

Legislative Organization and Political Representation*

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Abstract

The politics of congressional organization occupies a central role in accounts of legislatures' attempts to make informed policy choices. Committee systems facilitate the acquisition of policy expertise by legislators, and theoretical models show how delegating policy choice from the chamber to committees can improve the quality of collective decision making. We study how committee membership affects individual legislators' responsiveness to their constituencies. Using data on issue-specific voting behavior for members of the U.S. House from 1965 to 2011, we show that committee membership significantly reduces legislative responsiveness to constituency preferences on the issue area associated with the committee's policy domain. These results are robust across model specifications, policy areas, and subsets of observations. Additional analyses provide evidence consistent with our proposed informational mechanism. Our results suggest that committee membership enables legislators to cast better-informed roll call votes and show how legislative institutions affect political representation.

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Informational deficits loom large in legislative politics. Theoretical accounts of oversight (Gailmard and Patty 2013), interbranch bargaining (Howell, Jackman, and Rogowski 2013), the influence of party leaders (Curry 2015), and legislative policy choices (Callander 2011) relate information and uncertainty to congressional decision-making. Major twentieth-century legislative reforms, including the Federal Register Act of 1935, the Legislative Reorganization Acts of 1946 and 1970, and the Administrative Procedures Act of 1946, were motivated by legislators' desire to increase their access to policy-relevant information and enhance their awareness of activities undertaken by the executive branch. Perhaps the most important organizational innovation in congressional history—the emergence of the standing committee system—similarly reflected Congress's interest in acquiring independent sources of information for the purposes of making sound policy choices (Cooper 1970). The decentralization of power through the committee system, and the development of specialized expertise along with it, has been an important contributor to congressional institutionalization (Polsby 1968).

In this paper, we study how committee membership affects legislative voting behavior. Canonical accounts attribute the committee system with legislatures' efforts to develop policy expertise (e.g., Cooper 1970; Krehbiel 1991). Accordingly, legislators become specialists in issue areas through service on relevant committees (Fenno 1962; Katz and Sala 1996; Shepsle 1988). While important bodies of research examine the ideological composition of committees (e.g., Krehbiel 1991), legislators' committee participation (Gamble 2007), committee members' contacts with interest groups (Fourinaies and Hall 2018; Lorenz 2020; Powell and Grimmer 2016), and acquisition of distributive resources (e.g., Berry and Fowler 2016), existing empirical scholarship does not directly evaluate how committee service affects legislative decision-making. However, several recent studies show that legislators gain policy expertise through committee service (Cirone and Van Coppenolle 2018), use policy information when casting roll call votes (Butler and Nickerson 2011; Zelizer 2018), and take cues from their well-informed legislative peers (Box-Steffensmeier, Ryan, and Sokhey 2015; Curry 2019; Fong 2020), suggesting that committee membership may

affect legislative voting behavior.

We present a theoretical perspective in which committee service changes legislative decision-making by decreasing the costs of policy expertise. Generally speaking, legislators prefer to avoid the costs of acquiring detailed policy information, and will therefore prioritize their constituents' policy views. Legislators who serve on a policy-relevant committee, however, will by dint of their committee service have greater understanding of a given policy's consequences, and will (relatively) downweight constituent preferences. In short, our argument posits that legislators weigh information about constituent preferences and policy consequences when deciding how to vote; if committee services decreases the costs of acquiring policy information, we expect that constituent preferences are a lesser factor in legislators' decision calculus.

We test the effect of committee membership on political representation using data on legislative roll call voting records across fourteen policy areas from the 89th to 111th Congresses. Using a panel design, we isolate the effect of committee membership on legislators' responsiveness to constituent preferences in the relevant issue area. Our concern is with whether 1) conservative shifts in constituent preferences are matched with corresponding conservative shifts in legislators' roll call voting patterns, and 2) this responsiveness to constituent preferences is less pronounced for members of policy-relevant committees.

We find consistent evidence that legislators are less responsive to constituency preferences on issues for which they serve on committees. These results are robust across a range of model specifications, policy areas, and subsets of observations. We provide additional evidence to suggest that these effects are driven by an informational mechanism but find no evidence in support of other plausible mechanisms. Our results suggest that legislators are responsive to the policy expertise they gain through committee membership and provide new evidence about how legislative organization affects political representation.

Legislative Organization and the Committee System

The committee system occupies a central role in accounts of legislatures' attempts to make informed policy choices. National legislatures are typically too large, and responsible for too many tasks, for all members to be involved with crafting solutions for every item on their agendas. Krehbiel (1991, 62) elucidates the problem confronted by legislatures:

Other things being equal, legislators would rather select policies whose consequences are known in advance than policies whose outcomes are uncertain. Under conditions of relative certainty, legislators can plan and make the most of credit-claiming. ...Under conditions of relative uncertainty, however, surprise and the prospect of embarrassment lurk beneath any policy choice.

The emergence of standing committees by the Third Congress reflected the House's desire to acquire independent information rather than rely upon what was communicated to them by the executive branch (Cooper 1970). Committee organization helps mitigate the uncertainty associated with collective policy choice (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1989, 1990; Krehbiel 1991). As Baumgartner and Jones (2015, 88) argue, "committees remain the major institution for bringing information to bear on lawmaking matters."

A rich literature emphasizes that legislators gain policy expertise through committee service. In his classic study of the House Appropriations Committee, Fenno (1962, 316) reported that "only through specializing" could committee members "unearth the volume of factual information necessary" to consider the president's budgetary requests. Similarly, committee service is attributed with facilitating the "development of an expertise" (Gertzog 1976, 693) and providing "the leeway and confidence [legislators] need to become policy experts within their committees' jurisdictions" (Katz and Sala 1996, 23). Perhaps most colorfully, Shepsle (1988, 469-470) argued:

[T]he division-of-labor encourages specialized expertise. Albert Rains of Alabama was known as Mr. Housing in the 1950s House, Paul Rogers of Florida as Mr. Health

in the 1960s House, and George Mahon of Texas as Mr. Defense Procurement in the 1970s House, because each labored long and hard in a specific policy vineyard, acquired policy expertise, assembled an expert staff, and established a reputation for probity, integrity, and knowledgeability among his colleagues. The institutional bargain ... provides individuals with incentives to make intensive investment in specialized human capital.

In a particularly innovative study, Cirone and Van Coppenolle (2018, 949) provide systematic quantitative support for these claims by leveraging the random assignment of legislators to committees in the French National Assembly and concluding that “the value of committee service derives from the acquisition of specialized expertise by members.”

Committee service increases legislators’ access to policy-relevant information through several channels. First, committee members have access to policy reports and other resources provided by committee staff. As Patterson (1970, 22) documented, “the expertise of congressional committees ... [has] been greatly enhanced by extensive and increasing reliance upon professional personnel,” whose primary jobs are to “feed members relevant information” and “[provide] the facts and details” (26). Second, committee hearings provide opportunities for learning (McConachie 1898, 61) as policy experts and administration officials provide information that guides legislators’ subsequent policy choices (DeGregorio 1992; Kingdon 1973). Third, committee service affects members’ information levels via contact by interest groups. Lobbying groups provide costly policy and political information (Hall and Deardorff 2006), and committee members are prime targets of such lobbying efforts (Fourinaies and Hall 2018; Powell and Grimmer 2016). This interaction with interest groups produces incentives for legislators to emphasize policy expertise in committee discussions of proposed legislation (Esterling 2007).¹

¹Other models of lobbying (e.g., Austen-Smith and Wright 1994; Snyder 1992) may also predict that interest group interactions with legislators cause the latter to de-prioritize constituent

Committee Membership and Political Representation

We argue that the expertise acquired through committee service affects legislative voting behavior. The intuition for our theoretical perspective comes from models of policy choice with asymmetric information (e.g., Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990; Howell, Jackman, and Rogowski 2013). In our context, we evaluate a legislator's decision about whether to support a policy proposal. Given the research summarized above, we begin with the assumption that committee membership increases (most) legislators' policy expertise through their investments in specialization.²

We further assume that legislators enter office with multiple goals. Not only do they seek the approval of their constituents (Mayhew 1974), but they are also motivated to pursue particular policy outcomes (Fenno 1973; Kingdon 1973).³ These (sometimes competing) motivations are expressed through two inputs in their decision calculus, which may act as substitutes and may be weighted unevenly when considering policy proposals. To advance their electoral prospects, legislators consider constituency opinion. To advance their policy goals, legislators require information about how a given proposal translates into a particular policy outcome. Expertise reduces the uncertainty associated with policy choice but its acquisition is not costless.

preferences; these models, however, may be more plausible for less-informed legislators, rather than those, such as committee members, with access to independent sources of topical information. Later in the paper, we attempt to distinguish potential mechanisms for interpreting the relationship between committee membership.

²Gilligan and Krehbiel (1997) show that the incentives for specialization may not be uniformly distributed and that some members exert greater effort than others to become experts. Their empirical findings support our general assumption, however, that on average legislators become more knowledgeable through committee service.

³Legislators may have more than two goals but this would not change our expectations.

Previous literature establishes that both constituent preferences and policy information exert influence on legislator behavior. Legislators compile more conservative aggregate voting records (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001) and are more likely to support conservative legislation (Clinton 2006) when they represent more conservative constituencies. Likewise, policy information changes legislators' support for specific bills (Zelizer 2018) and responsiveness to constituency preferences (Butler and Nickerson 2011); at the aggregate level, information acquisition by individual legislators facilitates better-informed collective decisions (Battaglini et al. 2019). These studies suggest that expertise gained through committee service can also affect the nature of legislative decision-making. But while congressional committees are theorized to have consequences for political representation at both the collective and dyadic levels (e.g., Eulau and Karps 1977; Stevens, Mulhollan, and Rundquist 1981), relatively little scholarship directly relates committee membership to legislators' responsiveness to constituent preferences.

In this framework, committee service changes legislative decision-making by decreasing the costs of policy expertise. Committee service thus provides greater expertise about how policies translate into outcomes; in turn, legislators who serve on relevant committees place greater weight on their preferences over the outcomes produced by a policy, which comes at the expense of the weight they place on constituency opinion. Non-experts, by comparison, prefer to avoid the costs associated with information acquisition and thus, with relatively little understanding of how a given policy will map into outcomes, choose to prioritize the preferences of their constituents.⁴ The key hypothesis, therefore, is that committee service reduces legislators' responsiveness to constituency opinion. Because constituents value their representative's expertise and effectiveness in making policy in Washington, valuable committee assignments may

⁴This intuition draws from a model developed by Howell, Jackman, and Rogowski (2013), who study legislative decision making with multiple outcomes and asymmetric information in response to a presidential proposal.

act as a form of electoral subsidy (Grimmer and Powell 2013) in which legislators can exhibit decreased responsiveness without fear of significant electoral penalty.

The informational theory of committees is often contrasted with so-called distributive theories, which emphasize the committee system's role in enforcing an institutional logroll. While distributive models of committees make predictions about which legislators seek membership on which committees and speak to their overall composition, they have less to say about the impact of committee service on legislative voting behavior. Distributive models, moreover, offer predictions about voting on pork barrel spending, which may appear indirectly in measures of voting behavior, but informational models imply that committee membership should affect legislator expertise—and therefore behavior—in a given policy domain.

Our argument contributes to two distinct areas of scholarship. First, we posit a link between committee specialization and legislative voting behavior. If committee systems contribute to better-informed collective decision making due to the acquisition of specialized information by its members, we would expect that legislators bring to bear that specialized information when casting roll call votes. Second, we argue that legislative institutions affect legislators' responsiveness to constituent preferences. In particular, consistent with the notion of voting leeway (Fenno 1978), our argument suggests that committee membership allows representatives to (partially) substitute informed policy work for delegate-based representation.

