Mechanisms of Checks and Balances: Appropriations, Congressional Committees, and Interbranch Conflict*

Jeremiah Cha†
Harvard University

Jon Rogowski‡
University of Chicago

First version: 8 April 2023
This version: 10 December 2024

Abstract

Since the birth of modern political science, the power of the purse has been recognized as among the most important institutional powers through which Congress constrains presidential ambitions. We argue that the organization of Congress into committees and subcommittees is a key mechanism by which the collective body enforces its institutional prerogatives over appropriations. We test the hypothesis that presidents are less successful in realizing their preferred budgetary outcomes as the relevant subcommittee is more ideologically distant from the president. Using comprehensive new data on presidential budget requests and congressional appropriations for the U.S. federal government from 1972 to 2021, we find strong support for our expectations. Our findings offer new evidence about how the composition of legislative committees affects policy outcomes and illustrate how the (sub)committee system provides a mechanism by which Congress overcomes its collective action problems to constrain the executive.

Word Count: 8,673 (Approx)

*The Division of the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago provided generous support for this project. We thank Bryant Jung, Derek Kost, Benjamin Manning, and especially Sarah Cooper for exceptional research assistance. We also thank Kevin Angell, Pam Ban, Ruth Bloch Rubin, Dan Carpenter, Jim Curry, Seth Hill, Will Howell, Sam Kernell, Thad Kousser, Josh Ryan, Ken Shepsle, Dan Thompson, Craig Volden, Alan Wiseman, Adam Zelizer, and workshop audiences at Harvard University and UC San Diego for helpful comments.

†Ph.D candidate, Department of Government; jeremiahcha@g.harvard.edu.

‡Professor, Department of Political Science; jrogowski@uchicago.edu.

The presidency sits at the center of virtually every national issue in contemporary American politics. The increasing exercise of unilateral powers and expanding reach of institutional influence have sparked anxieties and debates about executive overreach within academic communities and among political observers.[1] Congress's waning capacity to counter presidential influence (see, e.g., Metzger 2021; Passachoff 2016; Whittington and Carpenter 2003) raises particularly urgent questions about the separation of powers in a system where formal authority is shared across branches of government (Neustadt 1990).

We study the limits on the president's policymaking influence in the context of appropriations. The power of the purse is among the most important powers granted to Congress. It is also a key mechanism in the separation of powers, as legislative control over appropriations is "[o]ne of Congress's main tools to push back at…presidential unilateralism" (Metzger 2021, 1153) and "the most important single curb in the Constitution on presidential power" (Corwin 1978, 134). We examine how the power of the purse constrains the policymaking influence of contemporary presidents. We focus on the role of the appropriations subcommittees, particularly in the House given Congress's tendency to delegate appropriations decisions to the relevant House subcommittees (Fenno 1966; Kingdon 1966; MacMahon 1943), in shaping Congress's response to presidents' budgetary proposals. Specifically, we posit that presidents are less successful in achieving their preferred budgetary outcomes as the composition of the relevant subcommittee is more ideologically distant from the president. In this way, the (sub)committee system provides a mechanism by which Congress overcomes its collective action problems to constrain the executive.

Our argument makes five main contributions. First, while classical perspectives argue that subcommittees evaluate presidential budget requests based on norms of fiscal responsibility (Fenno 1966), we argue that subcommittee members evaluate presidents' budget requests based on their ideological orientation vis-á-vis the president. Second, even as polarization has increased gridlock and complicated Congress's ability to make collective decisions (e.g., Binder 2015), we show that

[1]See, e.g., https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/04/us/politics/trump-2025-overview.html.

subcommittees perform the function of the broader Congress in enforcing its power of the purse. Third, we show how interbranch conflict limits presidents' ability to secure their policy goals, complementing other means through which Congress constrains the administrative presidency (e.g., Bolton and Thrower 2021; Howell 2003; Kriner and Schickler 2016). Fourth, we contribute to scholarship that theorizes how committee composition affects legislative outcomes (Adler 2000; Krehbiel 1990, 1991; McGrath and Ryan 2019; Shepsle and Weingast 1985). Fifth, our argument provides a framework for considering how other features of the political environment—including the president's popularity, the salience of particular issue areas, and the characteristics of bureaucratic agencies—affect interbranching bargaining. Though our focus is on the United States, our perspective relates to scholarship on the role of parliamentary committees in constraining ministries and executive agencies (see, e.g., Longley and Davidson 1998).

We introduce comprehensive data on presidential budget requests and enacted appropriations from fiscal years 1972 to 2021. We match these data to the subcommittee exercising jurisdiction over each request and characterize the ideological composition of each subcommittee's membership. Using these data, we show that enacted appropriations increasingly differ from the president's proposal when the ideological distance increases between the president and the median subcommittee member. These results are driven primarily by ideological conflict between the president and members of the House appropriations subcommittees and are robust across a range of model specifications, estimation strategies, and measurement choices. Moreover, these results are not driven by strategic presidential behavior in developing budgetary requests or variation in partisan control of Congress. In additional analyses, we find no evidence that Congress's response to the president's budgetary requests is moderated by presidential popularity, issues that are priorities of the president or particularly salient to the public, or by the structural independence of or ideological alignment between executive branch institutions and the president.

Our findings provide new evidence about how (sub)committee composition affects policy outcomes and illustrate a mechanism through which Congress constrains the president's agenda-

setter advantage in budgetary politics. In an era of rampant partisan polarization, narrow legislative majorities, and concerns about growing congressional dysfunction (e.g., Levinson and Pildes 2006), the work of the small appropriations subcommittees enables the broader legislature to perform its task of checking and balancing the executive.

