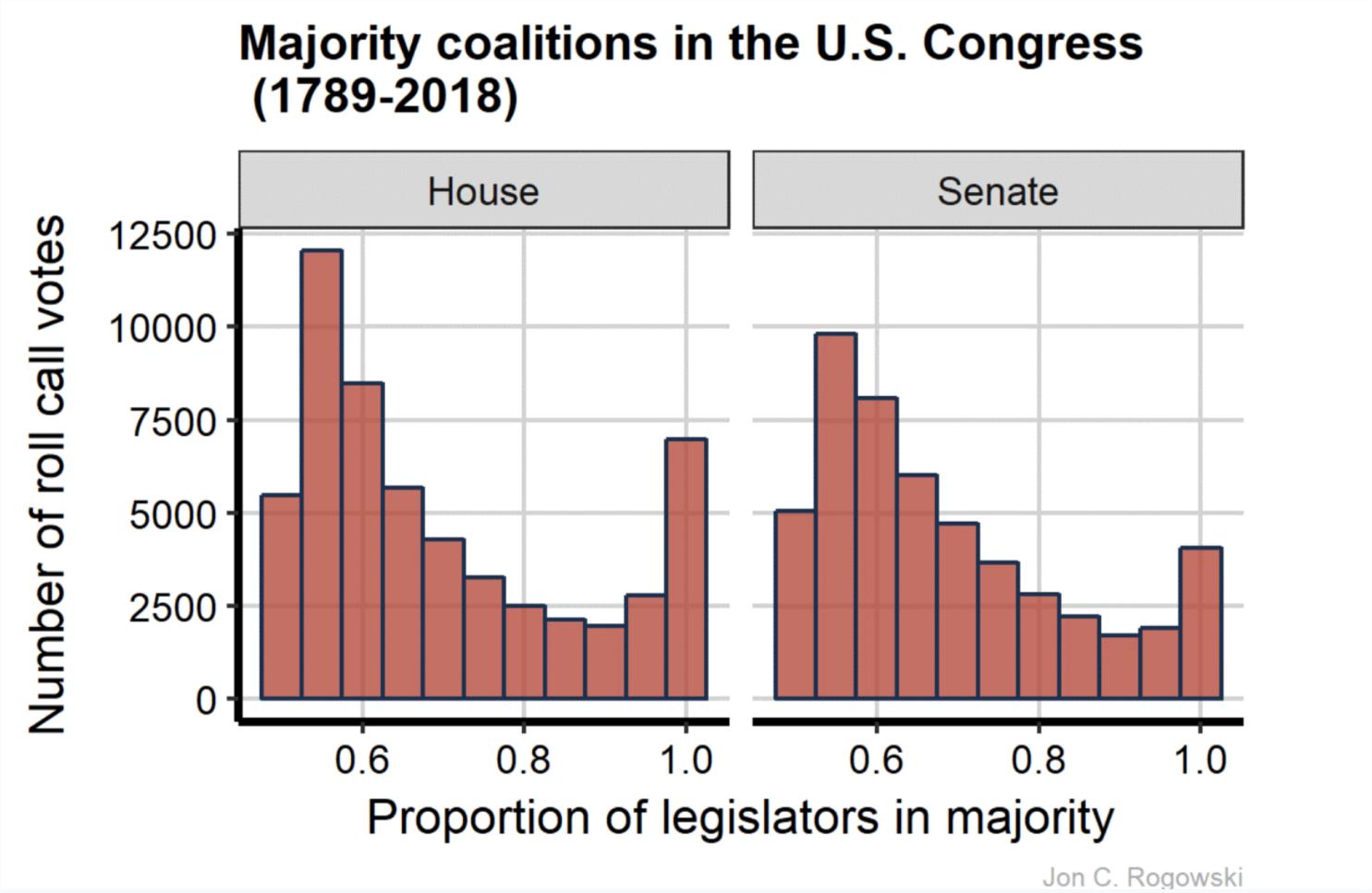
# What's in a (formal) model?

- Generally, models need a bit of setup:
  - **Theory**: something to be explained. What process is the author trying to demonstrate?
  - **Players**: who are the relevant players of the game?
  - **Assumptions**: models are always simplified abstractions of the real world - what does the model assume to make these simplifications?
- Models are usually followed by a section where authors use data to test model predictions.