Data and Measures

We study the effects of committee membership using data on voting records for members of the U.S. House of Representatives between 1965 and 2011.⁵ Specifically, we use measures of

⁵We begin with 1965 because the 89th Congress, elected in 1964, was the first elected after *Baker v. Carr*. Due to changes in congressional district boundaries following this decision, presidential vote shares for many districts are not available for members of the 88th Congress that

issue-specific roll call voting behavior and link these issues to the relevant committees on which legislators served. To the extent that legislators gain expertise through their service on congressional committees, we expect that committee service affects their voting patterns on legislation related to the policy domains on which their committees specialize.

Our analysis requires a measure of legislative voting behavior that meets three key criteria. First, it must vary across a legislator's time in office so that we can evaluate how legislative behavior changed with their committee assignments. Static measures that assume a legislator's preferences are constant throughout her term in office, such as common space DW-NOMINATE scores, would not meet this criterion. Standard DW-NOMINATE scores would also not meet this criterion; while this procedure generates time-varying measures of legislative behavior, any changes in a legislator's ideology are smoothed across her time in office in a linear fashion. Therefore, estimates generated from this approaches do not allow us to study whether a legislator's committee service corresponds with the timing of her change in voting behavior (see, e.g., Caughey and Schickler 2016).

Second, estimates of legislative voting behavior must be comparable across time. While in theory one could generate separate estimates of roll call behavior for each Congress, the estimates produced by this procedure would not be directly comparable without untestable assumptions about the distribution of legislative ideologies and the cutpoints associated with the roll call votes. To be more concrete, we would not know whether a legislator with an estimate of -0.50 in one Congress was more liberal than a legislator with an estimate of -0.25 in another; if the latter legislator served with a larger proportion of liberal members and/or voted on more liberal agendas relative to the former legislator, these differences would be observationally equivalent to the latter legislator holding more conservative views relative to the former legislator.

Third, because committees have relatively specialized jurisdictions, we require measures of

were chosen in the 1962 election.

legislative behavior across a range of policy domains that can be matched to committee jurisdictions and are available across a wide range of time. While interest group scores offer a potentially promising solution in this regard, relatively few domain-specific interest groups provide scores over a sufficiently long period of time.

To address these criteria, we adapt a measure of *conservative vote probabilities* previously used in Fowler and Hall (2016) and Alexander, Berry, and Howell (2016).⁶ These conservative vote probabilities are created by using roll call data in an OLS model with legislator and bill fixed effects to estimate the probability that a legislator casts a conservative vote relative to the median legislator. These scores are then rescaled so that the median legislator has a score of zero; legislators more conservative than the median have positive scores and legislators more liberal than the median have negative scores.⁷ The scores describe legislators' average voting behavior across bills and are provided for fourteen issue areas: agriculture, appropriations, defense, economy, education, energy, finance, foreign policy, housing, labor, taxes, trade, veterans, and welfare.

We take one additional step to address our second measurement criterion. Without transformation, these scores are not comparable across time. As the legislative agenda and identity of the median legislator vary from Congress to Congress, we cannot necessarily interpret changes in a legislator's score as a change in voting pattern. This problem is analogous to the limitations of intertemporal comparisons using interest group scores (Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder 1999), in which the scales on which legislative behavior is measured could shift or stretch over time.

⁶The creation of the conservative vote probabilities is discussed in Fowler and Hall (2013). These scores were downloaded from https://www.dropbox.com/s/068voyg8gzk5wsw/CVP_by_issue_83_111.csv?dl=0 on March 10, 2020.

⁷When this method is used to estimate legislators' voting scores across all issues for the period under study, Fowler and Hall (2013) report that the rank correlation between these scores and DW-NOMINATE score is 0.95 or greater across almost every Congress.

Therefore, for each issue area we apply the correction developed by Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder (1999), which produces *adjusted conservative vote probabilities*, which we standardized based on the 100th Congress.⁸ For example, consider that two legislators serving in different congresses may have identical preferences in a given issue area, but could appear ideologically distinct because they did not cast roll call votes on the same proposals. The Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder (1999) correction corrects for this possibility, much in the way that an inflation index allows for comparisons of prices across time, using a linear transformation to standardize scores across time so that we can compare legislative voting patterns within a given issue area.

Our issue-specific *adjusted conservative vote probabilities* are relatively unidimensional. First, Fowler and Hall (2013) report that their (unadjusted) conservative vote probabilities for each issue are highly correlated with scores estimated using all other issues, though the correlations are somewhat stronger for domestic policy and economic issues than for procedural votes and foreign policy. Second, the correlations across issue areas are relatively high.⁹ All 91 pairwise comparisons across issues are positively correlated and 41 have correlations of 0.7 or higher. Only 20 of the comparisons yield correlations less than 0.5, with twelve of them coming from correlations between the veterans domain and the other policy areas.¹⁰ The chief limitation of the *adjusted conservative vote probabilities* concerns their comparability *across* issues. That is, similar scores on different issues does not imply that the legislator voted in equally conservative ways on both issue areas. As we discuss below, we adopt an empirical strategy that accounts for the lack of comparability across across issue areas by evaluating changes in a given legislator's

⁸Summary statistics are shown in Table A.1 in the Supplementary Materials.

⁹Figure A.1 shows the full correlation matrix.

¹⁰Veterans issues are weakly correlated with all other issues in both the raw data and using the *adjusted conservative vote probabilities*. As we show below, however, our results are robust to the exclusion of this issue area.

voting behavior *within* issues. We also estimate separate models for each issue area to ensure that our findings are robust to this measurement consideration.

Using these issue-specific measures of roll call voting behavior, we evaluate the effect of committee members on legislators' responsiveness to constituency preferences. Given existing research (e.g., Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Miller and Stokes 1963), we expect that legislators from more conservative districts compile more conservative voting records. Unfortunately, survey data to measure annual district-level opinion across a common set of issues for the period under study is not available. Instead, we follow Warshaw and Rodden (2012) and use the Republican proportion of the district presidential vote in the most recent election to measure constituency preferences. While vote shares are not a perfect measure of district preferences, Tausanovitch and Warshaw (2013) report that estimates of aggregate district-level ideology based on batteries of issue preferences are highly correlated (at 0.78 or greater) with district presidential vote share and Warshaw and Rodden (2012, 212) conclude that presidential vote share is a better measure of issue preferences when large samples of district-level opinion are not available. Moreover, presidential vote share is highly correlated with preferences over a variety of specific policies at the congressional district level in recent versions of the CCES.¹¹ As we explain below, our empirical strategy uses *within*-issue variation in legislative voting behavior, reducing potential concerns about the relative performance of this measure across issue areas. A simple bivariate correlation between district presidential vote share and our adjusted CVP measure, by issue area, suggests that representatives from more-Republican districts consistently vote more conservatively across issue areas.¹²

We connect legislators' voting records on each policy area to their membership on relevant

¹¹For most issues, the correlation is greater than 0.5. One exception is the "Ryan Budget," which is correlated at only 0.18. We thank *name redacted* for sharing these results.

¹²See Figure A.2 in the Supplementary Materials.

committees. For each issue area, we create a binary indicator, *Committee service*, that takes a value of one if a legislator in a given Congress served on a committee whose jurisdiction includes that issue. Specifically, each issue area was matched to the following House committee: agriculture to Agriculture; labor, education, and welfare to Education and Labor; energy to Energy and Commerce; finance and housing to Banking; defense to Armed Services; economy, taxes, and trade to Ways and Means; veterans to Veterans Affairs; appropriations to Appropriations; foreign policy to Foreign Affairs.¹³ Overall, our data include 1,895 unique legislators across 23 congresses and fourteen issues.¹⁴ We investigate our hypothesis by studying whether responsiveness varies with a legislator's membership on a committee that addresses the relevant issue domain.¹⁵

Empirical Strategy

Our data characterize legislative voting behavior across issues and congresses from 1965 to 2011. In our primary models, the unit of analysis is a legislator i 's responsiveness to constituency preferences on issue j in congress c . We leverage the panel nature of the data and use a differences-in-differences design to identify how committee service affects responsiveness to

¹³Where an issue area did not have an obvious committee match, we searched the database of public laws on the Policy Agendas Project to determine to which committees legislation in a given issue area had been referred most frequently.

¹⁴While our data do not permit us to examine all House committees, our sample does include the most policy-relevant committees in the House (see Fenno 1973) for which constituency preferences can be clearly related to specific policy choices.

¹⁵Table A.2 shows descriptive statistics for all variables used in our analyses.

constituent preferences. Specifically, we estimate the following model:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Conservative vote probability}_{ijc} = & \alpha_{ij} + \delta_{jc} + \beta_1 \text{Republican presidential vote share}_{ic} + \\ & \beta_2 \text{Committee member}_{ijc} + \\ & \beta_3 (\text{Republican presidential vote share}_{ic} \times \text{Committee member}_{ijc}) \\ & + \epsilon_{ijc}, \end{aligned}$$

where the dependent variable is the adjusted conservative vote probability for legislator i on issue j in congress c . Our analysis is therefore a two-way fixed effects model where the unit of observation is the legislator-issue-congress. We evaluate the effect of committee membership using the two independent variables described above. The coefficient on *Republican presidential vote share*, β_1 , characterizes legislative responsiveness to district preferences among legislators who do not serve on a committee relevant to a given issue. Theoretically, legislators have electoral incentives to reflect the political views of their circumstances, and thus we expect that the estimate of β_1 will be positive. *Committee member* is a binary indicator for whether a legislator serves on a committee with jurisdiction over the relevant issue area. Because of the interaction term, this captures the change in roll call voting associated with joining a committee for a legislator in a district that gives 0% of the vote to GOP presidential candidate. We have no strong theoretical expectations about this coefficient. Our primary quantity of interest concerns the estimate of β_3 , which characterizes the interaction between *Republican presidential vote share* and *Committee member*. If committee membership reduces legislative responsiveness to constituent preferences, the estimate of β_3 will be negative.

Several other components of equation (1) merit discussion. In our primary models, we include legislator-issue (α) and congress-issue (δ) fixed effects. These parameters control for time-invariant attributes of legislators and secular trends in Congress, respectively, that are associated with voting patterns on a particular issue. As we will describe below, we also estimate additional

models that include legislator-congress fixed effects to account for mean shifts in a legislator's overall conservatism, across issues, in roll call voting in a given congress. Finally, ϵ_{ijc} is a random error term, which we cluster on districts (specific to each redistricting cycle).

Using equation (1), the coefficients for our key independent variables are identified from within-legislator changes in district preferences, committee membership, and their interaction. Most importantly for our analysis, the coefficient for *Committee member* reflects changes in a legislator's membership on an issue-relevant committee. Most commonly, this would happen when a legislator is re-assigned to a different committee during their time in office, in which case a legislator may roll off of one committee and begin serving on another.¹⁶ This specification allows us to characterize how committee service affects the policy representation provided by a legislator to her constituents on a given issue. Over the course of their careers, 43 percent of the legislators in our data experience at least one change in their committee membership for a given issue area, and on average about seven percent of committee members in a given congress were newly appointed.¹⁷ Our key quantity of interest, the interaction between committee service and district preferences, is identified off of changes in *either* of the two independent variables over a legislator's career.

We also estimate a series of supplementary models that include district-issue fixed effects rather than legislator-issue fixed effects. This specification allows us to test a slightly different, but no less substantively important, question: how does having its legislator serve on a relevant congressional committee affect a district's representation on that issue? In this specification, the

¹⁶Junior members could also be "exiled" (Grimmer and Powell 2013) from committee membership following a loss of their party's seats on that committee.

¹⁷Overall, 1,623 of legislator-issue observations (or slightly more than one percent of the sample and six percent of unique legislators) experienced a change in their committee membership for a given issue following their initial committee assignments.

coefficient for *Committee member* is identified using within-district changes (during the course of the same redistricting cycle) in whether its representative serves on a relevant committee, which occurs mostly through the replacement of an incumbent by a successor and which characterizes 2,536 (or about 2.4 percent) of the district-issue observations in our sample. Finally, as we describe below, we estimated a variety of additional models and employed alternative research designs to address issues of model specification, heterogeneous effects, and selection.