Presidential Power and Appropriations

Presidents have incentives to direct policymaking activity within the executive branch. By staffing the bureaucracy with ideological allies (Lewis 2008), centralizing policymaking in the White House (Moe 1985), and issuing unilateral directives (Howell 2003), presidents have opportunities to create new policies and reshape existing ones. Yet the scope of presidents' policy influence is limited by their need for funding, without which their initiatives cannot be executed. As such, Congress's power over appropriations is a key mechanism for constraining presidents' efforts to control the executive branch. As McConachie (1898, 235) argued more than a century ago, it is "in the direction of administrative activity through the power of granting or withholding money…that Congress finds by far its greatest power over the Executive…"

Appropriations is a particularly useful context for studying Congress's ability to constrain presidential power. First, appropriations is a substantively important policy outcome, responsible for spending upwards of $6 trillion dollars annually—nearly a quarter of the nation's gross domestic product. Reflecting the importance of appropriations policy, virtually every fiscal year is accompanied by threats of government shutdowns. Second, appropriations is central to the president's control of the administrative state (Bolton and Thrower 2019). As Metzger (2021, 1077) writes, contemporary presidents often have incentives for "creatively interpret[ing] appropriations statutes, impos[ing] new grant conditions, repurpos[ing] and withhold[ing] funds, and invok[ing] inadequate funding as a basis for broad assertions of presidential discretion." Third, debates over appropriations between Congress and the president concern concrete dollar figures.

In contrast with most other areas of public policy, in which Congress and the president debate myriad provisions when writing new immigration policy or reforming the health care system, for example, these dollar figures provide a measurable way of evaluating Congress's willingness to accommodate the president's stated spending preferences.

The evolution of the appropriations process over US history has gradually favored the presidency. In the nation's early years, departmental officials sought lump sum grants of appropriations while Congress argued for specificity as a means of performing its oversight role. The expansion of the standing committee system between 1814 and 1816, in fact, reflected Congress's interest in overseeing executive branch expenditures (see Galloway 1961, 174-176). The 1921 Budget and Accounting Act overhauled what had been a decentralized appropriations system by requiring presidents to submit an annual budget request to Congress. So doing, the president gained formal proposal power over appropriations, which conveyed greater authority over the nation's spending (Dearborn 2019; Krause and Jin 2020; Krause 2022). These basic terms govern the relationship between presidents and Congress in contemporary appropriations politics.

Scholars have identified a number of factors associated with how well Congress accommodates the president's budgetary requests. Kiewiet and McCubbins (1988) show that veto power conveys asymmetric benefits to the president in bargaining over appropriations, as presidents have greater influence in setting appropriations policy when they prefer less spending to Congress but are less influential when they prefer more spending. Canes-Wrone (2001) shows that presidents are more successful in achieving their budgetary goals on proposals for which they have sought public support. Other studies show that Congress better accommodates presidential preferences during periods of war (Howell, Jackman and Rogowski 2013, chapter 5) and for agencies concerned with foreign affairs (Canes-Wrone, Howell and Lewis 2008).

We study how Congress constrains presidential influence over budgetary outcomes. Given the disaggregated way Congress evaluates the president's budgetary proposals, we focus on the role of the Appropriations Committees and their various subcommittees in scrutinizing the

president's budget requests. Previous research examines how the aggregated characteristics of Congress or its chambers affect the legislative responses responses to presidential budgets (e.g., Canes-Wrone, Howell and Lewis 2008; Howell, Jackman and Rogowski 2013) but has not evaluated how subcommittee composition affects evaluations of presidents' requests. This is an important omission given that scholars have long recognized the central role of the appropriations subcommittees in enacting the nation's budget (e.g., Fenno 1966; Geiger 1994; Kingdon 1966; MacMahon 1943).

The Appropriations Subcommittees as a Source of Presidential Constraint

We argue that the composition of the appropriations subcommittees shapes congressional scrutiny of presidential budgets. Over the last century, the appropriations committees have been organized as 10 to 13 subcommittees, each of which has jurisdiction for appropriations related to some set of institutions within the federal government. The subcommittees review the president's spending requests, consult the financial estimates compiled by the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office, and issue reports that recommend spending levels and provide instructions for their expenditure. Given these arrangements, Geiger (1994, 398) argued that "the subcommittees are the most important actors" in Congress's review of the budget and Kingdon (1966, 68) even more pointedly noted that "congressional decisions on agency budgets are made neither by the whole congress, nor even by the full appropriations committees, but by subcommittees of the appropriations committee" (see also Davis, Dempster and Wildavsky 1966, 530). These accounts make clear that the subcommittees are the locus of congressional decision making on appropriations; therefore, the fate of presidential budget requests is largely in their hands. Based on our perspective, we expect that enacted appropriations better reflect a president's budgetary requests when members of the appropriations subcommittees are more ideologically congruent with the president.

Our argument assumes that subcommittee members evaluate a president's budget request

based on how well it reflects their own preferences relative to the status quo. This characterization follows theoretical models in which legislators are posited to have preferences along an ideological continuum in which they support a given proposal if they prefer it to the status quo (Krehbiel 1998; Poole and Rosenthal 1991). To the extent that legislators and presidents have preferences over spending levels and are more supportive of spending levels that more closely reflect those preferences, a subcommittee is more likely to accommodate a president's budget request when it is more closely aligned with the president's ideological orientation. This characterization contrasts with classical scholarship, which argued that appropriators make spending decisions based on the norms into which committee members were socialized rather than on the basis of their spending preferences. Most prominently, Richard Fenno (1962, 311) argued that committee members perceived themselves as the "guardian[s] of public funds" and had the responsibility to cut spending from the president's request (see also Davis, Dempster and Wildavsky 1966; Fenno 1966). While our account and this perspective both characterize subcommittees as sources of congressional constraint on presidents' budgetary preferences, they generate competing expectations about how Congress responds to presidential budgets.