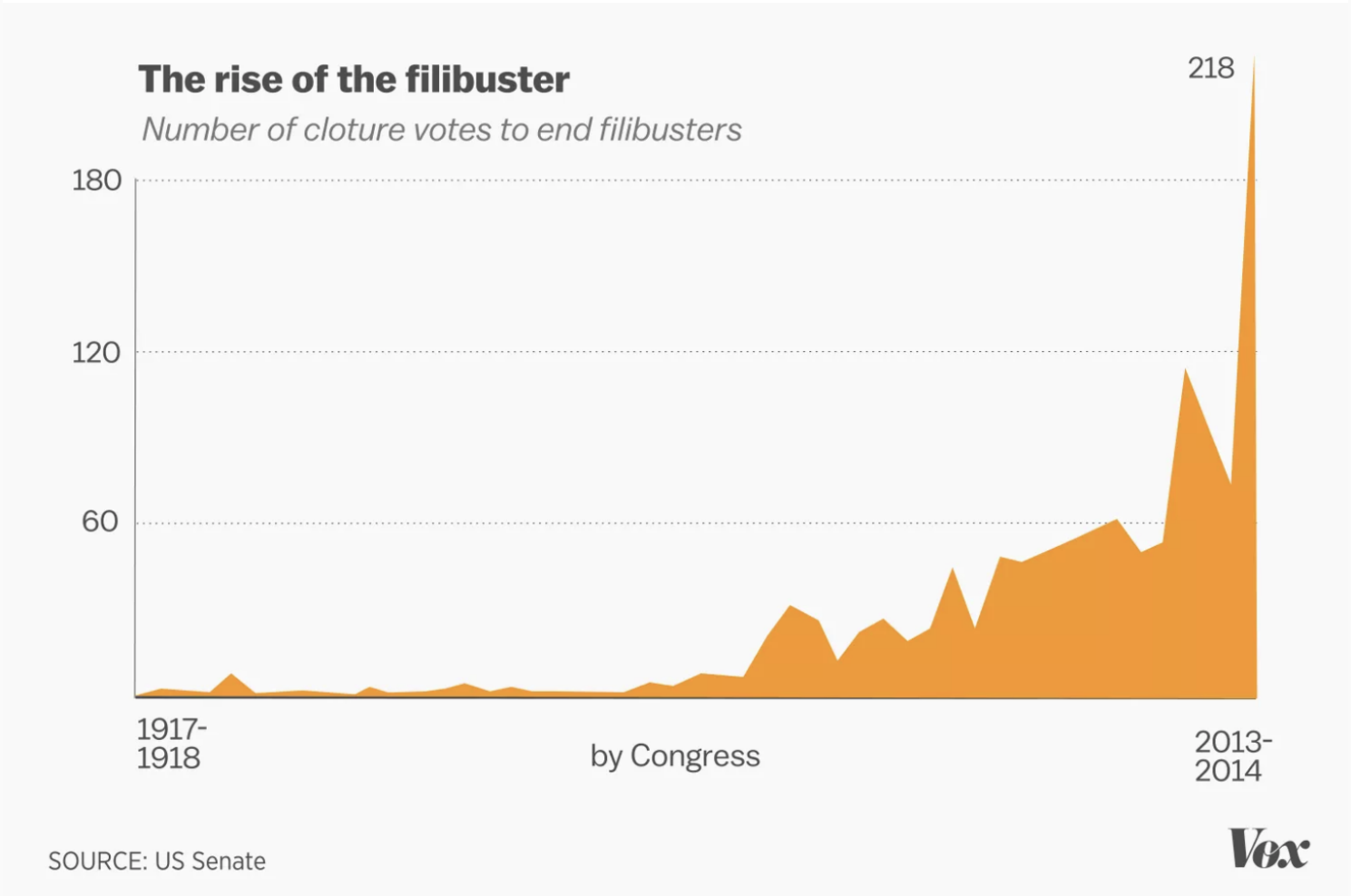
# Theory: Pivotal Politics

- What is the goal of Krehbiel's model? (i.e. what observable phenomena is he trying to explain? ***hint***: there are two)
  1. Legislative **coalitions** (i.e. who wins the vote) are often larger than necessary (i.e. larger than 50% + 1). Why?
  2. **Gridlock** (inability to pass legislation) happens *often* **but not always**. When and where does gridlock happen?

# Motivation #1: Coalition size is generally larger than 50%



# Motivation #2: Gridlock occurs often but not always




Filibusters are good proxy for gridlock - takes two-third of senate to overturn.

# Theory: Pivotal Politics

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    1. Legislative **coalitions** (i.e. who wins the vote) are often larger than necessary (i.e. larger than 50% + 1). Why?
    2. **Gridlock** (inability to pass legislation) happens *often* **but not always**. When and where does gridlock happen?
- Krehbiel's model aims to answer these two questions with a theory of political decision-making. What's his answer?
    1. **Coalitions** are usually greater than minimum-majority sized because of supermajoritarian procedures (mainly filibuster and veto).
    2. **Gridlock** occurs regularly because of supermajoritarian procedures under certain circumstances (moderate status quo policies and heterogeneous [i.e. varied] preferences).
- His formal model is a tool to demonstrate and explain this ($\uparrow$) theoretical argument.

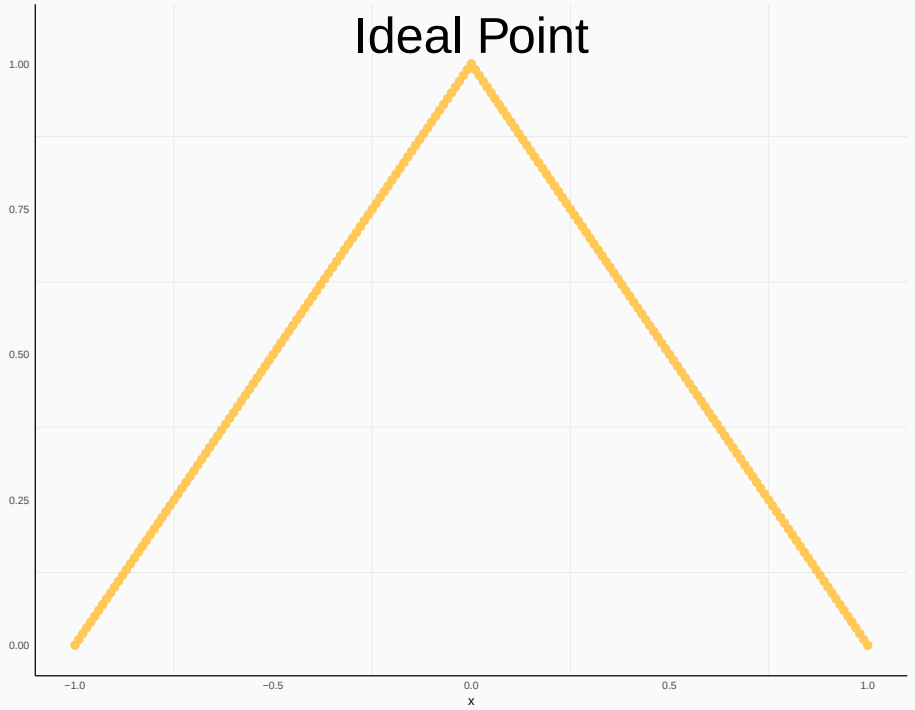
# Assumptions: Spatial Model of Legislative Voting