Results

Table 1 displays our estimates of the effect of committee membership on legislative behavior. The results in column (1) show the results of our primary model specification that includes legislator-issue and congress-issue fixed effects. The coefficient for *Republican presidential vote share* characterizes responsiveness to district preferences on an issue for which a legislator does not serve on a relevant committee. Consistent with Figure A.2, the coefficient is positive and statistically significant, indicating that, on average across all issues, legislators' voting records are responsive to changes in the ideological leanings of their constituencies. Legislators compile more conservative roll call voting records as their constituents are more conservative. The coefficient for *On committee* characterizes whether committee members in the most liberal districts have systematically different voting records on the relevant issue compared to non-committee members from those districts. The coefficient for this variable is also positive and significant, indicating that membership on a committee by these representatives of the most liberal areas is associated with having a roll call voting record that is .014 units more conservative on that issue.

Most importantly, the estimate for the interaction between *Republican presidential vote share* and *On committee* corresponds to β_3 and indicates how joining (or leaving) a committee affects a legislator's responsiveness to district preferences on a given issue area. Consistent with our hypothesis, the coefficient estimate for the interaction term is negative and statistically significant.

Table 1: Committee Service and Ideological Responsiveness

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.079** (0.014)			0.191** (0.029)	0.111** (0.022)
On Committee	0.014* (0.008)	0.018** (0.007)	0.018** (0.007)	0.031** (0.011)	0.026** (0.009)
Republican					0.313** (0.006)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share \times On Comm.	-0.041** (0.015)	-0.045** (0.013)	-0.046** (0.013)	-0.064** (0.021)	-0.055** (0.018)
District-by-Issue Fixed Effects				✓	✓
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓		
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓		✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Member Fixed Effects		✓	✓		
No. Unit FEs	17,045	17,045	17,045	29,504	29,504
No. Clusters	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279
Observations	138,417	138,417	138,417	138,417	138,417

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test).

The estimate indicates that committee membership is associated with reduced responsiveness to constituent preferences on the relevant issue area. The magnitude of the estimate, moreover, suggests that committee members are about half as responsive to their constituents on the committee's policy domain relative to non-members.

We find similarly strong evidence about the effect of committee membership across the other model specifications in Table 1. Column (2) shows results from a model that includes legislator-issue and congress-legislator fixed effects, accounting for an alternative set of time-period unobservables. Similarly, in column (3) we include legislator-issue fixed effects, congress-issue fixed

effects, and congress-legislator fixed effects. This specification accounts for the possibility that a legislator experienced a change in preferences between congresses that had a common effect on her roll call voting patterns across all issues. Both model specifications produce results similar to those in column (1).

Column (4) shows results from a model that includes district-issue (rather than legislator-issue) and congress-issue fixed effects. As we explained above, the coefficients in this specification are identified using changes within a district during a given redistricting cycle. This model produces similar patterns to those in columns (1) through (3), though the magnitudes of the coefficients are somewhat different. The most important difference is that the coefficient for *Republican presidential vote share* is considerably larger in magnitude than in column (1), which is likely driven by the fact that sizable increases (or decreases) in a district's preferences will result in changes in who (and which party) represents that district in Congress. The coefficient for the interaction term is again negative. Finally, the model shown in column (5) uses a similar specification as column (4) but includes an indicator for whether the district is represented by a member of the Republican Party (note that we cannot estimate a coefficient for this variable in the models with member fixed effects, as partisanship does not vary within legislators). We again obtain patterns consistent with those produced by the other models. Here, the coefficient for *Republican* is positive and statistically significant, indicating that, as expected, districts receive more conservative representation when they replace a Democratic legislator with a Republican. The coefficient for the interaction term is again negative and significant, and here indicates that membership on a committee reduces responsiveness to constituency preferences on that issue area by about half.

We present our main results visually in Figure 1. This is a marginal effects plot, showing the marginal effect of committee service on issue-specific roll call voting across levels of district Republican presidential vote share. In a counterfactual scenario where committee service has no effect on responsiveness, we would expect the marginal effect to be consistent across levels of

district conservatism; instead, we see that in the most liberal districts committee service appears to make legislators more conservative, and in the most conservative districts it appears to make legislators more liberal. While we cannot state definitively whether these shifts move legislators away from or toward their constituents' preferences, the fact that the slope on the interaction is negatively is clear evidence that the effect of committee service is different in districts with different ideological orientations, in such a way that overall responsiveness is reduced.

The results reported in Table 1 are robust to a wide range of additional analyses. We briefly describe these analyses below and present their results in the Supplementary Materials.

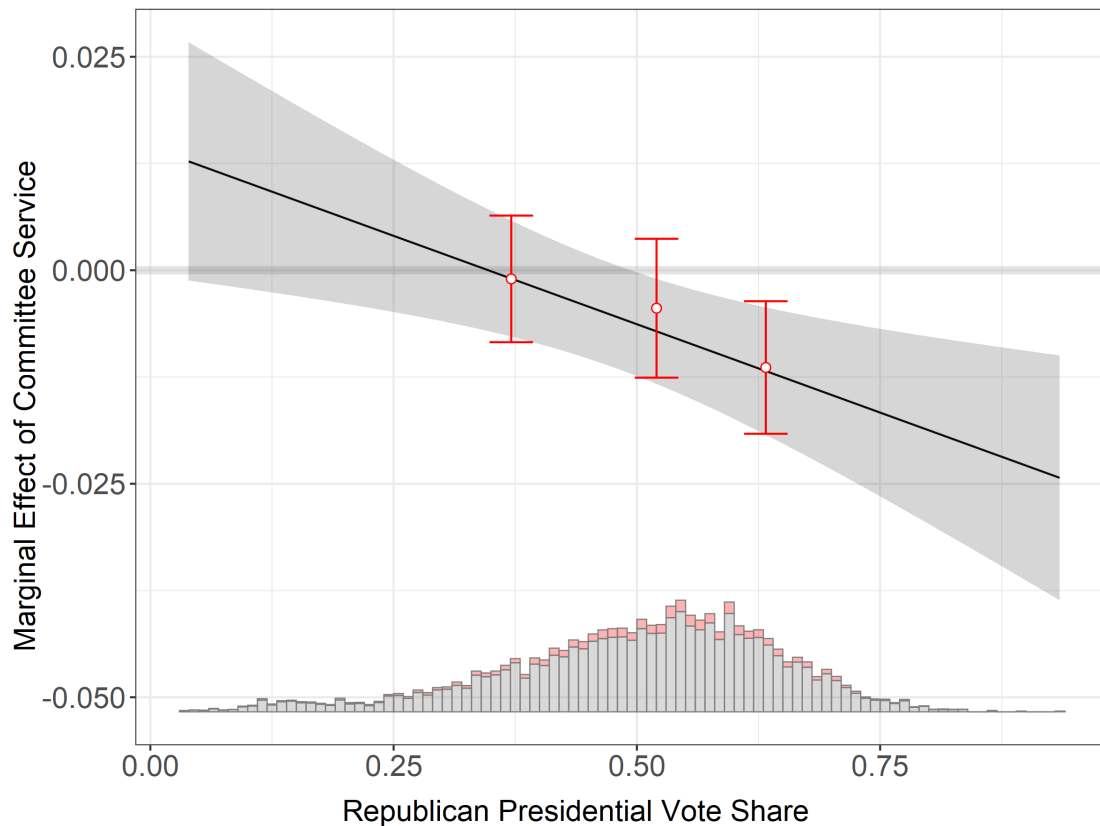


Figure 1: Marginal Effect of Committee Service Across District GOP Vote Share

Identifying assumptions. Our key identifying assumption is that, absent a change in a legislator's committee membership, her voting patterns on a given issue would have moved in parallel

to the voting patterns of other legislators as well to as to her own voting patterns on other issues. This is the common “parallel trends” assumption. While we cannot directly test this assumption, we can evaluate whether trends were parallel in periods before and after treatment. To do so, we add lags and leads of our committee membership indicator, and interact these, as well as the true treatment, with *Republican presidential vote share*.¹⁸ (See Table B.1.) Our main coefficient of interest is either similar or larger in magnitude than the results reported in the text; moreover, the coefficients for the led values, which could indicate pre-trending, are generally considerably smaller. These findings support a causal interpretation of the findings in Table 1.

Moderation and model misspecification. Second, following the recommendation of Blackwell and Olson (2020), we estimated models where the indicator for committee membership is fully interacted with all other terms in the model; in our application, this indicator is interacted with the time fixed effects.¹⁹ Using this more flexible approach addresses concerns that committee members may be systematically more or less conservative in a given congress, irrespective of their constituents’ preferences. The coefficient estimates from these fully-moderated models, presented in Table B.2, are similar in magnitude to those in Table 1, and estimates for models with legislator fixed effects continue to be statistically significant despite the loss of power from the inclusion of the additional covariates. We apply this intuition as we explore additional heterogeneity below, interacting additional moderators through all covariates and time fixed effects whenever possible.

¹⁸While in principal we might also be concerned about parallel trends in this second treatment variable, we view endogeneity as a far greater concern as regards committee membership, which legislators can strategically manipulate in a way that they cannot for district ideology.

¹⁹Interaction with legislator or district fixed effects would be collinear with our quantity of interest.

Sample robustness. Third, we find no evidence that our results are driven by a single committee, issue area, congress, or legislators from a particular state. We estimated the model from column (1) of Table 1 and sequentially omitted one committee, issue area, congress, and state from the sample. The results are presented in Appendix B.3. Across these 96 regressions, the coefficient for the interaction between *Republican presidential vote share* and *On committee* is negative in all models, and fails to reach statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level in only one model, and at the $p < 0.10$ level in zero. These results suggest that our results are not disproportionately shaped by any particular issue area, committee, time period, or set of legislators. We also ensure that our results are not uniquely shaped by the oddness of the 1968 presidential election (with George Wallace running as a notable third-party candidate) by re-estimating our results using only data from 1972 and later (Table B.3). We also re-estimate the models from Table 1 while focusing on the most overtly ideological issue areas.²⁰ This may present a more difficult test of our hypothesis, as the public has clearer preferences on “easier” and more ideological issues, which may dampen the effect of committee membership on responsiveness in these domains. While estimates for the within-district models are attenuated and statistically insignificant, those for the within-legislator models remain substantively similar to those reported in the text and statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Selection. Fourth, we conducted additional analyses to address potential concerns about endogeneity. After all, legislators are not randomly assigned to committees; instead, as Davidson (1974, 49) acknowledges, “it is no secret that committees tend to attract members intimately concerned about their subject matter.” The non-random assignment of legislators to committees presents inferential challenges for evaluating the consequences of committee membership. As Grimmer and Powell (2013, 914) summarize, it is difficult if not impossible to measure all the characteristics that might be associated with membership on a particular committee. While our modeling strat-

²⁰Specifically, we focus on appropriations, the economy, education, labor, welfare, and taxes.

egy accounts for unobserved legislator-specific factors that might affect member voting behavior, one potential concern may be that a legislator’s political sophistication is correlated both with the committee on which they serve and their ability to explain their voting patterns on that issue area to their constituents. While such a situation may not be likely, since this correlation would need to occur *only* for the issue area associated with their committee membership and not any other issue area, our analyses cannot rule out this type of confounding.

Therefore, we adopt the “exile” strategy (Grimmer and Powell 2013; Powell and Grimmer 2016) and leverage changes in committee membership for legislators who were forced off of a committee due to their party’s losses in Congress. Importantly, committee members are exiled not for reasons of their choosing but rather because they were the least senior members of their party’s membership on a given committee.²¹ We adapt this research design to our context, limiting focus to the committees that we examine in the main analysis.²² Using Grimmer and Powell’s (2013) data on exiled legislators,²³ we construct a control group from the copartisan committee colleagues of the exiled who are spared that fate. Despite the significantly reduced statistical power due to the smaller number of observations,²⁴ we find results consistent with those in Table 1, where committee exile is associated with increased responsiveness to constituency preferences. While we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no effect, point estimates for the effect of exile on

²¹Grimmer and Powell (2013) demonstrate that exiled members are indistinguishable from members who remain on the committee along most characteristics apart from seniority.