Our account contributes to several bodies of scholarship, which to date have existed mostly separately. First, while previous research downplayed the possibility that subcommittee composition affected appropriations decisions (White 1989, 201-203) or reshaped budgetary priorities (Geiger 1994, 414), this work did not directly examine how subcommittee membership affected congressional action on the president's budget.[2] More recent scholarship shows that the ideological alignment of appropriations subcommittees with the president is associated with the budgetary discretion they give to agencies (Bolton and Thrower 2019) and the speed with which they pass spending bills (Woon and Anderson 2012). We extend these insights to argue that the

[2]This research also focuses nearly exclusively on the House though more recent scholarship suggests the value of accounting for the Senate when evaluating appropriations outcomes (Shepsle et al. 2009).

appropriations subcommittees are an underappreciated source of congressional constraint on the president's budgetary goals. In addition, by studying how appropriations subcommittees shape budgetary outcomes we examine claims that subcommittees are "vital to the policy-making process" (Shepsle and Weingast 1985, 118) and wield significant influence over collective committee decisions (Deering 1982; Hall and Evans 1990).

Second, our account implies a relationship between committee composition and policy outcomes. While our argument does not address the representativeness of the appropriations committees or their subcommittees (see, e.g., Groseclose 1994; Krehbiel 1990; McGrath and Ryan 2019), it does predict that their ideological composition is associated with congressional scrutiny of the president's budget. To the degree that appropriations subcommittees are unrepresentative of the chamber, our account implies that budgetary outcomes would better reflect the subcommittee's preferences rather than the median of the chamber.[3]

More broadly, our argument suggests that committee organization is an important mechanism for enabling Congress to enforce its institutional prerogatives vis-á-vis the president. Previous research documents the role of political parties (e.g., Aldrich 1995) and intraparty organizations (e.g., Bloch Rubin 2017) in helping to solve collective action problems that often inhibit legislative action. Today's Congress is more polarized and more partisan than it once was (Binder 2015; Curry and Lee 2020; Moskowitz, Rogowski and Snyder 2024), and recent research documents Congress's institutional weaknesses in serving as a constraint on the exercise of unilateral power (Kaufman and Rogowski 2024). These observations may rightfully generate concern about Congress's ability to serve as an effective institutional counterweight to the presidency (e.g., Levinson and Pildes 2006). As a complement to other scholarship that stresses the role of committee investigations led by entrepreneurial legislators in serving as a check on the presidency (e.g., Kriner and Schickler 2016), we show how the disaggregation of the chamber into

[3]Interestingly, the HAC was one of two committees for which the evidence in Groseclose (1994) supported the outlier hypothesis.

small subunits enables the legislature to effectively pursue its preferences vis-á-vis the president in ways that may not be possible were it left to the entire chamber. In addition, scholars have long emphasized the importance of Congress's power of the purse, and we highlight the specific role of the appropriations subcommittees in enforcing this advantage.

Even more generally, our account provides a framework through which we can evaluate how other features of the political environment affect interbranch bargaining. Previous theoretical scholarship stresses the conditions under which Congress defers to the president's preferences on policy debates and in confirming nominations (Hammond and Hill 1993; Howell and Jackman 2013; Kang 2022). In the context of appropriations, we characterize congressional deference as circumstances when Congress better accommodates a president's budgetary request than we would expect given their ideological disagreement with the president. We evaluate several such circumstances that previous scholarship has identified as capable of generating such discretion. First, previous scholarship indicates that presidential popularity increases the willingness of other political actors and the public to defer to the president (Christenson and Kriner 2019; Neustadt 1990). Second, we study whether the political salience of particular issue areas moderates Congress's response to the president's budgetary requests (e.g., Canes-Wrone 2001; Lee 2008). Third, we evaluate how the structural independence of and ideological orientation of bureaucratic institutions affect Congress's response to the president. Our primary interest in conducting these evaluations is to study the robustness of institutional conflict as a mechanism through which Congress constrains the president's ability to realize their preferred policy outcome.

Data

We test our argument using an original dataset of presidential budget requests and congressional enactments for fiscal years 1972 to 2021. We collected this data from the Budget of the United States, issued annually by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The Budget of the

United States contains narrative descriptions of presidential policy priorities as well as detailed presidential request and congressional enactment figures disaggregated by federal subunit.[4]

Our dataset represents the most comprehensive compilation of these discretionary budgetary figures assembled to date.[5] These data build upon foundational work by Fenno (1966) and Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991), who analyzed spending patterns for a sample of 77 agencies and laid the foundation for subsequent empirical work on separation of powers (Canes-Wrone 2001; Canes-Wrone, Howell and Lewis 2008; Howell, Jackman and Rogowski 2013). Generically, our data include requested and enacted appropriations for subunits (often representing offices, agencies, and bureaus) nested within units (often departments or independent agencies) for each fiscal year. Our data contain information on 626 unique unit-subunits with a total of 10800 observations. Descriptions of the data are shown in Appendix A.1.