- Setup:
  - Unicameral (one house) legislature (so no mention of inter-house relations).
  - We can measure every legislator's preferred policy as a single number "ideal point."
    - Let's say conservative = the right of the graph.
    - So, imagine someone like Ted Cruz as most right point, Bernie Sanders on left. Landrieu closer to the middle.
  - Single-peaked, symmetric preferences (more on next slide).
    $q$ = status quo (i.e. the existing policy right now)
- Notice all of the things the model does not include for simplification (no parties, no media, no Supreme Court, etc.).


- Procedural assumptions - all players
  - know the sequence (the move order) and each other's preferences ("complete information").
  - know who pivotal voters are and adopt "optimal" strategies.

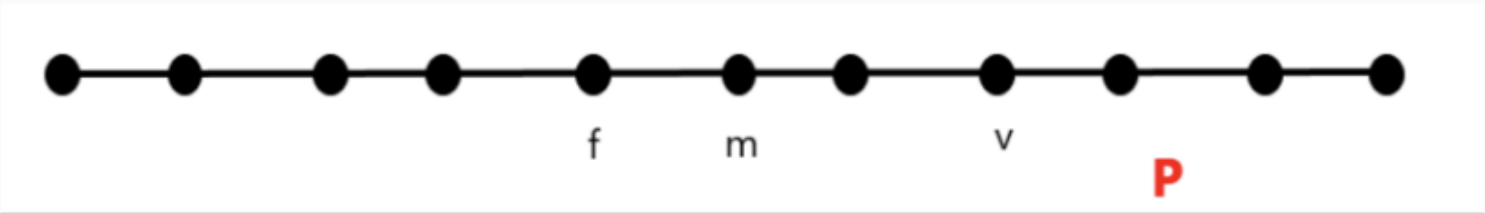
# Assumption: single-peaked symmetric preferences

- This means that how much everyone "prefers" a particular point on the line is symmetric in either direction starting from their ideal point.
- i.e. For my ideal point $x$, I am neutral between $x + 3$ and $x - 3$, but I prefer $x - 3$ to $x - 5$ (because $x - 3$ is closer to $x$).
- so "optimal" strategies means that players want to minimize the difference between policy and their ideal point.



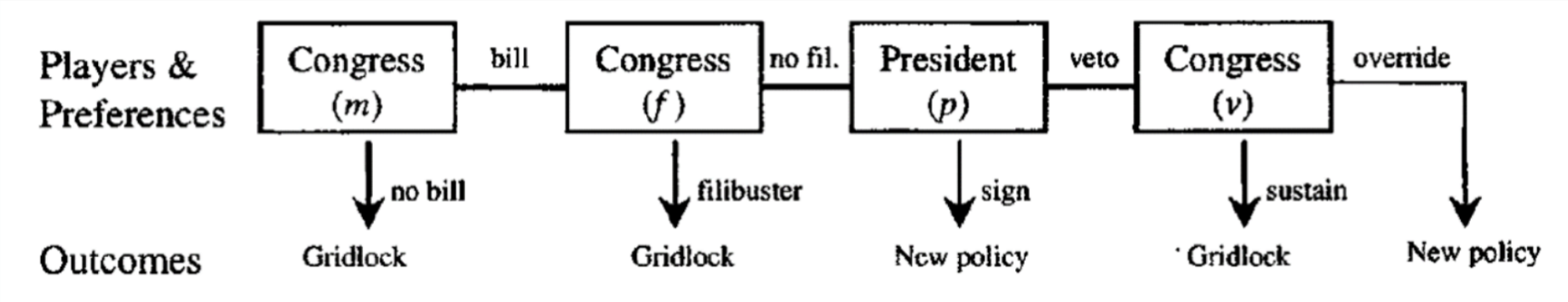
# Players

- Who are the players?
  1. $m$: Median member of unicameral legislature (let's say the Senate).
  2. $p$: President.
  3. $f$: Filibuster pivot - Senator who has 3/5 of Senate between them and the most extreme member in the president's direction.
     - i.e. if conservative president, then filibuster pivot is the 60th most conservative Senator (10 more liberal than the median).
  4. $v$: Veto pivot ($\frac{2}{3}$ of Senate, typically same side of median as president)
     - Filibuster pivot ($\frac{3}{5}$ of Senate, typically opposite of median to president)



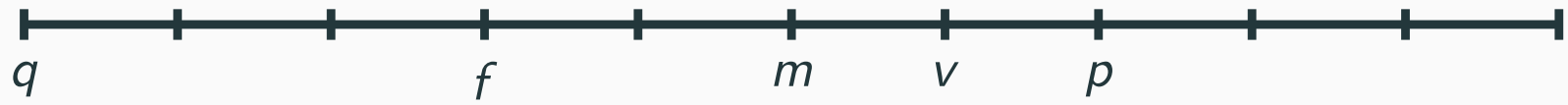
# Sequence of events

(read from left to right, up to down)
(i.e. $m$ moves first, they offer a bill or not. then $f$, filibuster or not, etc.)