²²To improve power we use data for this analysis extending back to the 83rd Congress.

²³Data from <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/p7gycbkyemrnbjp/AABp-QurauUgS11j6fhUEwjia?dl=0>.

²⁴Ultimately, 26 unique legislators were exiled, with a control group of 123 unique legislators.

responsiveness are in fact larger than those reported in Table 1.²⁵

Heterogeneous Effects. Fifth, we explored whether the effects shown in Table 1 varied across member characteristics, committees, and time. Though these analyses are less connected to our core theoretical perspective, they allow us to examine several additional empirical questions raised by the results presented above. Full model results are presented in Appendix C. In brief, we find that the effects of committee membership on district responsiveness are roughly equivalent among both Democrats and Republicans, and are slightly stronger among members of the minority party compared to the majority. We also find that the negative effects on committee service on responsiveness are concentrated among legislators from competitive districts, with no effect on legislators from safe districts. These results support the claim that committee membership serves as a more important form of electoral subsidy for legislators representing marginal districts (Grimmer and Powell 2013). We also conduct our analysis separately by committee: while the effect of committee membership on responsiveness is estimated to be negative for eight of the nine committees, the magnitudes of the estimated effects vary somewhat across them. Finally, we found relatively little evidence that the effect of committee service significantly accumulated over time.

Evidence of an Informational Mechanism

Our theoretical discussion posited that committee service reduced legislators' responsiveness to constituency preferences through the provision of policy-relevant information. Because we do not have a way of directly measuring the new information legislators receive through their committee service, we cannot provide a direct test of the extent to which an increase in information mediates the relationship between committee membership and responsiveness. Instead, we re-

²⁵See Table B.5.

port the results of three additional analyses, each of which provides an indirect assessment of an informational mechanism.

First, we evaluate whether the effect of committee membership varies with committee capacity. We measure committee capacity using data on committee staff and evaluate whether it moderates the effect of committee membership. Committee staffers are “highly trained specialists” whose principal roles are to gather and distribute information to committee members and develop legislative solutions to the committee’s policy priorities (Sidlow and Henschen 1985, 485). To the degree that increases in staffing are associated with the capacity to disseminate greater volumes of and higher-quality information, we expect that the effects of committee membership will be larger (i.e., more negative) as staffing resources increase.²⁶

We compiled data on committee staffing levels from 1977 to 2011 reported by the Congressional Research Service (2016). We use the CRS data to create a measure of the number of staff (logged) for each committee in each congress.²⁷ The total number of House committee staff varied during this time period, increasing from 1,891 in 1977 to a high of 2,223 in 1992 before declining to the 1,300–1,500 range for most of the last two decades. Staffing also varied within and between committees. The Appropriations Committee was the best-staffed committee in each year during this period, and the number of staff ranged between 76 and 223. Among policy-relevant committees, the Agriculture Committee had some of the smaller staffs, ranging between 22 and 69.²⁸ Using these data, we estimate a model similar to that in column (1) of Table 1 but include the

²⁶We do not claim that committee staff *only* compile and distribute policy-relevant information, nor that all committee members have equal access to this information. We instead posit that members’ access to this information is increasing in the number of committee staff.

²⁷Table D.1 shows substantively similar results using staff per member.

²⁸Several other committees focused mostly on internal operations, such as Rules and Ethics, had smaller staff sizes.

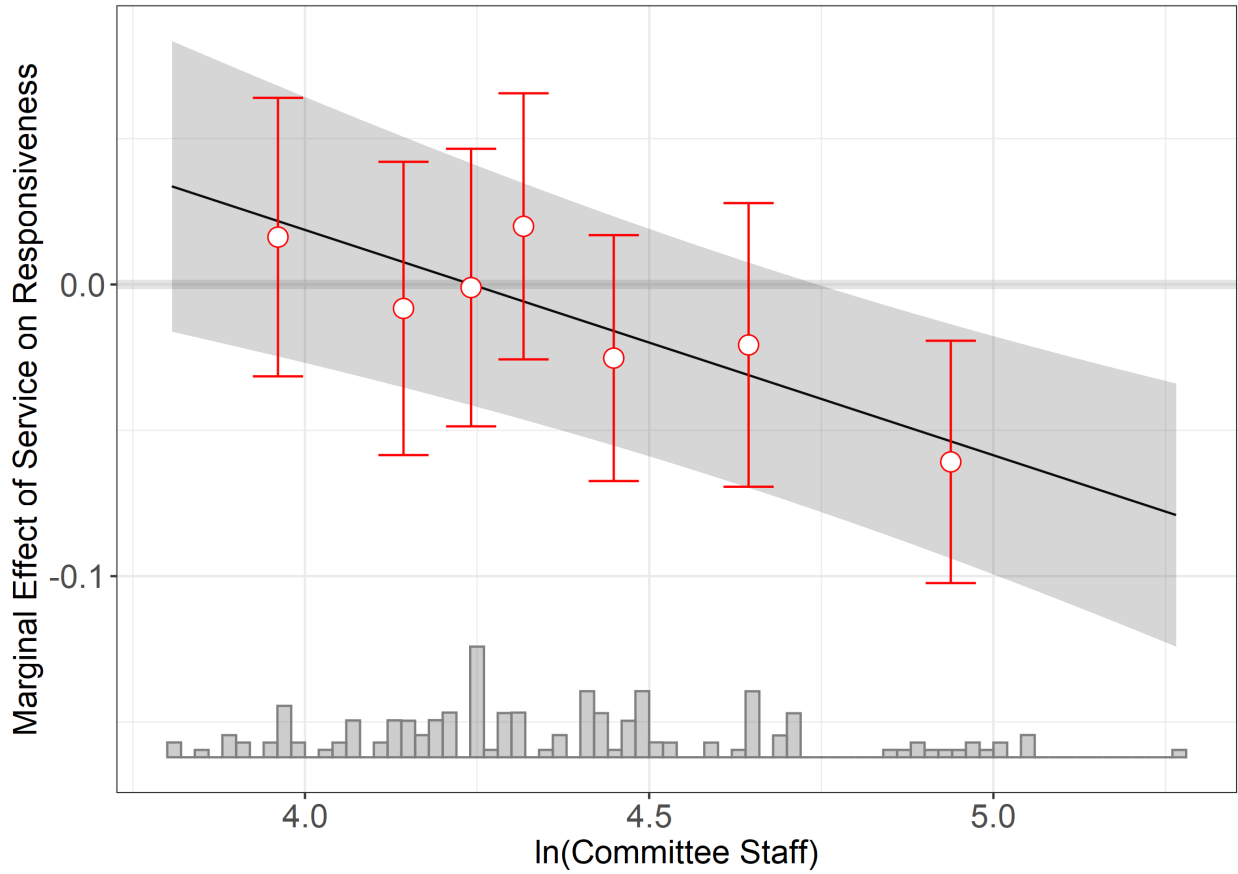
triple interaction between *Republican presidential vote share*, *On committee*, and *Committee staff* as well as all lower-order interaction terms.

Figure 2 presents the results of these analyses graphically. The plot shows the marginal effects of the interaction between committee membership and Republican presidential vote share (shown on the *y*-axis) across the range of committee staff sizes (shown on the *x*-axis). The solid line shows the estimated marginal effect from a linear model and the points show estimates for bins of the moderator along with 95% confidence intervals.²⁹ The horizontal line at zero shows the null hypothesis that committee staff does not moderate the effect of committee membership on responsiveness to public opinion. The histogram along the *x*-axis show the distribution of values of the staff measure. The results indicate that the effect of committee membership on responsiveness is more negative for committees with larger staff resources. Consistent with our proposed mechanism, these findings show that serving on committees with access to more (and, potentially, better) information reduces responsiveness to a greater degree than serving on committees with lower staff capacity.

Second, we consider how the change in responsiveness that we document corresponds to existing theoretical perspectives about committee service vis-à-vis legislators' constituents. If committee membership frees legislators from electoral constraints on issues related to their committee service (through, for example, an issue-specific electoral subsidy), legislators may downweight their constituents' preferences relative to their own. Given existing scholarship indicating that legislators are generally more ideologically extreme than their constituents (Bafumi and Herron 2010), this "untethering" from constituent preferences could be associated with more ideologically extreme voting patterns: more liberal voting patterns among Democrats and more conser-

²⁹Binning the moderator is suggested by Hainmueller, Mummolo, and Xu (2019) to assess the plausibility of the assumption of a linear interactive effect. Figure produced using the INTERFLEX package in R.

Figure 2: The Moderating Effect of Committee Capacity on Legislative Responsiveness



Solid line shows the effect of committee service on constituency responsiveness across the range of values of $\log(\text{committee staff})$. Points reflect estimates of the marginal effect within bins of the moderating variable. 95% confidence intervals are presented for both fits. Horizontal line represents the null hypothesis that the interaction between *On committee* and *Republican presidential vote share* is zero.

vative voting patterns among Republicans. Alternatively, and consistent with our argument, if our patterns are explained by committee members' access to information, we would expect that this information would provide a common signal about the state of the world to Democratic and Republican legislators. In this case, by contrast, we would expect that legislators would cast more-moderate votes in the issue areas of their committee service: to the extent that committee service leads to downweighting constituents' preferences, it is in service of better policy outcomes.

While our main results suggest the latter perspective, since the same rightward (leftward) shift

in district preferences corresponds to a smaller increase (decrease) in conservative vote probability among committee members, we also test the relationship between committee service and moderation more directly. To do so, we regressed our conservative vote probability measure on committee service, interacted with the legislator's party, as well as the various combinations of fixed effects in Table 1. Our results (see Table D.2) provide no evidence that committee service contributes to more extreme voting records. To the contrary, the interaction between *On Committee* and *Republican* ranges from zero to -0.013 (though it is only significant in the model with district fixed effects), suggesting that committee service may contribute to greater moderation among its members.

Third, we studied whether our effects may be attributable to social connections and collegiality rather than information. Legislators who serve together on committees, according to the former argument, may develop informal relationships that lead them to vote in more similar ways than they would otherwise. We examined this alternative explanation by accounting for committee size. Building on Tam Cho and Fowler (2010), we expect that decreases in committee size are associated with opportunities for stronger informal connections between members. We estimated several models to evaluate this expectation. Using the specification presented in column 1 of Table 1, we use committee size, in both raw and logged forms, to examine whether serving on smaller committees generates a larger decrease in responsiveness. The results, presented in Table D.3, provide no evidence that membership on smaller committees is associated with larger decreases in responsiveness to constituent preferences.

On their own, none of the findings above provides dispositive evidence for our proposed mechanism, committee members' policy expertise. Each of them, however, provides evidence consistent with the claim that policy information meaningfully affects the nature of congressional voting patterns and helps to rule out several competing explanations. The consistent findings across the four analyses point to the role of policy-specific information gained through committee service as an explanation for its effects on legislative voting patterns.

Conclusion

Political parties and standing committees are arguably the two most important institutions in the House of Representatives. As Brady (1988, 115) has written, “Committees are more than just a part of the policymaking process . . . Since World War II they have effectively made policy.” Though substantial literature analyzes consequences of legislative parties for political representation (e.g., Olson and Snyder Forthcoming), to our knowledge we are the first to study how committee membership affects constituency representation in Congress. We provide evidence that legislators are less responsive to district preferences on issues for which they serve on relevant committees.

Our findings have several implications for positive and normative theories of legislative organization and representation. First, our results are broadly consistent with theories that emphasize the role of expertise and specialization in the committee system. Upon joining committees, legislators become policy specialists and this specialization affects how they evaluate policy proposals in that domain. Our evidence is consistent with claims that committee membership provides information to legislators who then draw upon it when casting roll call votes.