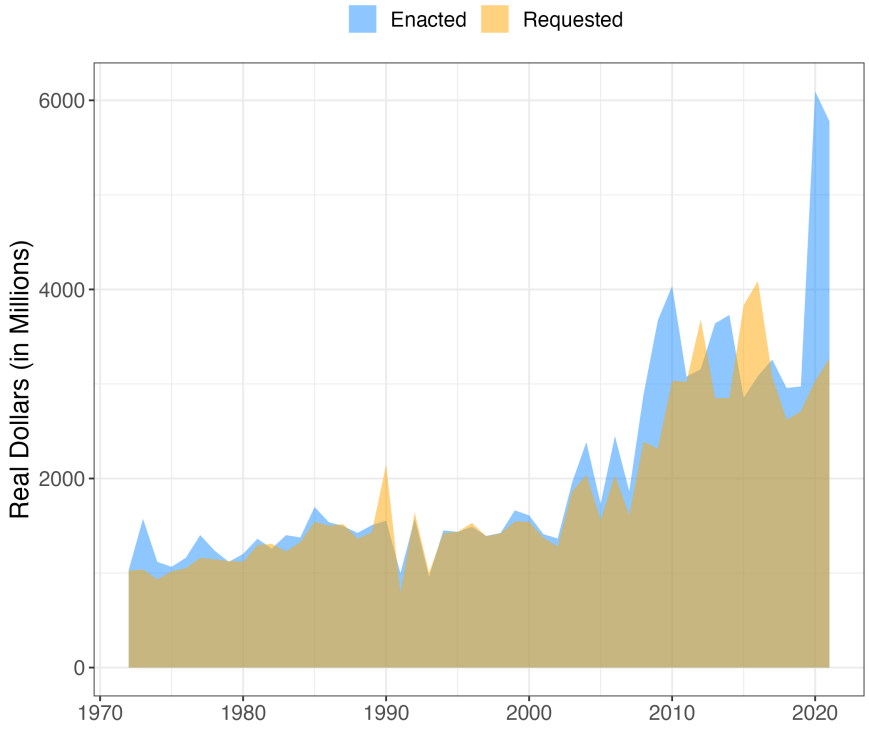
Figure 1 shows total presidential requests and congressional enactments by fiscal year, in real dollars (standardized to the 2022 calendar year). In aggregate, the average annual difference between congressional enactments and presidential requests is about $800 billion. The figure shows both that the size of the budget has grown over time and that presidents' success in achieving their preferred outcomes has varied. In some years, for example, the difference between requested and enacted appropriations is vanishingly small (for example, during most of the Clinton administration) while in other years the gap between requested and enacted appropriations is larger in both absolute and percentage terms (for example, most fiscal years during the Nixon, George W. Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations).

We then linked each subunit in our appropriations data to the respective subcommittee in each chamber with jurisdiction over it. To do so, we primarily rely on House Appropriation

[4]"Subunit" generally refers to federal offices and agencies, such as the Forest Service and the Federal Aviation Administration.

[5]We focus on discretionary spending because it is the primary site of interbranch bargaining between the president and Congress.

Figure 1: Total Requested and Enacted Appropriations, FY1972 to FY2021



bills (similar to Adler 2000), which list subunits disaggregated by subcommittee jurisdiction. We also use reports published by the HAC that detail more recent jurisdictional divisionsand House hearing transcripts for more historical jurisdictional divisions. Most subunits can be directly matched to appropriation bills, though in a few cases subunits are listed in the annual budget reports but not explicitly in the appropriation bills of the given year.[6] While in some instances it was possible to match these subunits to the relevant subcommittees, we omitted from the analyses the several hundred observations for which the available information was insufficient for making an informed judgment about which subcommittee oversaw appropriations decisions.

The appropriations subcommittee system was reorganized several times during the period under study. As illustration, Figure A.2 summarizes the subcommittee composition of the HAC and its representation in our data. From 1971 to 2003, the HAC was organized into thirteen sub-

[6]We describe these cases and how we handled them in Appendix A.2.

committees.[7] Following the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the 108th Congress added a Subcommittee on Homeland Security, and merged the subcommittees on Transportation and on Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government. In the next Congress, the HAC was reorganized into ten subcommittees by disbanding two subcommittees and reorganizing their respective jurisdictions into other subcommittees. In the 110th Congress, the Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch was reconstituted and the Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury was separated.

Finally, to measure the ideological composition of the subcommittees, we compiled complete rosters of all subcommittees along with the identity of the relevant chair from the House Appropriation Committee Semi-Annual Report of Committee Activities, published by each Congress, and the United States Senate (2022).

Empirical Strategy

The dependent variable in our analysis is presidential success in achieving their budgetary preferences. As previous scholarship has noted (Canes-Wrone, Howell and Lewis 2008), appropriations is a particularly good context for studying a president's bargaining success. By comparing what presidents requested to what Congress enacted, we have a clear and continuous measure of the degree to which Congress accommodated the president's policy preferences. We operationalize this quantity as the difference between presidential requests and congressional enactments (for a similar approach, see Sharkansky 1965*b*, 626-627). Specifically, we follow Howell, Jackman and Rogowski (2013) and calculate the dependent variable as $\ln(1 + |\text{Requested}_{it} - \text{Enacted}_{it}|)$ for each subunit i in fiscal year t. Larger values of this measure indicate greater differences between what the president requested and what Congress enacted.

[7]This period is often noted as one of stability for its consistent committee structure and subcommittee jurisdictions (Saturno 2021).

Our primary independent variable characterizes the ideological distance between the president and the relevant subcommittee. Following models of committee decision making (Black 1958), we measure this quantity for each chamber using the absolute value of the ideological difference between the president and the median subcommittee member using first dimension NOMINATE scores (Lewis et al. 2022).[8] This approach is similar to that used in Woon and Anderson (2012), where larger values indicate greater ideological disagreement between a president and a subcommittee.[9] Based on these calculations, we characterize *Subcommittee distance* as the greater of the ideological distances between the president and the median of the relevant House and Senate subcommittees. As we discuss below, we also explore model specifications that focus on the ideological distance between the president and the subcommittee medians in each chamber.

Using the measures described above, we estimate the following model:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \gamma_p + \beta \text{ Subcommittee Distance}_{it} + \Omega \mathbf{X}_{it} + \epsilon_{it}, \tag{1}$$

[8]One may be concerned that NOMINATE scores are calculated using the appropriations bills whose outcomes we study. However, appropriations bills concern a trivial fraction of all roll calls in a given congress, and thus estimates of roll call voting behavior—which are based on all votes cast over a legislator's career—are based on substantially more information beyond a member's votes on appropriations in a given congress. While one might re-estimate NOMINATE scores and exclude appropriations votes, this exercise would likely produce scores that are empirically indistinguishable from extant 1st dimension NOMINATE scores given the unidimensionality in roll call voting patterns (Poole and Rosenthal 1991).