# Example

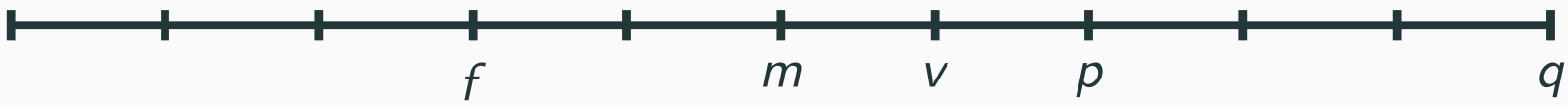
- Extreme status quo $q$.




- Median $m$ always moves first: what point should they propose for their bill?
  - Exactly their ideal point $m$.
  - Why? Both $f$ and $v$ prefer $m$ to the status quo $q$ (because $m$ is closer than $q$ to their ideal points).
  - The only members who prefer $q$ to $m$ are those closer to $q$ than to $m$. They're not a large part of the legislature. $f$ prefers $m$, so no filibuster.
  - President prefers $m$ to $q$, so there will be no veto.

# Example #2

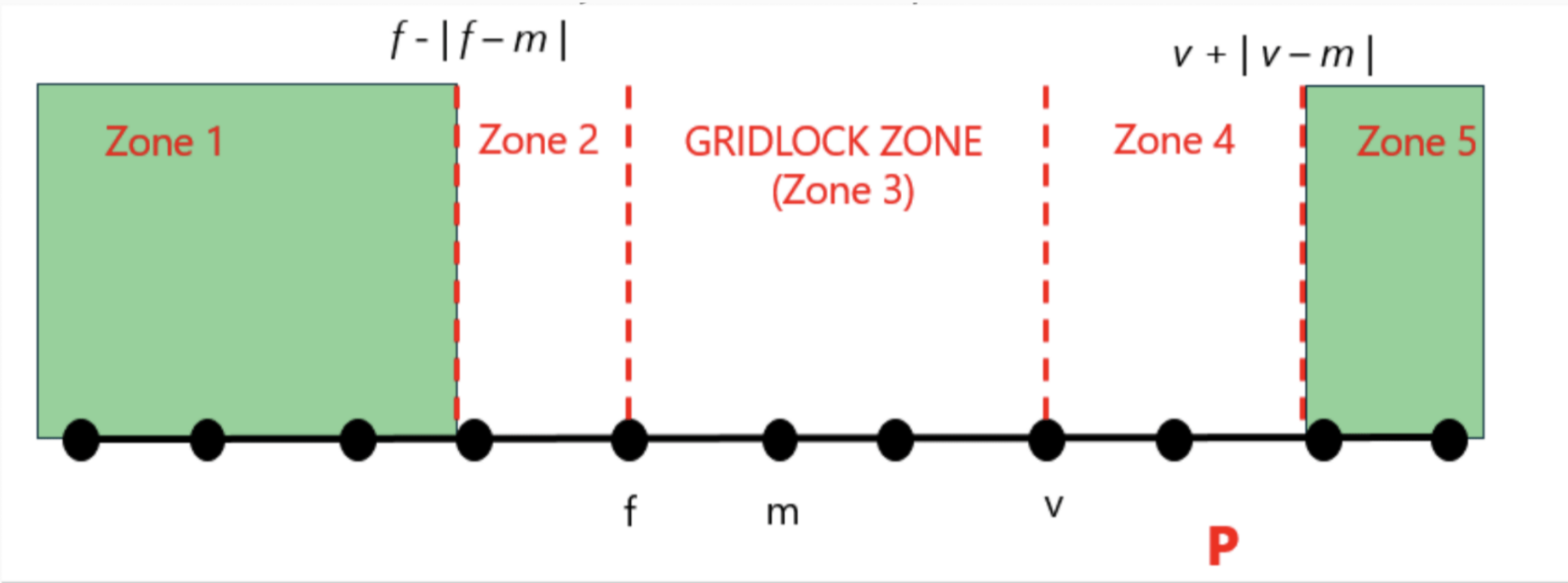
- Extreme status quo $q$ in the other direction.




- What happens now?
  - Exactly the same! Median should propose $m$.
  - Why? Both $f$ and $v$ prefer $m$ to the status quo $q$ (because $m$ is closer to their ideal point).
  - As before, the only members who prefer $q$ to $m$ are those for whom $q$ is closer to their ideal point than $m$. $f$ prefers $m$, so no filibuster.
  - President prefers $m$ to $q$, so there will be no veto.