Second, our results suggest a tradeoff between policy expertise and policy representation. From a normative perspective, our findings offer some reassurance that legislators draw upon their committee experience to make informed policy decisions. Policymaking is fraught with uncertainty, and committee service creates policy specialists who use the available information to reduce their uncertainty about how policies produce outcomes. The cost of this relationship, however, is the loss of some degree of democratic responsiveness. To the degree that committee service reduces constituency influence over policymaking, committee service may be viewed as undermining dyadic representation. These competing perspectives may be reconciled through the lens of pandering where, for example, officeholders must sometimes choose between supporting policies that are popular with the public and those that advance the public interest (e.g., Canes-Wrone, Herron, and Shotts 2001). In the context of congressional committees, our findings are

broadly consistent with the claim that pandering is less frequent than pure models of constituent control may predict.

Third, our analyses speak to the relationship between committee service and legislators' balancing act between policymaking and reelection considerations. Fenno (1962, 313) emphasized the importance for committee members to come from districts whose "electoral situation[s]" were "conducive to... 'responsible' legislative behavior." The key concern, according to Fenno, was that members would have "freedom of maneuver... without fear of reprisal at the polls." Our results suggest that committee service indeed provides the flexibility for legislators to act upon the expertise they gain in responsible ways. The electoral subsidy from committee service allows legislators to cast not only better-informed votes, but also to compile more moderate and, perhaps, less partisan, voting records than they might otherwise.

Fourth, our findings have some relevance for contemporary debates about committees and expertise in Congress. Recent reports released by the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress have encouraged greater investment in committee capacity and expertise. In additional (and more preliminary) analyses, we explored whether our results vary over time. We focused on the Republican Revolution following the 1994 congressional elections, which ushered in committee reforms that weakened committee capacity (Crosson et al. 2020). We find that while committee membership significantly reduced responsiveness prior to 1995, it had no effect on responsiveness following the Republican Revolution. (See Figure D.1 in the Supplementary Materials). To the extent our main findings indicate how committees contribute to substantive policymaking, these additional results suggest that weakening committee capacity has diminished the role of policy-relevant information in legislators' voting patterns.

Our findings raise new questions about legislative committees, information networks, and behavioral evaluations of representatives. While our analysis necessarily took the House committee system as relatively fixed, variation in the nature of committee systems, particularly as it relates to the allocation of power between committees and floor majorities (see Anzia and Jackman 2013),

could moderate the effect of committee membership on the acquisition of policy expertise and subsequent voting patterns. Given patterns of information transmission through legislative networks (Box-Steffensmeier, Ryan, and Sokhey 2015; Curry 2019; Fong 2020), moreover, our empirical estimates may understate the magnitude of the relationship between committee service and responsiveness. And, to the extent committee members share policy expertise with their colleagues, the composition of legislative networks may have representational consequences. Finally, our results suggest that voters may value the development of policy expertise even at the expense of dyadic representation. Future research on these and related questions would provide new insight about how legislative institutions affect substantive representation.

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Supplementary Materials

Legislative Organization and Political Representation

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A Descriptive Statistics

Table A.1: Summary Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Pctl. 25	Pctl. 75	Max
		Issue Area: Agriculture					
Adjusted CVP	9893	0.033	0.158	-0.358	-0.102	0.17	0.5
		Issue Area: Appropriations					
Adjusted CVP	9914	0.079	0.284	-0.596	-0.188	0.351	0.779
		Issue Area: Defense					
Adjusted CVP	9915	0.076	0.284	-0.789	-0.174	0.328	0.976
		Issue Area: Economy					
Adjusted CVP	9922	0.12	0.234	-0.561	-0.095	0.368	0.809
		Issue Area: Education					
Adjusted CVP	9878	-0.091	0.216	-0.856	-0.269	0.116	0.696
		Issue Area: Energy					
Adjusted CVP	9912	0.067	0.173	-0.426	-0.091	0.233	0.581
		Issue Area: Finance					
Adjusted CVP	9899	-0.015	0.093	-0.276	-0.095	0.077	0.249
		Issue Area: Foreign Policy					
Adjusted CVP	9918	0.056	0.211	-0.441	-0.142	0.273	0.777
		Issue Area: Housing					
Adjusted CVP	9801	0.166	0.384	-2.611	-0.151	0.479	3.713
		Issue Area: Labor					
Adjusted CVP	9899	0.163	0.43	-1.182	-0.238	0.613	1.52
		Issue Area: Taxes					
Adjusted CVP	9871	0.052	0.138	-0.414	-0.031	0.147	0.487
		Issue Area: Trade					
Adjusted CVP	9873	0.119	0.461	-1.497	-0.142	0.417	1.712
		Issue Area: Veterans					
Adjusted CVP	9863	0.005	0.026	-0.577	-0.001	0.01	0.791
		Issue Area: Welfare					
Adjusted CVP	9915	0.121	0.296	-0.502	-0.156	0.433	1.042

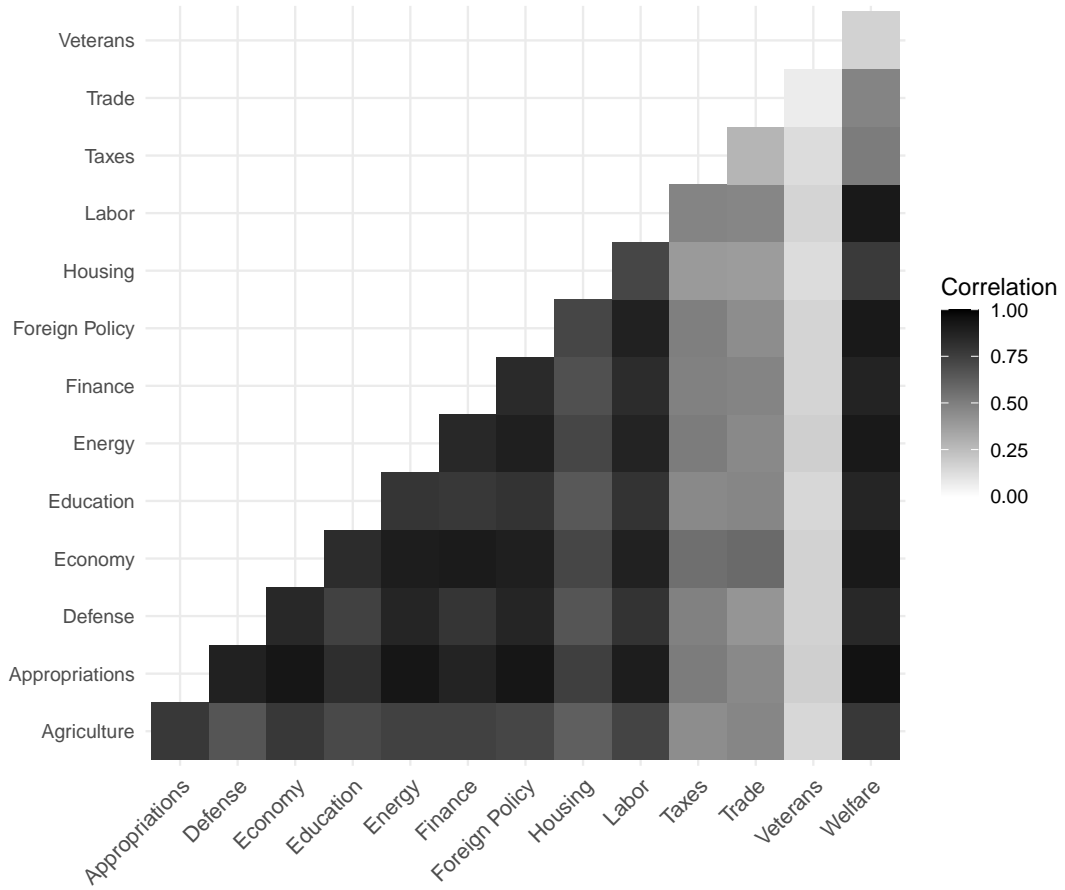
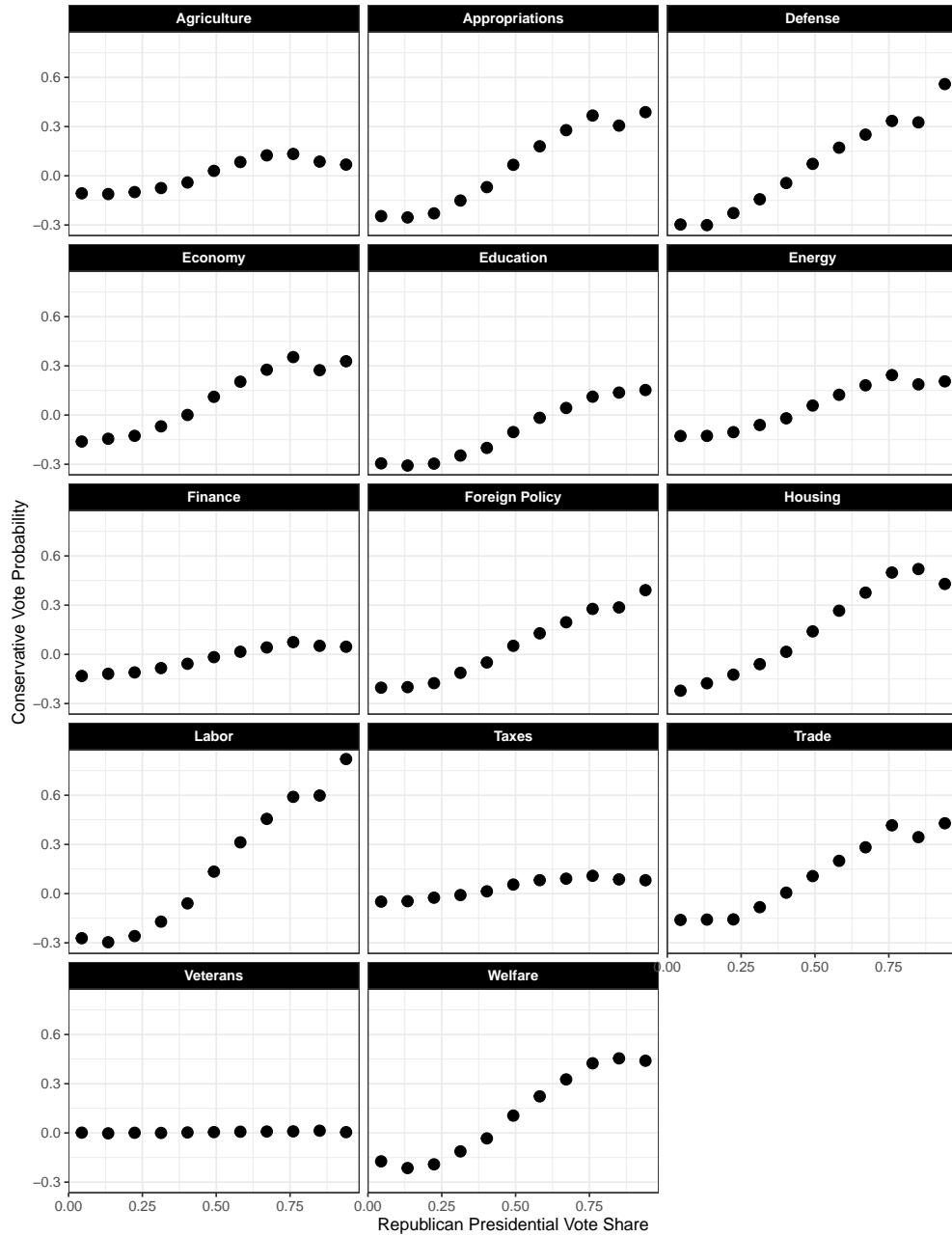


Figure A.1: Correlation Across Issue Areas by Legislator-Congress

Table A.2: Summary Statistics

Variable	Obs.	Mean	St. Dev.	Min.	25th	75th	Max
Adjusted CVP	138473	0.068	0.28	-2.61	-0.12	0.25	3.71
GOP Presidential Vote Share	138417	0.50	0.14	0.039	0.42	0.60	0.93
On Committee	138473	0.10	0.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
ln(Staff on Committee)	67565	4.37	0.30	3.81	4.17	4.52	5.27
ln(Staff per Committee Member)	67565	0.50	0.40	-0.28	0.27	0.84	1.72
Republican	138473	0.43	0.50	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Majority	138306	0.58	0.49	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Issue Area	138473						
... Agriculture	9893	7%					
... Appropriations	9914	7%					
... Defense	9915	7%					
... Economy	9922	7%					
... Education	9878	7%					
... Energy	9912	7%					
... Finance	9899	7%					
... Foreign Policy	9918	7%					
... Housing	9801	7%					
... Labor	9899	7%					
... Taxes	9871	7%					
... Trade	9873	7%					
... Veterans	9863	7%					
... Welfare	9915	7%					
Committee	138473						
... Agriculture	9893	7%					
... Appropriations	9914	7%					
... Armed Services	9915	7%					
... Banking	19700	14%					
... Education & Labor	29692	21%					
... Energy & Commerce	9912	7%					
... Foreign Affairs	9918	7%					
... Veterans' Affairs	9863	7%					
... Ways & Means	29666	21%					

Figure A.2: Legislative Responsiveness to Constituency Preferences across Issues



Plotted points show the binned mean values of conservative vote probabilities across the range of values of *Republican presidential vote share*.