[9]Our account follows Black (1958) in assuming that (sub)committee deliberations operate by majority rule, where we would expect the median member of the subcommittee to be the relevant actor for collective decision making.

where the dependent variable is the difference between requested and enacted appropriations and i indexes the subunits in our data. *Subcommittee distance* is the measure described above, which we rescale by dividing by its standard deviation to facilitate interpretation. With this rescaled measure, a one-unit increase represents a 0.29 increase in subcommittee distance, similar to the difference in ideological orientations between representatives Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY; −0.49) and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA; −0.175). The coefficient estimate for β is our primary quantity of interest. If presidents are less successful in achieving their preferred budgetary outcomes as the relevant subcommittee is more ideologically distant from them, as we argue, we expect to find a positive estimate for this parameter.

Our primary specification includes fixed effects for subunits (α_i) and presidential administrations (γ_p). The former accounts for systematic differences in interbranch bargaining that vary across the myriad subunits in our data. For example, some subunits may be more politically salient, and thus subjected to greater congressional scrutiny, than others. By including presidency fixed effects, we hold constant the attributes of individual presidents that may be associated with bargaining outcomes. With this model specification, the estimate for β is identified with changes in subcommittee distance that occur within presidential administrations.

We also account for other congressional and economic factors $\mathbf{X}_{it}$ that may be associated with a president's bargaining success. First, we control for the president's appropriations request—that is, $\ln(\text{Requested}_{it})$—as Congress is more likely to accommodate the president's requests for smaller expenditures than larger ones. Second, we account for periods of divided government, as Congress may be less likely to accommodate the president's budgetary request when a larger share is controlled by the other party (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1985*a*,*b*).[10] Third, because presidents are given more budgetary latitude during periods of war (Howell, Jackman and Rogowski

[10]This could arise because the party opposite the president has political incentives to attempt to reduce the president's political standing (see, e.g., Lee 2016) and/or because its members have budgetary preferences that systematically differ from the president's.

2013), we include an indicator corresponding to the Vietnam, Persian Gulf, and post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Economic factors may also have implications for presidential bargaining success, as declining economic circumstances may provide presidents with less leverage for obtaining their policy preferences (Woon and Anderson 2012). Thus, we also include measures of the annual unemployment rate, the year-over-year percentage change in real gross domestic product (GDP), and the size of the budget deficit in real terms from the previous year.

Finally, in all our models we estimate standard errors clustered on subcommittees, the level at which values of subcommittee distance are assigned. However, because our data include a relatively small number of clusters (i.e., fewer than fifty; see Cameron and Miller 2015), without further adjustment our standard errors are likely to be biased downward. To address this issue, we estimate standard errors with the wild clustered bootstrap with 100,000 iterations (Fischer and Roodman 2021). We follow conventions in the literature and thus report p-values in our tables rather than standard errors.

Results

Table 1 presents our main results. The first column reports results from the bivariate relationship between the president's bargaining success and *Subcommittee distance*, along with subunit and president fixed effects. The second model adds the covariate characterizing the size of the president's budgetary proposal. In the third model, we add controls for divided government and war, and in the fourth model, we add a suite of economic and legislative controls described above.

The findings in Table 1 provided consistent evidence that presidents are less successful in achieving their preferred outcomes when their proposed budgets are reviewed by an ideologically distant legislative subcommittee. In each model, the coefficient for *Subcommittee Distance* is positively signed and statistically distinguishable from zero. These findings indicate that the discrepancy between presidential requests and congressional enactments increases with the ide-

ological distance between the president and relevant subcommittee. Taking the inverse log of the coefficient from column 4 indicates that a standard deviation increase in the ideological distance between a president and the most distant subcommittee median translates to a 45% increase in the discrepancy between presidential proposals and congressional enactments. The magnitude of this difference is on par with or exceeds the effect size of factors found to be important in previous scholarship on presidential bargaining success, such as war (Howell and Jackman 2013), increased latitude on foreign policy issues relative to domestic affairs (Canes-Wrone, Howell and Lewis 2008), and presidents' public appeals (Canes-Wrone 2001, 2006). In short, ideological conflict between presidents and subcommittees reduces the president's influence over budgetary policy.

Table 1: Subcommittee Composition and Presidential Budgetary Success

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Subcommittee Distance	0.209	0.203	0.373	0.370
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
ln(Request)		0.697	0.696	0.693
		(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Divided Government			−0.326	−0.273
			(0.066)	(0.173)
War			0.131	0.149
			(0.038)	(0.017)
ln(Unemployment)				0.023
				(0.949)
ln(GDP per capita)				2.370
				(0.384)
ln(Deficit)				−0.002
				(0.133)
Num.Obs.	10761	10761	10761	10761
R2	0.695	0.706	0.706	0.706
Subunit FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

footnotesize Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with
emphp-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

The results in Table 1 are robust across additional analyses. First, we considered several strategies to address budgets submitted by presidents in the first year of their terms. While presidents

generally submit budget proposals in the first week of February (Dearborn 2019), new presidents are inaugurated only weeks before proposals are due. Newly-inaugurated presidents thus decide whether to stand by their predecessor's budget proposal or submit their own. Every newly elected president in the post-World War II era made substantial revisions to their predecessor's proposal with the exception of George H.W. Bush (Keith and Christensen 2021). Following Howell, Jackman and Rogowski (2013), we estimated models where we omitted all observations from the first year of each presidential administration excepting Gerald Ford. We also estimated models where we omitted only the first year of George H.W. Bush's first term. Both analyses provide similar results to those shown in Table 1.[11]