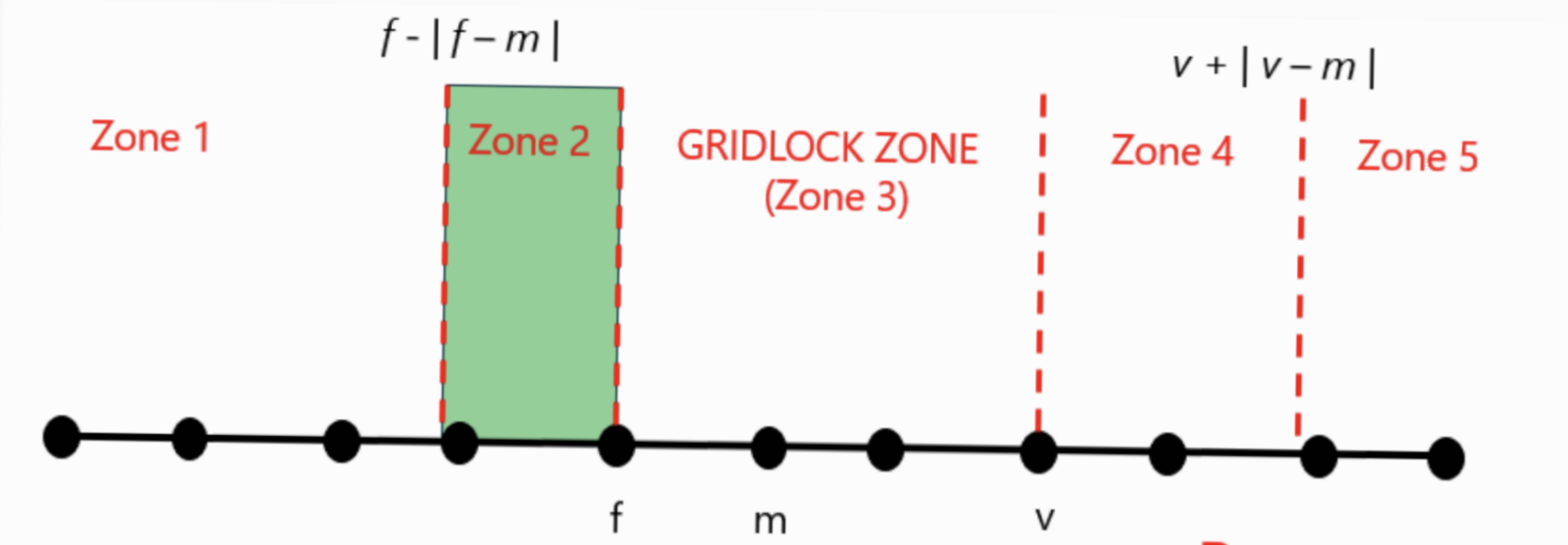
# The edge cases

- Those were exactly what Professor Rogowski will call Zones #1 and #5.
- If $q$ is ever there, it can easily be moved to $m$.
- This works because the important players - $f$, $v$, and $p$ always prefer $m$ to $q$.



# Example #3

- Once status quo isn't as extreme, $f$, $v$, or $p$ might prefer $q$ to certain proposals and can get concessions.
- For status quo in Zone 2, filibuster $f$ is closer to $q$ than $m$.
- When $m$ is proposing, they know $f$ won't support a bill further away from $f$ than $q$ already is. **So $m$ proposes a bill between $f$ and $m$ that is equally far away as $f$ and $q$ but on the opposite side.**
- This is very tricky! You will need to stare at it for a while - use these slides and the ones from lecture.



# The single most important plot

Once it starts to make more sense, everything you need to know is in this plot:

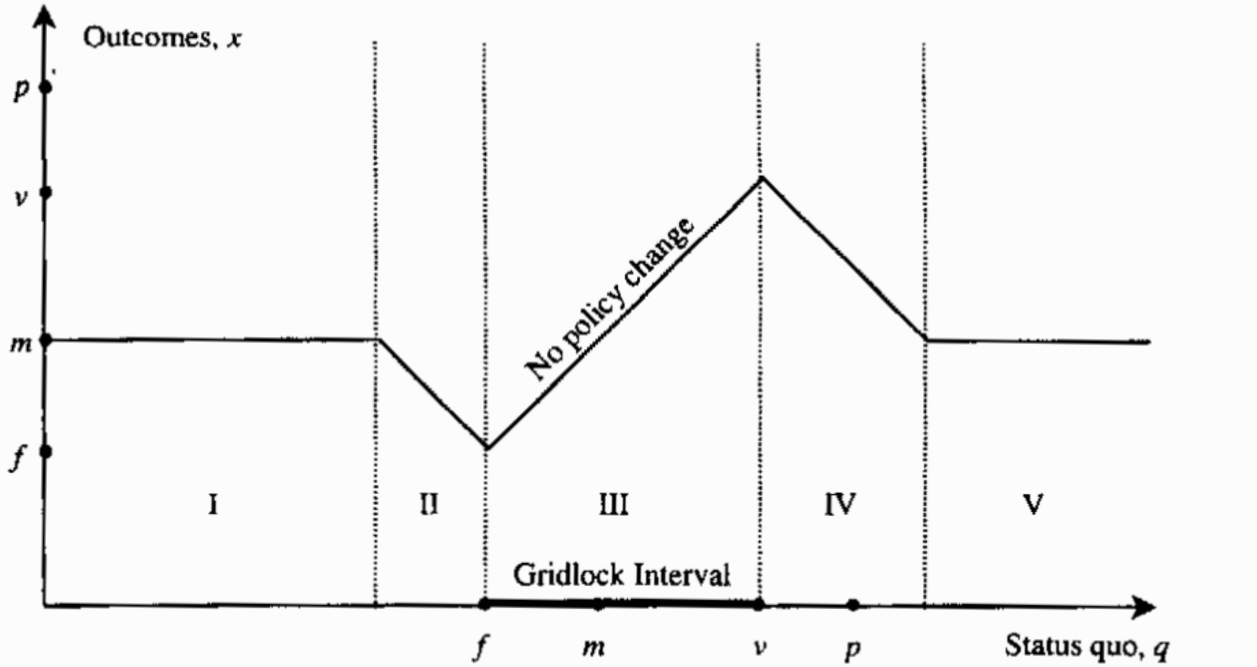
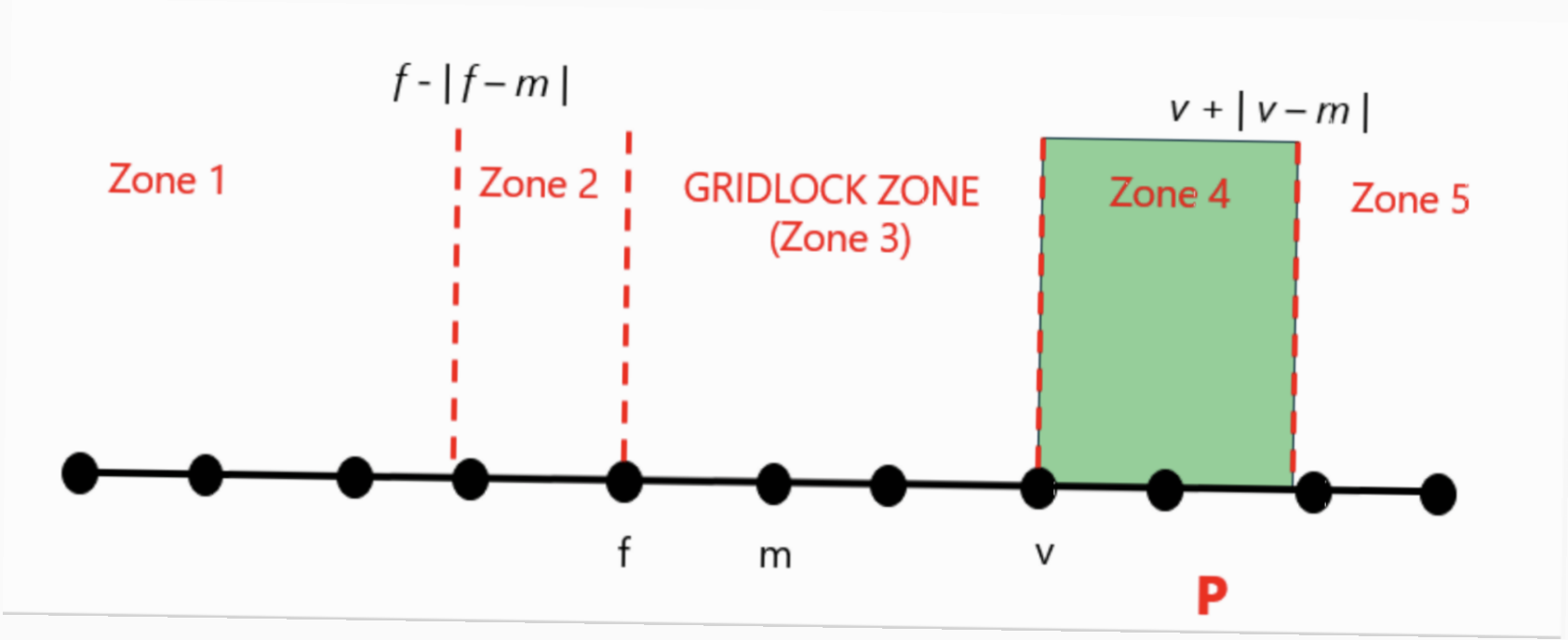