B Robustness Checks

B.1 Parallel Trends

Table B.1: Parallel Trends: Committee Service and Ideological Responsiveness

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.093** (0.015)		0.086** (0.017)		0.110** (0.021)	
On Committee	0.020 (0.016)	0.024 (0.016)	0.028 (0.022)	0.043* (0.022)	0.054* (0.030)	0.050 (0.036)
On Committee (t+1)	-0.011 (0.017)	-0.009 (0.017)	-0.011 (0.020)	-0.010 (0.021)	-0.040 (0.034)	-0.009 (0.037)
On Committee (t-1)			-0.012 (0.014)	-0.025* (0.014)	-0.012 (0.024)	-0.015 (0.024)
On Committee (t+2)					0.015 (0.024)	0.0003 (0.023)
On Committee (t-2)					-0.015 (0.018)	-0.017 (0.018)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share × On Committee	-0.041 (0.030)	-0.049 (0.030)	-0.047 (0.041)	-0.073* (0.041)	-0.096* (0.058)	-0.082 (0.068)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share × On Committee (t+1)	0.005 (0.031)	0.002 (0.031)	-0.005 (0.037)	-0.005 (0.038)	0.055 (0.064)	-0.010 (0.070)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share × On Committee (t-1)			0.015 (0.028)	0.039 (0.027)	-0.002 (0.047)	0.002 (0.046)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share × On Committee (t+2)					-0.030 (0.048)	0.007 (0.045)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share × On Committee (t-2)					0.042 (0.035)	0.047 (0.035)
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Member Fixed Effects		✓		✓		✓
No. Unit FEs	15,252	15,252	13,597	13,597	10,125	10,125
No. Clusters	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,224	3,224
Observations	121,372	121,372	106,147	106,147	80,850	80,850

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. *p<0.10, **p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

B.2 Fully Moderated Models

We omit the specification in Model 2 from Table 1 because both types of fixed effects in that specification are indexed by legislator, and so interactions between *On committee* and those fixed effects are collinear with the quantities of interest.

Table B.2: Committee Service and Ideological Responsiveness: Fully Moderated Model

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.081** (0.014)		0.190** (0.029)	0.111** (0.022)
Republican				0.314** (0.006)
On Committee × Republican				−0.009 (0.008)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share × On Committee	−0.052** (0.018)	−0.043** (0.015)	−0.035 (0.025)	−0.039 (0.025)
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓		
District-by-Issue Fixed Effects			✓	✓
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Issue FE × ‘On Committee’	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Member Fixed Effects		✓		
No. Unit FEs	17,045	17,045	29,504	29,504
No. Clusters	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279
Observations	138,417	138,417	138,417	138,417

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test).

B.3 Sample Robustness

Each figure in this section plots estimates for the interaction between district presidential vote share and an indicator for committee membership, based on model from table 1, column 1, while sequentially omitting committees, issue areas, congresses, and states, respectively. Thick lines show the 90 percent confidence intervals and thin lines indicate 95 percent confidence intervals when clustering on district. Table B.3 presents results based on a sample comprising 1972 and after (therefore avoiding the unusual nature of the 1968 presidential election) and Table B.4 presents results estimated using only highly ideological issue areas – specifically, appropriations, the economy, education, labor, welfare, and taxes.

Figure B.1: Estimate of “Rep. Pres Vote Share \times On Committee,” Dropping Committees

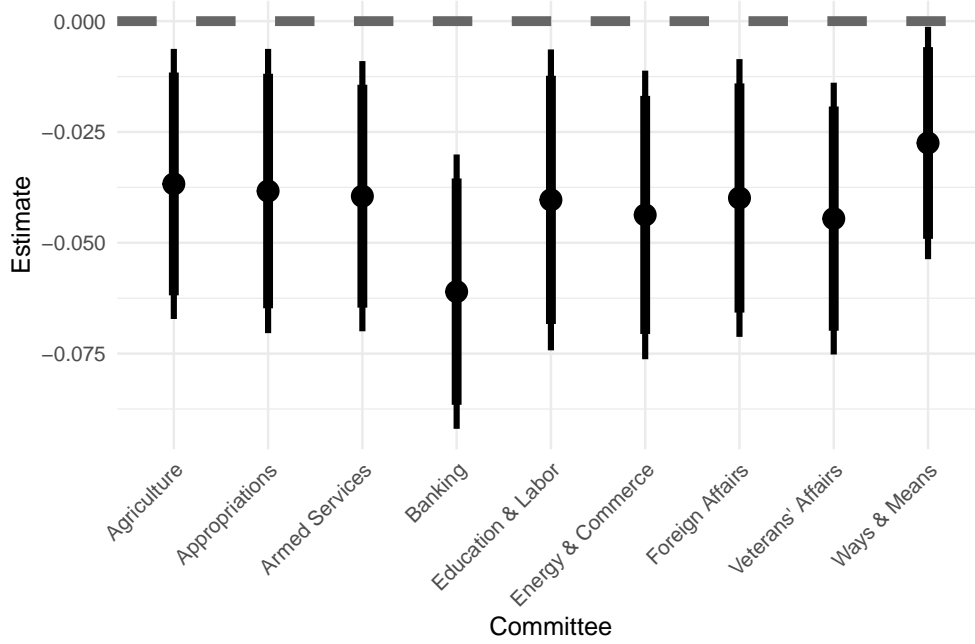


Figure B.2: Estimate of “Rep. Pres Vote Share \times On Committee,” Dropping Issue Areas

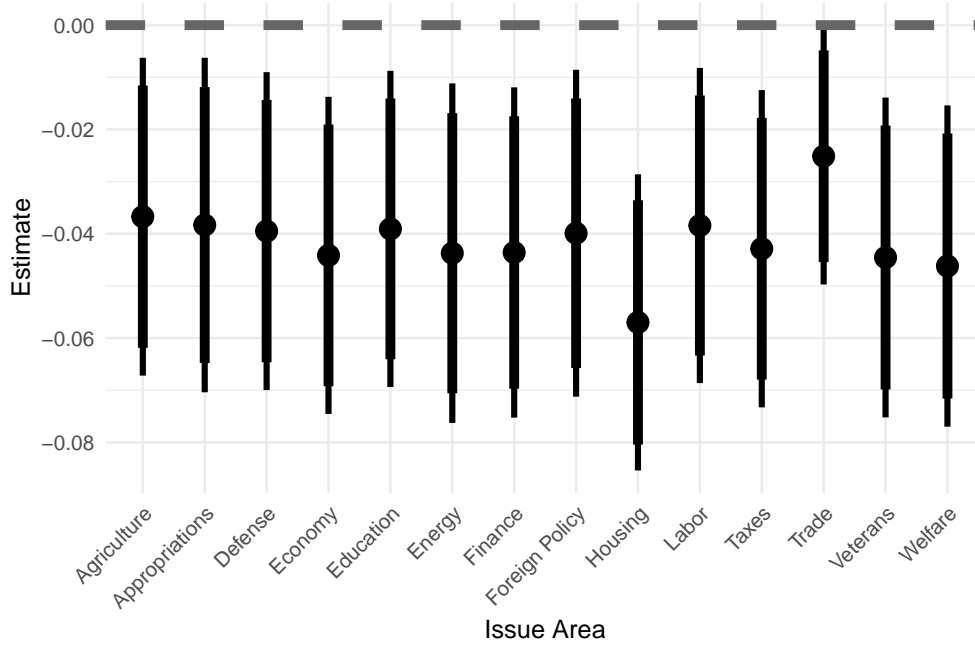


Figure B.3: Estimate of “Rep. Pres Vote Share \times On Committee,” Dropping Congresses

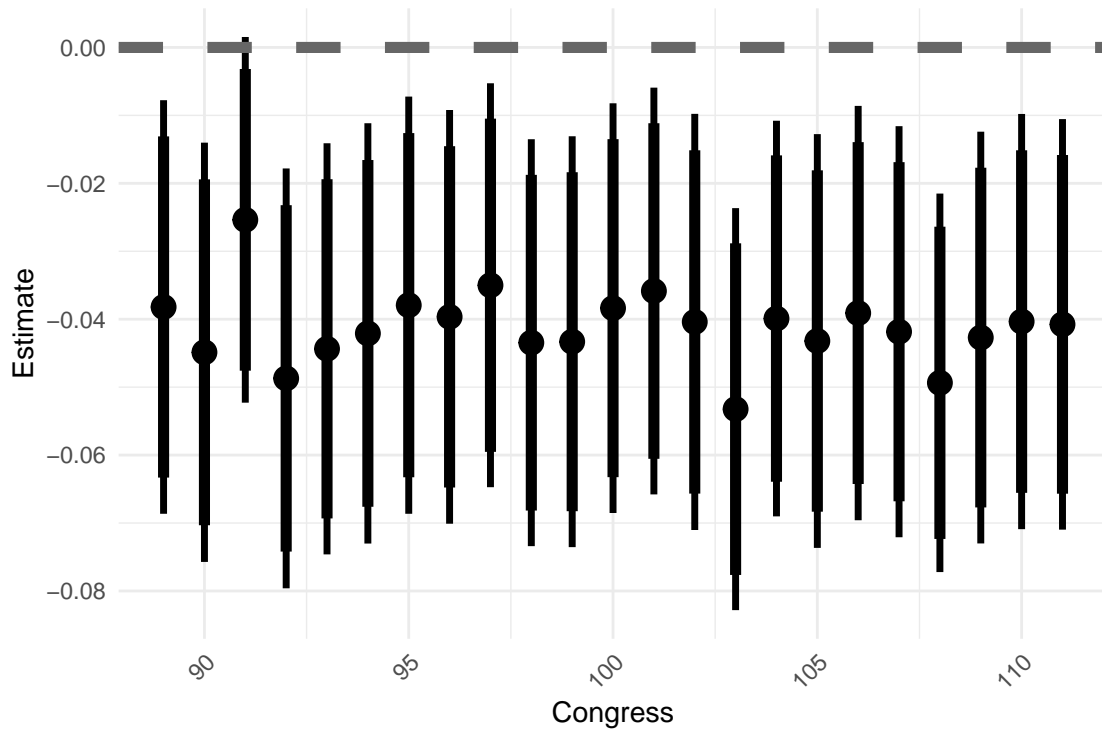


Figure B.4: Estimate of “Rep. Pres Vote Share \times On Committee,” Dropping States