Second, our results are robust to using an alternative measurement strategy for characterizing the ideological distance between presidents and subcommittees. By construction, the NOMINATE scores we use are constant over legislators' terms in office. While this choice is appropriate given perspectives that emphasize the ideological stability of legislators' voting records during their careers (Poole 2007), other evidence suggests that a legislator's voting record may vary across time depending on the political context (Howell, Jackman and Rogowski 2013) and, more relevant for our purposes, changes in committee membership. Moreover, the use of static NOMINATE scores means that changes in subcommittee ideology come only from compositional changes. As an alternative strategy, we estimate the models reported in Table 1 using Nokken-Poole scores to characterize the ideological locations of subcommittee members. Like NOMINATE scores, Nokken-Poole scores are comparable across time but allow a legislator's ideology to vary from one congressional term to the next. Our results are nearly indistinguishable from

[11]See Tables B.3 and B.4 in the Supplementary Appendix. When removing observations from all presidents' first years, as Howell, Jackman and Rogowski (2013) do, the magnitudes of the coefficients are a bit smaller than in Table 1 (and are not statistically distinguishable from zero in several models), but we are inclined to view this as an overly conservative approach given that virtually all first year presidents did in fact submit their own budgets.

Table 1 when substituting these scores.[12]

Third, we find no evidence that our results are driven by a single fiscal year, subcommittee, or component of the federal government. We re-estimated model (4) from Table 1 while sequentially omitting one year at a time. We repeated this exercise while omitting each subcommittee and each unit of government ("unit" generally refers to a Department or similar institution). The coefficients from each of these 101 additional models continue to be positive and statistically distinguishable from zero, though the magnitude varies somewhat across the models.[13] These results indicate that our findings are robust across the composition of our sample.

Fourth, we find that the composition of subcommittees is associated with differences in presidential budgetary success irrespective of the partisan composition of the House. Though some models in Table 1 controlled for periods of divided government, here we study whether the relationship between subcommittee distance and the president's bargaining success vary with the composition of Congress. To do so, we estimated separate models for periods of unified and divided government, as well as include an interaction term with our measure of subcommittee distance. In model (3) we continue to obtain positive and statistically significant coefficients for subcommittee distance while neither of the interaction terms is statistically distinguishable from zero.[14] These results suggest that the composition of appropriations subcommittees is strongly linked to the president's bargaining success regardless whether the partisan composition of the House is favorable to the president. Even though the subcommittee distance measure is correlated with the partisan composition of the House, these results suggest that the findings in Table 1 do not simply reflect the larger congressional environment rather than the membership of the relevant appropriations subcommittee.

Fifth, we sought to distinguish whether the composition of the House or Senate appropria-

[12]See Table B.5.

[13]See Figures B.1 through B.3.

[14]See Table C.1.

tions committees appeared to be the more binding constraint on presidential bargaining success. To do so, we estimated separate models in which *Subcommittee distance* was calculated based on the ideological distance between the president and the median of the relevant House and Senate appropriations subcommittee, respectively.[15] We find considerably stronger evidence that the House appropriations subcommittees are the strongest constraints on the president's budgetary request. The coefficient for *Subcommittee distance* is approximately four times larger for the House subcommittees, while the coefficient for the Senate subcommittees is not statistically distinguishable from zero. These results underscore the importance of the House appropriations committees, consistent with classic accounts that focus on that chamber rather than the Senate.

Sixth, we assess the impact of *Subcommittee distance* relative to that of other key House of Representatives actors. Traditional theories of Congress highlight the importance of both subcommittee chairs (Berry and Fowler 2016) and the median member of the broader chamber (Krehbiel 1991). To evaluate the impact of these legislative actors, we estimated separate models for the ideological distance between the President and subcommittee chairs as well as the median member of the House.[16] To select the model that best represents the data generating process, we compare the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) of the three models (Kuha 2004). The BIC represents an efficient method to evaluate nonnested models by calculating the probability that each model is the true model given our observed data (Bonneau et al. 2007). Our main specification in Table 1 performs the best between these three models. Moreover, we find that the coefficient for these alternative measures – *Subcommittee chair distance* and *House median distance* – is smaller than our main specification in Table 1.

Seventh, and finally, we study whether the relationship between subcommittee composition and presidential bargaining success systematically strengthened or weakened over the period under study. To do so, we considered the "Republican Revolution" as a potential break in the re-

[15]See Table C.2.

[16]See Table C.3

lationship between subcommittee composition and interbranch bargaining outcomes. Previous literature emphasizes that the Congress elected in the 1994 midterms marked an important turning point in congressional politics. In particular, a suite of reforms implemented with the new Republican majority weakened committee capacity (Crosson et al. 2021) and undermined the power of the HAC (Aldrich and Rhode 2000). We estimated separate models for budgets enacted prior to and after calendar year 1995.[17] Interestingly, we find that the coefficient for *Subcommittee distance* is positive but small in magnitude and not statistically distinguishable from zero for the earlier period, but large in magnitude and statistically significant for the period following the "Republican Revolution." While the Republican Revolution may have inaugurated a period of decreased congressional influence vis-à-vis the president on other domains, our findings suggest that, if anything, Congress has been a more important source of constraint on the president during this period.

We also considered changes over time by estimating the specification from column (4) of Table 1 while also including indicators for each decade in the period under study and interacting them with the measure of *Subcommittee distance*.[18] We find no systematic evidence of change over time. The coefficient for the constituent term of subcommittee distance is positive and statistically distinguishable from zero, as it is in Table 1. The interaction terms, moreover, are inconsistently signed and only one (for the 2010s) is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Together, these findings weigh against claims that congressional constraints have declined or decreased across time.

[17]See Table C.4.

[18]See Table C.4.

Do Presidents Anticipate Subcommittee Opposition?