Figure 2.7
Equilibrium policies in the pivotal politics theory

- Notice Zones #1 and #5 are always $m$ (see Examples #1 and #2).
- Zone #2: $m$'s proposals must gradually move to satisfy $f$.

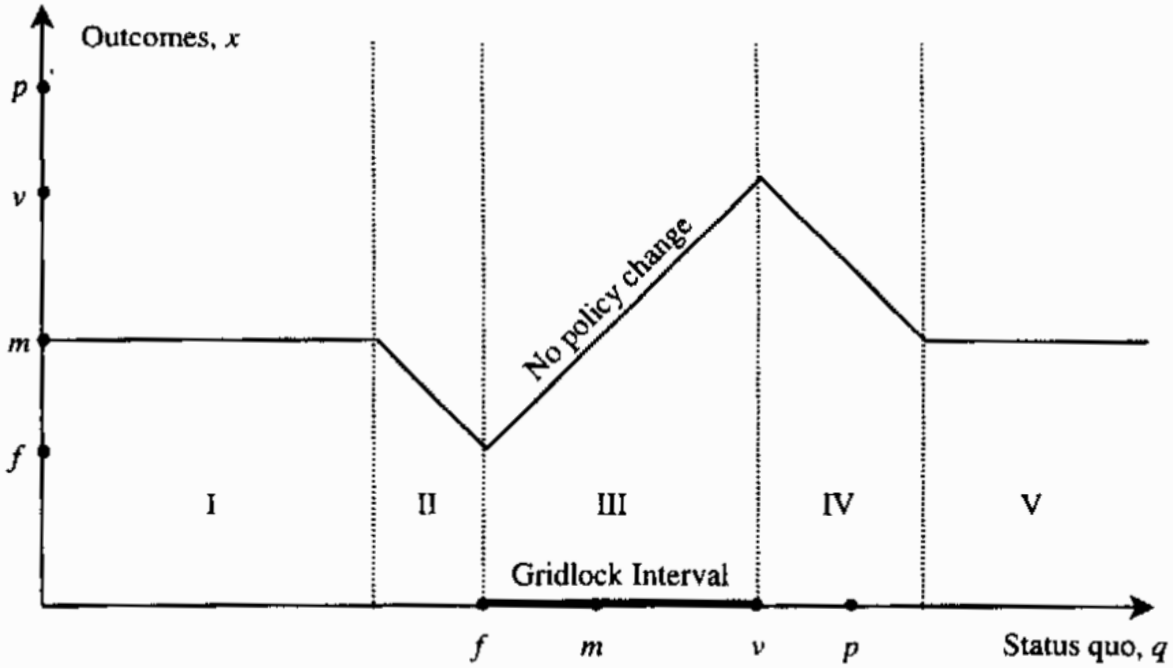
# Example #4

- For Zone #4, similar logic to Zone #2.
- If status quo is in Zone #4, $m$ knows they need to please $v$. If $v$ is pleased, then president won't veto.
- So $m$ can propose a bill closer to them that $v$ prefers equally to $q$.