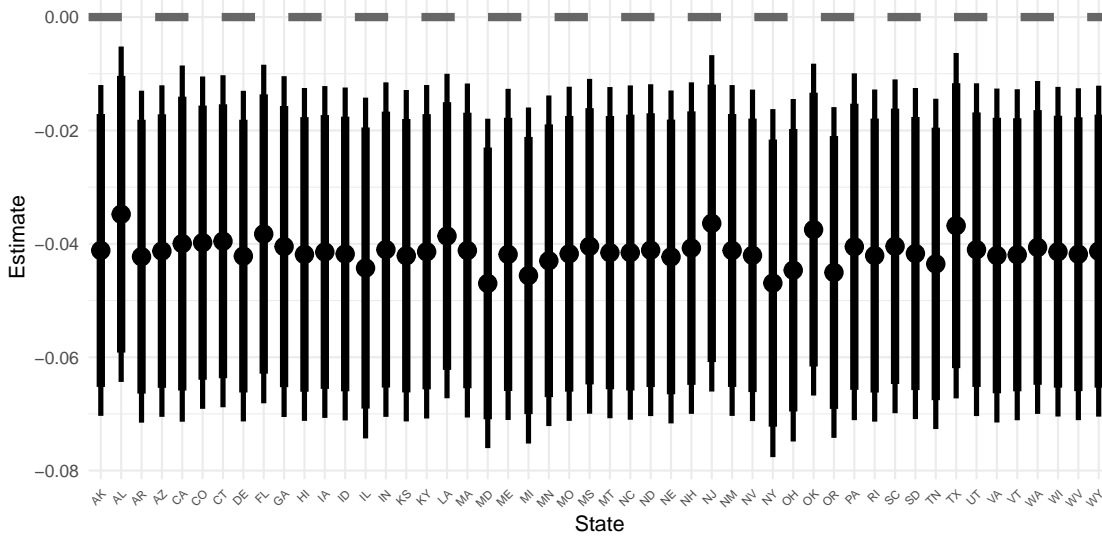


Table B.3: Committee Service and Ideological Responsiveness, 1972 and Later

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.031* (0.017)			0.193** (0.037)	0.106** (0.028)
On Committee	0.021** (0.008)	0.027** (0.008)	0.026** (0.007)	0.030** (0.012)	0.023** (0.010)
Republican					0.317** (0.006)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share × On Comm.	-0.050** (0.015)	-0.058** (0.014)	-0.059** (0.014)	-0.061** (0.022)	-0.049** (0.018)
District-by-Issue Fixed Effects				✓	✓
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓		
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓		✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Member Fixed Effects		✓	✓		
No. Unit FEs	14,748	14,748	14,748	21,168	21,168
No. Clusters	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352	2,352
Observations	114,865	114,865	114,865	114,865	114,865

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. *p<0.10, **p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

Table B.4: Committee Service and Ideological Responsiveness, Only Ideological Issues

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.096** (0.017)			0.216** (0.037)	0.122** (0.027)
On Committee	0.005 (0.009)	0.024** (0.009)	0.022** (0.009)	-0.002 (0.020)	0.006 (0.014)
Republican					0.382** (0.007)
Rep. Pres. Vote Share \times On Comm.	-0.040** (0.018)	-0.067** (0.017)	-0.067** (0.017)	-0.005 (0.041)	-0.038 (0.030)
District-by-Issue Fixed Effects				✓	✓
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓		
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓		✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Member Fixed Effects		✓	✓		
No. Unit FEs	5,685	5,685	5,685	9,837	9,837
No. Clusters	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279
Observations	59,375	59,375	59,375	59,375	59,375

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test).

B.4 Committee Exile

Table B.5: Committee Exile Analysis

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.422** (0.072)	0.315** (0.087)	0.412** (0.099)	0.303** (0.100)
Exiled	-0.077 (0.127)	-0.082 (0.133)	-0.115 (0.136)	-0.102 (0.133)
Republican	0.266** (0.027)	0.207** (0.042)	0.183** (0.042)	
Rep. Pres. Vote Share × Exiled	0.131 (0.225)	0.132 (0.229)	0.188 (0.233)	0.185 (0.228)
Lagged DV		0.219* (0.119)	0.170 (0.128)	0.126 (0.132)
Constant	-0.295** (0.032)	-0.225** (0.049)		
Committee Fixed Effects			✓	✓
Congress Fixed Effects				✓
Observations	378	378	378	378

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.
*p<0.10, **p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

C Extensions: Heterogeneous Effects

C.1 Partisanship and Majority Status

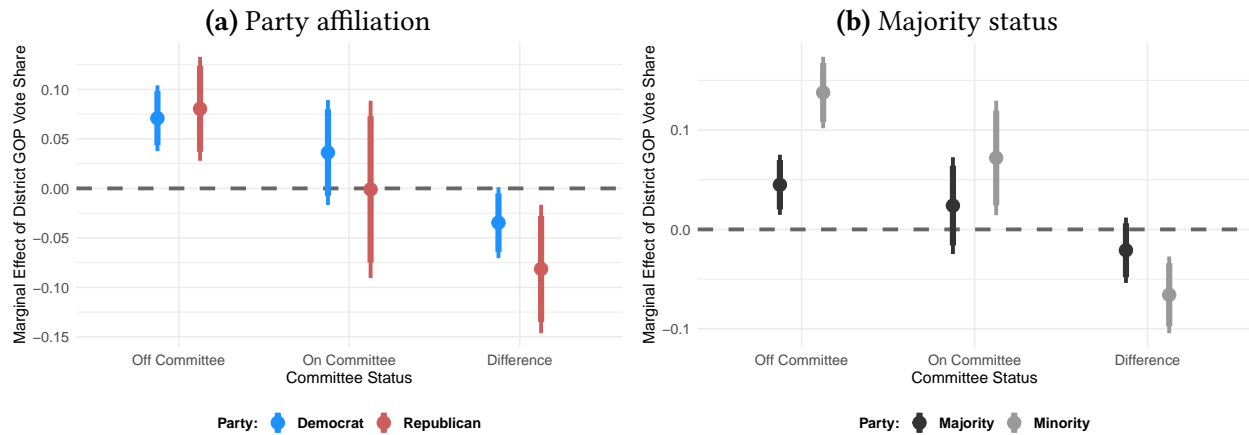
We considered whether the effects of committee membership on responsiveness to district preferences varied across political parties. To do so, we distinguished the effects among Democrats and Republicans. We also distinguished the effects based on whether a legislator’s party had majority or minority status in the chamber.

The results are shown in Figure C.1. The left plot shows the results for comparing the effects of committee membership among Democrats and Republicans and the right plot shows the results when comparing legislators based on majority status. The plotted points are the coefficient estimates and the vertical lines are the 95 percent confidence intervals. Using the model specification from column (1) of Table 1, “Off Committee” (shown along the x -axis) plots the coefficient for *Republican presidential vote share* for legislators who do not serve on an issue-relevant committee. “On Committee” shows responsiveness among legislators who do serve on issue-relevant committees. The right-most set of plotted points show the difference between “Off committee” and “On committee,” which corresponds to the interaction between committee membership and district ideological preferences.

Figure C.1a shows that the effects of committee membership on district responsiveness are roughly equivalent among both Democrats and Republicans. Non-committee members from both parties are similarly responsive to their constituents, and we do not find any statistically significant differences in responsiveness between Republicans and Democrats who do serve on committees. While the difference between these quantities is about twice as large for Republicans (-0.08) as it is for Democrats (-0.04), we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the marginal effects are the same magnitude. As Figure C.1b shows, however, we find some that evidence committee membership has greater effects among members of the minority party. Among both committee members and non-members, we find that minority members are more responsive to district pref-

erences than members of the majority party. However, the difference in levels of responsiveness are much larger for minority party members, while the effects of committee membership are small (-0.02) and indistinguishable from zero for majority party members.

Figure C.1: The Moderating Effect of Party Affiliation on Legislative Responsiveness



Plotted points characterize the coefficients for *Republican presidential vote share* for legislators “off committee” and “on committee.” The points for “Difference” show the interaction between committee service and district ideological preferences, or the difference between these quantities. Vertical lines show the 90 percent (thick lines) and 95 percent (thin lines) confidence intervals.

C.2 Electoral Competition

We studied how individual legislators’ electoral incentives moderated the effect of committee membership. To the extent that electoral competition creates incentives for responsiveness to constituency preferences, we would expect that average rates of responsiveness are higher in more competitive districts. However, it is unclear whether the shifts in responsiveness among committee members documented above are similar in magnitude across legislators from districts with varying levels of competition. We distinguish the effects of committee service among legislators from marginal and safe districts with a triple interaction between *Republican presidential vote share*, *On committee*, and an indicator for legislators from marginal districts. We characterize members’ districts as marginal if the district’s margin in the most recent presidential election was

ten percentage points or less.

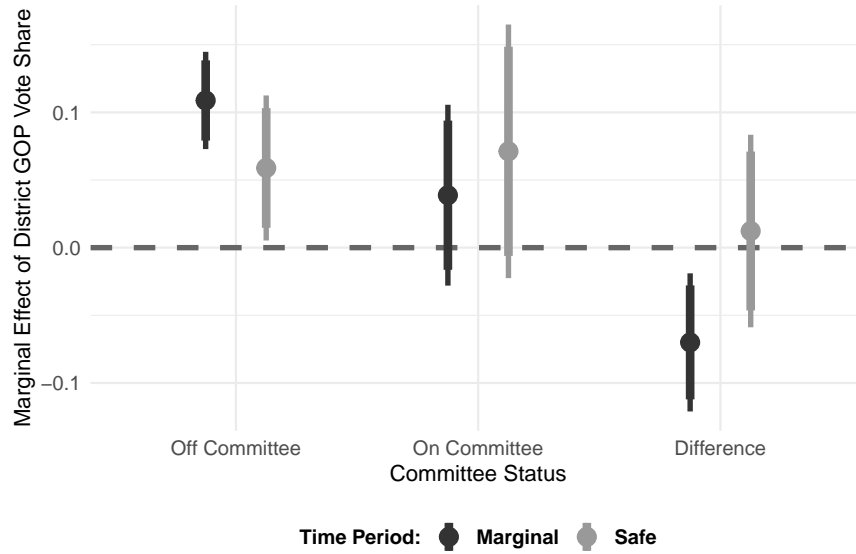
The results are presented in Figure C.2. First, among non-committee members, average issue responsiveness is greater among legislators from marginal rather than safe districts. Competitive electoral environments are associated with a stronger link between constituent preferences and legislative voting behavior. Second, however, among committee members, we find no difference in responsiveness based on whether legislators represent safe or marginal districts. The estimates are less precise and neither is statistically distinguishable from zero, yet they suggest that legislators are equally responsive to constituent preferences across both safe and marginal districts. While both of these findings are correlational in nature, the third and most important result concerns the effect of committee membership on responsiveness. Here, we find that committee membership produces a negative and statistically significant decrease in responsiveness among legislators from marginal districts, while the marginal effect among legislators from safe districts is positive, small in magnitude, and statistically indistinguishable from zero.

C.3 Variation across Committees

We distinguished the effects across each of the nine committees in our data by interacting indicators for each committee with the interaction between *Republican presidential vote share* and *On committee*. We do not have strong theoretical expectations about whether and how these effects are likely to vary. However, just as some committees may be more desirable than others for reasons related to prestige or access to distributive resources, committees may vary in the information they provide and in legislators' incentives to act upon it.