To what extent are the results presented in Table 1 a result of strategic behavior by presidents? Though the findings support our theoretical perspective in which interbranch disagreement between presidents and subcommittees reduces Congress's willingness to accommodate a president's budgetary request, it is also possible that this result reflects presidents' calculations about how their proposals will be reviewed by Congress. If a president were to anticipate extra scrutiny from an appropriations subcommittee because the subcommittee membership is ideologically hostile to the president, for example, that president may decide to strategically misrepresent her preferences in the hope that enacted appropriations would end up somewhere close to what she ultimately would have preferred. In this case, a president who prefers more spending relative to Congress might submit a budget request that exceeds her own budgetary preferences (and analogously for a president who prefers lower spending than Congress). If this were to be the case, our findings would indicate not that subcommittees constrain presidential influence, but rather that presidents appear "weaker" when bargaining with ideologically distant subcommittees because of the president's own strategic behavior.

Previous literature downplays possibilities such as these. For example, Kiewiet and McCubbins (1985*a*, 722) argue that presidents have strong incentives to represent their preferences truthfully to Congress. Likewise, presidents' efforts to recruit public support for their proposals (e.g., Canes-Wrone 2001) suggest that presidents do not strategically manipulate their budgetary requests.[19] Nonetheless, we undertake two sets of analyses to address this possibility.

First, we examine whether presidents request larger amounts when key members of Congress are more ideologically distant. Table 2 shows the results. In column (1), we regressed presiden-

[19]Similarly, Kousser and Phillips (2012) argue that governors have strong reputational and electoral incentives to present sincere budgetary requests and present evidence showing that governors do not adjust their budgetary proposals as the composition of state legislatures changes.

tial proposals (logged) on the measure of subcommittee distance. In column (2), we replace the subcommittee distance measure with the indicator for divided government. Column (3) reports results when including both independent variables. In all three models, we include the battery of economic and war controls included in model (4) of Table 1. If our findings reflect patterns of strategic presidential proposal making, we expect that presidents request more funding when facing ideologically divergent subcommittees and/or during periods of divided government.

Table 2: Predicting the Size of Presidential Requests

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Subcommittee Distance	0.010	0.025	0.028	0.029
	(0.351)	(0.232)	(0.181)	(0.172)
Divided Government		−0.029	−0.035	−0.032
		(0.345)	(0.265)	(0.327)
War			0.020	0.023
			(0.298)	(0.198)
ln(Unemployment)				−0.013
				(0.893)
ln(GDP per capita)				−0.334
				(0.375)
ln(Deficit)				−0.0004
				(0.152)
Num.Obs.	10761	10761	10761	10761
R2	0.937	0.937	0.937	0.937
Subunit FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

We find no evidence that presidents increase or decrease their budgetary requests as the composition of Congress changes. None of the key coefficients in any model are large in magnitude or statistically distinguishable from zero. Moreover, even if the largest coefficient from Table 2

were statistically significant, it would explain only a fraction of the results we obtain in Table 1.[20] Overall, consistent with the argument from Kiewiet and McCubbins (1985*a*), Table 2 provides no evidence that presidents strategically manipulate their proposed budgets based on changes in the ideological composition of Congress.

Second, we estimate model specifications similar to those used in previous research to address potential endogeneity between proposals and enacted appropriations. Following Kiewiet and McCubbins (1991) and Howell, Jackman and Rogowski (2013), we instrument logged presidential proposals on identifiers for first-term presidents and indicators for each of the four years in a presidential term. Unlike previous research, none of the instruments are statistically distinguishable from zero in our models, as the first-stage results are nearly identical to those shown in Table 2.[21] Unsurprisingly, then, the F-statistic for our first-stage equation suggests that this instrumental variables strategy is extremely weak, as it is less than one. When estimating the second-stage results, the coefficient for subcommittee distance is identical to that shown in column (4) of Table 2—unsurprisingly, again, given that 2SLS estimates converge to OLS estimates in the context of weak instruments.

Overall, while the instrumental variables strategy used by prior research appears less reliable in the context of our data, the evidence weighs against the possibility that our main findings reflect strategic behavior by the president. This concern would require that presidents strategically increase their proposals when they anticipate greater opposition from Congress, which in turn makes them appear less successful than they actually are. In systematically investigating presidential budget requests, however, we find no evidence that presidents strategically modify

[20]The coefficient for divided government in column (3) is the largest in magnitude, and if it were statistically significant would provide evidence that presidents increase their requests by about four percent when they transition from unified to divided government. However, the p-value is quite large, and thus the results do not provide compelling evidence for such an interpretation.

[21]See Table C.5.

their proposals as the composition of appropriations subcommittees changes. Thus, these findings are consistent with scholarship that argues that presidents have incentives to present sincere budgetary proposals and support our interpretation of the results shown in Table 1.

Political and Institutional Influences on Interbranch Bargaining

Beginning, at least, with Neustadt, scholarship on the presidency emphasizes the role of the president's public prestige in generating compliance from other political actors. We considered the possibility that Congress would be more likely to defer to the budgetary proposals submitted by more popular presidents. To do so, we include an annual measure of the president's approval rating in our model and interacted it with our measure of legislative constraint. If higher levels of presidential approval induce deference from Congress, we would expect the coefficient for the interaction term to be negative. Table 3 presents these analyses. Results in column 1 show that presidential approval has a small but positive association on the relationship between legislative constraints and bargaining outcomes. In other words, a one standard deviation increase in presidential approval, equivalent to approximately an 11% increase in approval, marginally worsen the bargaining outcomes for the president by approximately an additional percentage point. Interestingly, and counter to the insights of Neustadt and others, the constituent term for presidential approval is positive and statistically significant—indicating that higher levels of presidential popularity are associated with larger gaps between presidential requests and enacted appropriations even when the president and the relevant subcommittee are ideologically congruent.