# Back to this plot

Notice parallels between Zones #2 (outcome moves toward $f$) and #4 (outcome moves toward $v$).

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Equilibrium policies in the pivotal politics theory

- Notice Zones #1 and #5 are always $m$ (see Examples #1 and #2).
- In Zone #2, $m$'s proposals must gradually move towards $f$ to satisfy

# Example #5: The Gridlock Zone

Now we're in trouble. Imagine $q$ is in Zone #3. $m$ has two options:

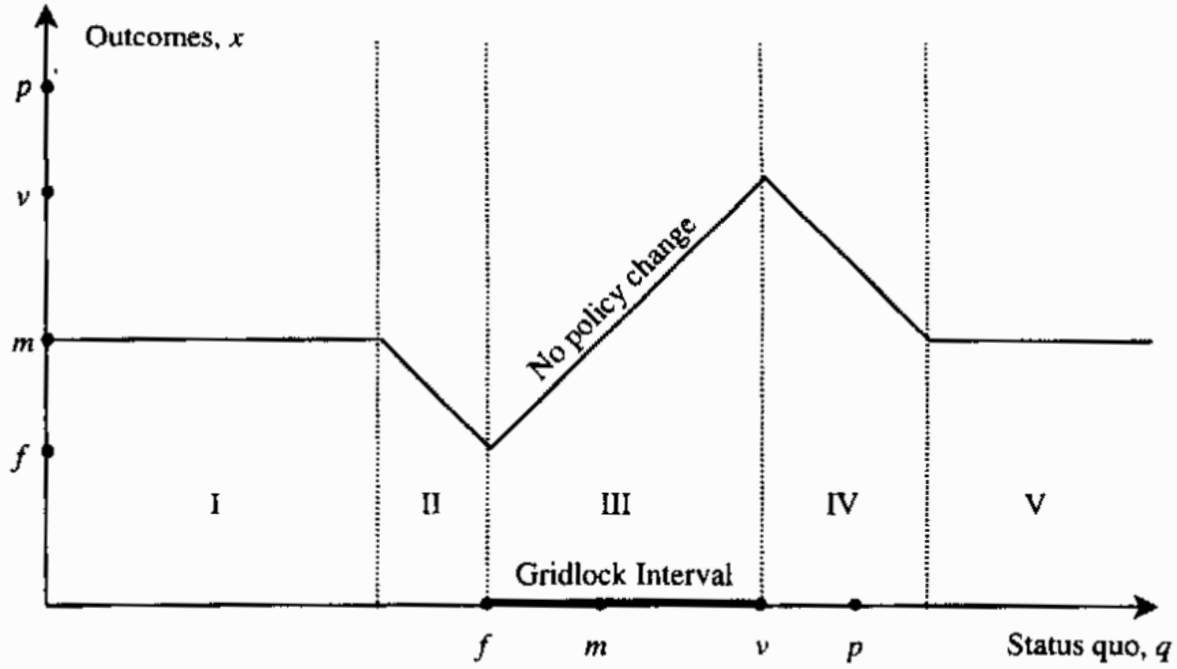



Figure 2.7
Equilibrium policies in the pivotal politics theory

- If $q$ is to the left of $m$, then $m$ wants to move it right.
- Nope! $f$ and everybody to their left prefers $q$ to any proposal moving $q$ to the right. $f$ will filibuster.