The results shown in Figure C.3 reveal that while the effect of committee membership on responsiveness is estimated to be negative for eight of the nine committee, there is some heterogeneity in the patterns across them. The findings for Agriculture, Armed Services, Education and Labor, Foreign Affairs, and Ways and Means most resemble those shown in Table 1. Legislators who do not serve on these committees are generally responsive to constituency preferences,

Figure C.2: The Moderating Effect of Marginality on Legislative Responsiveness



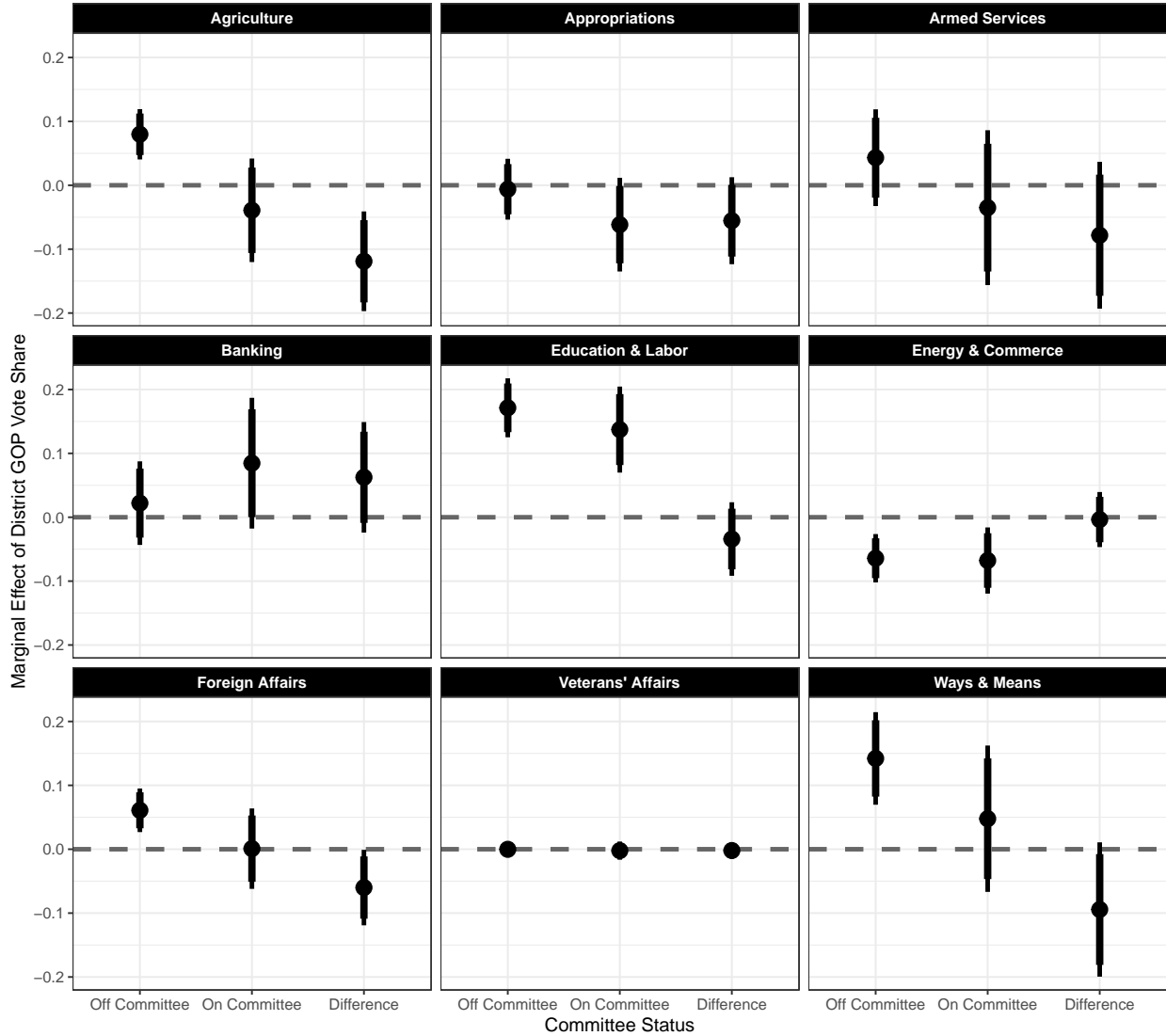
Plotted points characterize the coefficients for *Republican presidential vote share* for legislators “off committee” and “on committee.” The points for “Difference” show the estimate for the interaction between committee service and district ideological preferences, or the difference between these quantities. Vertical lines show the 90 percent (thick lines) and 95 percent (thin lines) confidence intervals.

while responsiveness is lower among committee members. Among several other committees, including Appropriations, Energy and Commerce and, most notably, Veterans’ Affairs, legislators not on the committee are largely unresponsive to constituent preferences but committee membership does not meaningfully change this relationship. Finally, the difference for the Banking Committee is positive but not distinguishable from zero.

C.4 Variation Over Committee Tenure

Finally, we are interested in knowing whether the effects of committee service that we document are immediate, or accumulate over the course of a committee career. To study this, we not only interact district Republican vote share with an indicator for being on a committee, but also with a count variable that records the number of congresses the legislator has served on that committee; this variable is 0 if the legislator is not on the committee. We again use the five main

Figure C.3: Committee-Specific Estimates of Changes in Responsiveness



Plotted points characterize the coefficients for *Republican presidential vote share* for legislators “off committee” and “on committee.” The points for “Difference” show the interaction between committee service and district ideological preference, or the difference between these quantities. Vertical lines show the 90 percent (thick lines) and 95 percent (thin lines) confidence intervals.

model specifications from Table 1.

The results, presented in Table C.1, are mixed, but on balance suggest that the effect of committee service is immediate. While our main specification, Model 1, suggests that effects accumulate over time, the other specifications are uniform in their indication that being on a committee, regardless of length, is what contributes to our documented reduction in responsiveness.

Table C.1: Length and Durability of Committee Service and Ideological Responsiveness

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.080** (0.014)			0.180** (0.028)	0.112** (0.022)
Committee Tenure	0.006** (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.002 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)
On Committee	0.001 (0.008)	0.016** (0.008)	0.016** (0.008)	0.028** (0.013)	0.022** (0.011)
Republican					0.319** (0.006)
Rep. Vote Share × Committee Tenure	-0.010** (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.007)	-0.004 (0.005)
Rep. Vote Share × On Committee	-0.017 (0.016)	-0.043** (0.015)	-0.044** (0.015)	-0.054** (0.025)	-0.048** (0.021)
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓		
District-by-Issue Fixed Effects				✓	✓
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓		✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Member Fixed Effects		✓	✓		
No. Unit FEs	15,252	15,252	15,252	29,180	29,180
No. Clusters	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279
Observations	136,624	136,624	136,624	136,624	136,624

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. “Ever Served” takes a value of one for every year after an MC starts serving on a committee, regardless of whether they still do. “Committee Tenure” is a count starting the first congress a member serves on a committee (and continues regardless of whether they still serve). *p<0.10, **p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

D Additional Evidence of an Informational Mechanism

D.1 Committee Capacity

Table D.1: Committee Service and Ideological Responsiveness

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>					
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.187 (0.172)		-0.011 (0.254)	-0.058* (0.034)		0.026 (0.060)
On Committee	-0.249** (0.125)	-0.197* (0.101)	-0.266* (0.148)	-0.006 (0.020)	-0.00005 (0.017)	-0.006 (0.027)
Republican			0.362** (0.008)			0.362** (0.008)
Rep. Vote Share \times On Comm.	0.771** (0.244)	0.648** (0.199)	0.836** (0.291)	0.031 (0.040)	0.018 (0.035)	0.028 (0.049)
Rep. Vote Share \times ln(Staff)	-0.054 (0.038)	-0.051* (0.026)	0.012 (0.055)			
On Committee \times ln(Staff)	0.058** (0.028)	0.047** (0.022)	0.065** (0.032)			
Rep. Vote Share \times On Comm. \times ln(Staff)	-0.179** (0.054)	-0.153** (0.043)	-0.201** (0.064)			
Rep. Vote Share \times ln(Staff per Member)				0.017 (0.037)	-0.014 (0.034)	0.029 (0.066)
On Committee \times ln(Staff per Member)				0.022 (0.031)	0.022 (0.025)	0.056 (0.041)
Rep. Vote Share \times On Comm. \times ln(Staff P.M.)				-0.098 (0.061)	-0.096* (0.051)	-0.163** (0.080)
District-by-Issue Fixed Effects			✓			✓
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Congress-by-Member Fixed Effects		✓			✓	
No. Unit FEs	10,906	10,906	16,584	10,906	10,906	16,584
No. Clusters	2,073	2,073	2,073	2,073	2,073	2,073
Observations	67,565	67,565	67,565	67,565	67,565	67,565

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test).

D.2 Committee Membership and Ideological Extremism

Table D.2: Committee Service and Polarization

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Adjusted Conservative Vote Probability			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
On Committee	-0.005 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)	-0.003 (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)
On Committee × Republican	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.006 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.005)	-0.013* (0.007)
Republican				0.320** (0.006)
GOP Pres. Vote Share	0.075** (0.014)			0.107** (0.022)
District-by-Issue Fixed Effects				✓
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓	✓	
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓		✓	✓
Congress-by-Member Fixed Effects		✓	✓	
No. Unit FEs	15,252	15,252	15,252	29,180
No. Clusters	3,279	3,279	3,279	3,279
Observations	136,624	136,680	136,680	136,624

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. *p<0.10, **p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

D.3 Committee Size

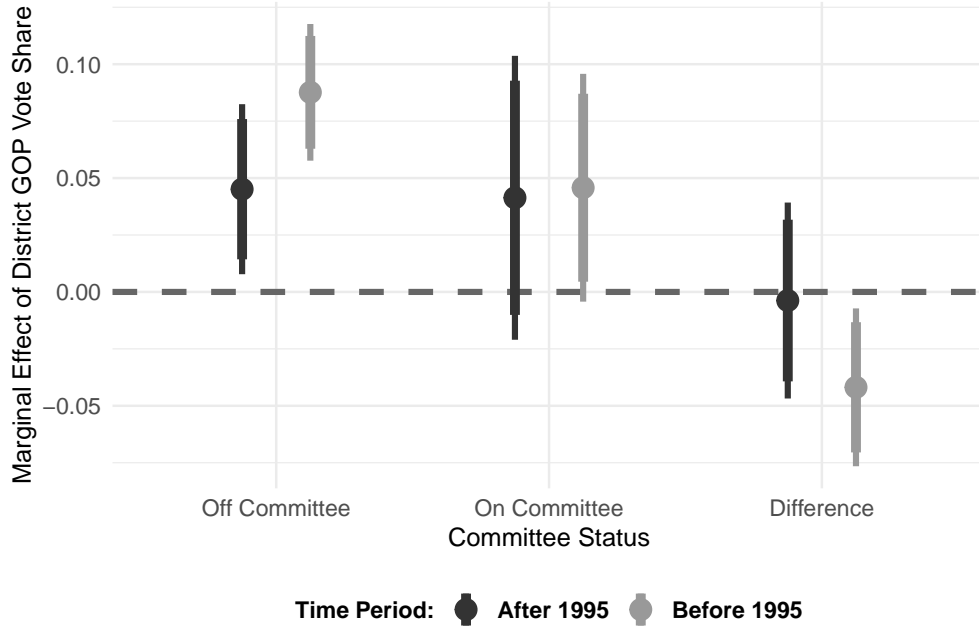
Table D.3: Committee Size and Ideological Responsiveness

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Adjusted CVP	
	(1)	(2)
Republican Presidential Vote Share	0.298** (0.038)	0.890** (0.142)
On Committee	-0.012 (0.031)	-0.088 (0.113)
Rep. Vote Share × On Comm.	-0.034 (0.058)	-0.039 (0.215)
Rep Vote Share × No. on Committee	-0.005** (0.001)	
On Committee × No. on Committee	0.0005 (0.001)	
Rep. Vote Share × On Comm. × No. on Committee	-0.00001 (0.001)	
Rep Vote Share × ln(No. on Committee)		-0.220** (0.038)
On Committee × ln(No. on Committee)		0.026 (0.029)
Rep. Vote Share × On Comm. × ln(No. on Committee)		0.001 (0.056)
Member-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓
Congress-by-Issue Fixed Effects	✓	✓
No. Unit FEs	15,252	15,252
No. Clusters	3,279	3,279
Observations	136,624	136,624

Note: Entries are linear regression coefficients with standard errors clustered on congressional districts in parentheses. Observations are at the MC-by-issue-by-Congress level. *p<0.10, **p<0.05 (two-tailed test).

D.4 Temporal Variation

Figure D.1: The Effect of Committee Service Responsiveness Before and After the Republican Revolution



Plotted points characterize the coefficients for *Republican presidential vote share* for legislators “off committee” and “on committee.” The points for “Difference” show the interaction between committee service and district ideological preference, or the difference between these quantities. Vertical lines show the 90 percent (thick lines) and 95 percent (thin lines) confidence intervals.