# Example #5: The Gridlock Zone

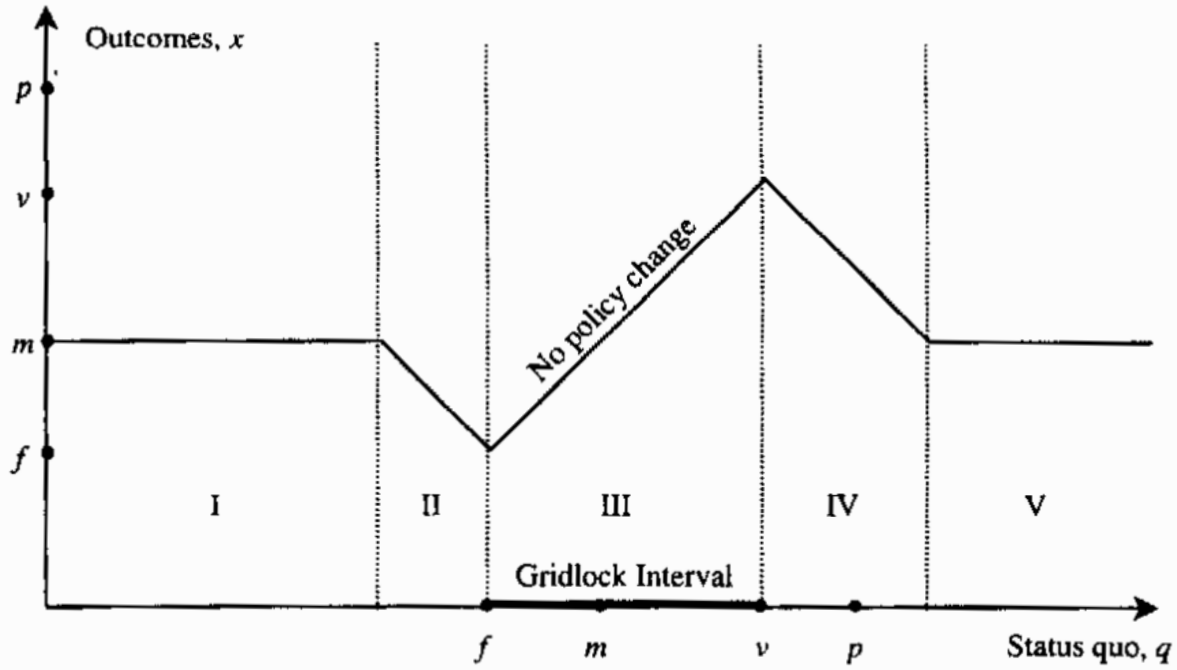
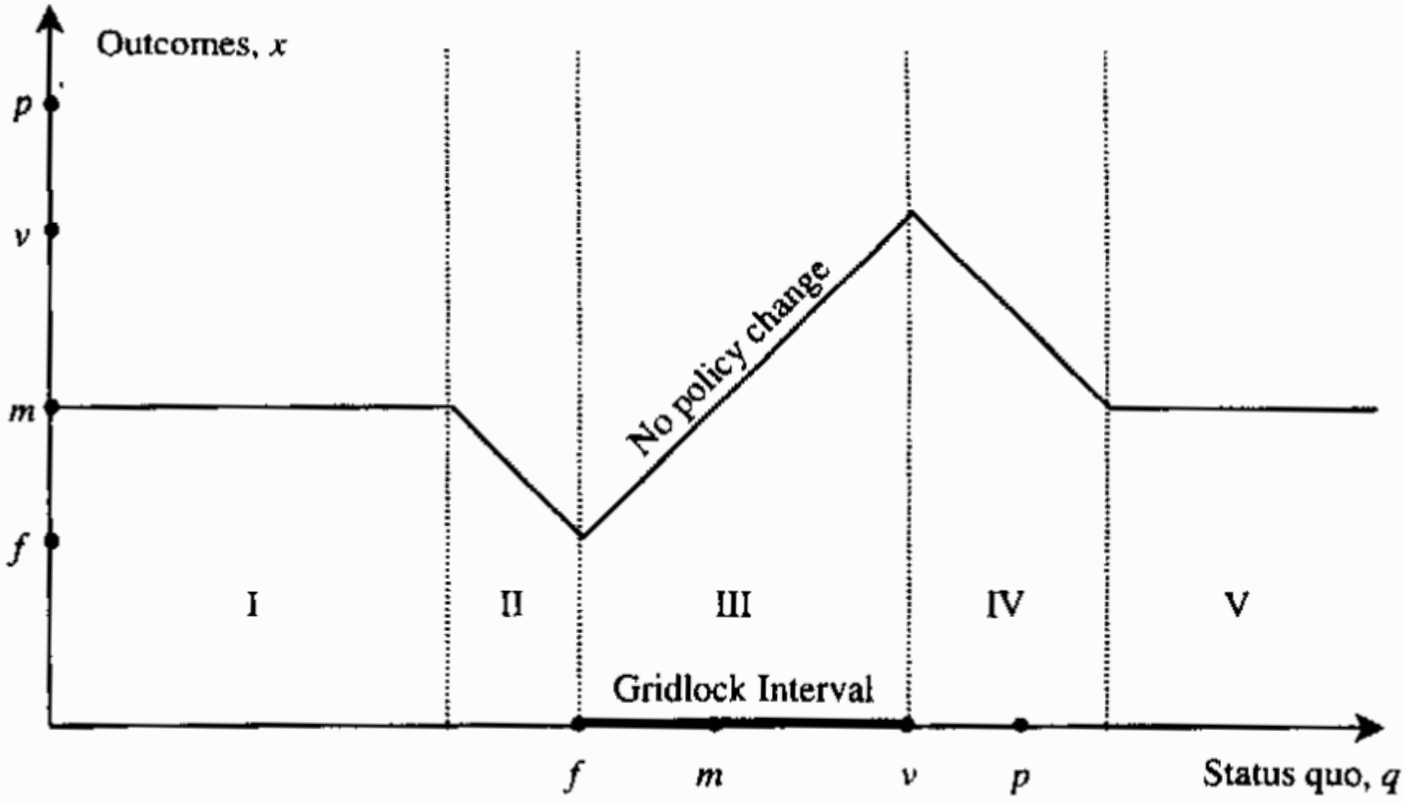



Figure 2.7
Equilibrium policies in the pivotal politics theory

- If $q$ is to the right of $m$, then $m$ wants to move it left.
- Nope! $v$ and everybody to their right (including the president) prefers $q$ to any proposal moving $q$ to the left. President will veto and there aren't enough votes to override it (because $v$ agrees).

# I wasn't lying - this plot tells it all!

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Equilibrium policies in the pivotal politics theory

# Review: The Big Picture

- Krehbiel's Pivotal Politics aims to explain two patterns:
  1. Legislative **coalitions** (i.e. who wins the vote) are often larger than necessary (meaning generally larger than 50% + 1).
  2. **Gridlock** (inability to pass legislation) happens *often* **but not always**.
- His answer:
  1. **Coalitions** are usually greater than minimum-majority sized because of supermajoritarian procedures (mainly filibuster and veto).
  2. **Gridlock** occurs regularly because of supermajoritarian procedures in Congress, moderate status quo policies, and heterogeneous preferences.
- He uses the model described above to do this, which is based on important assumptions, including:
  - Single-peaked preferences
  - No parties