Column 2 relaxed our assumptions about the functional form of the relationship between presidential approval and the president's bargaining success. We include two indicators to distinguish presidents with low approval rating (under 40 percent) and high approval ratings (over 60 percent). The omitted category thus represents presidents with approval ratings between 40

and 60 percent. We interacted both indicators with the subcommittee distance measure. The results continue provide little evidence that Congress grants greater discretion to more popular presidents. The coefficients for the interaction terms are incorrectly signed if this were the case. Overall, and counter to foundational arguments by Neustadt and more recent claims by Christenson and Kriner (2019), we find no evidence that presidential popularity is associated with greater presidential influence over appropriations policies.

Table 3: Presidential Approval and Congressional Constraints on Presidential Budgetary Success

	(1)	(2)
Subcommittee Distance	0.434	0.396
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Subcom Distance x Low Approval		−0.063
		(0.342)
Subcom Distance x High Approval		0.137
		(0.356)
Subcom Distance x Approval Rating	0.010	
	(0.017)	
Num.Obs.	10277	10277
R2	0.707	0.708
Controls	✓	✓
Subunit FE	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses. *Low approval* indicates presidential approval ratings at 40 percent or below, and *High approval* indicates presidential approval ratings at 60 percent or higher. Full specification can be found in Table D.1.

Additionally, we evaluate the role that public and presidential issue priorities affect the relationship between legislative constraints on the president and their bargaining success. To measure public issue priorities, we utilize Gallup's annual most important problem. We calculate the percentage of the public who rated each issue area as that year's "most important problem." To measure presidential priorities, we utilize the topical proportion of the State of the Union speech dedicated to each issue. In order to merge these data with our budgetary data, we first recorded the primary governmental designated function of each subunit, such as General Government and Defense. We, then, match each issue coding to their closest function codes. For instance, most Treasury items were categorized under General Government, while Defense items were categorized under Defense. For items with multiple functions, we only use the primary function codings.[22] To evaluate the differential effect of public and presidential issue priorities on budgetary negotiations, we similarly interact these variables with our measure of legislative constraints. Table 4 shows that issue prioritization by either actor has a minimal effect on the role that subcommittees have on legislative success. Congress does not respond to the president's budgetary proposals in ways that depend on how salient an issue is to the public, nor do they evaluate a president's proposal differently on the basis of whether that issue was a particular priority of the president. In fact, the constituent term of *Public priority* suggests that presidents fare *worse* on issue areas that are more publicly salient. None of these findings, though, indicate that Congress foregoes its role in the separation of powers based on the importance of an issue to the president or the public.

[22]These amount to a small minority of subunits.

Table 4: The Politics of Issue Priorities and Congressional Constraints on Presidential Budgetary Success

	(1)	(2)
Subcommittee Distance	0.311	0.298
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Subcom Distance x MIP	0.004	
	(0.164)	
Subcom Distance x Topic Prop		0.006
		(0.137)
Num.Obs.	8817	7746
R2	0.708	0.713
Controls	✓	✓
Subunit FE	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with *p*-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses. *Public priority* indicates the annual proportion of the public that identified each issue area as the "most important problem." *Presidential priority* indicates the annual proportion of the president's state of the union address that references each issue area. Full specification can be found in Table D.2.

Finally, we studied whether Congress's response to presidents' budgetary proposals depended on the characteristics of the agency for which the president requested funds. We first considered an agency's structural independence using scores from Selin (2015), who evaluates the independence of an agency based on the principal's ability to hire and remove personnel as well as their ability to review an agency's decision. These results are reported in the first two columns. We find no evidence that presidents are more or less successful in bargaining over appropriations

for agencies on the basis of their political independence. Nor do we find any evidence that independent moderates the relationship between ideological conflict and bargaining outcomes. The structural independence of bureaucratic agencies, we find, does not appear to be a significant factor in shaping how Congress reviews presidential budget requests, which runs counter to contemporary models of interbranch bargaining (Prato and Turner 2024).

The third and fourth columns show results when considering the ideological alignment between presidents and agencies. We use scores of department (column 3) and agency (column 4) ideology to study whether a given department or agency is ideologically aligned with the current presidential administration. Using the scores from Clinton and Lewis (2008), we classified an agency or department as "liberal" if its estimate was to the ideological left of zero and its confidence interval did not include zero. Likewise, we classified an agency or department as "conservative" if its estimate was to the ideological right of zero and its confidence interval did not include zero. We then classified an agency or department as "aligned" with the president if it was conservative and the president was Republican, or if the agency or department was liberal and the president was a Democrat. We classified an agency or department as "not aligned" with the president if it was conservative and the president was Democratic, or if the agency or department was liberal and the president was a Republican. Aligned agencies received a score of +1, unaligned agencies received a score of -1, and all others received a score of zero. We then interacted this trichotomous variable with *Subcommittee distance*. As Table 5 shows, we find little evidence that agency or departmental alignment significantly moderates the effect of *Subcommittee distance* on presidential bargaining success. While presidents *are* more likely to have their requests met by Congress for agencies that are ideologically aligned with them, members of Congress do *not* set aside their ideological differences with the president when doing so.

Table 5: Agency Characteristics and Bargaining Success

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Subcommittee Distance	0.217	0.219	0.188	0.131
	(0.128)	(0.155)	(0.061)	(0.775)
Subcom Distance x Removal	0.068			
	(0.347)			
Subcom Distance x Review		0.005		
		(0.891)		
Subcom Distance x Dept Align			−0.006	
			(0.940)	
Subcom Distance x Pres Align				−0.063
				(0.761)
Num.Obs.	5023	5023	2378	834
R2	0.594	0.598	0.642	0.601
Legislative Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Subunit FE			✓	
Unit FE	✓	✓		✓
President FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with *p*-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses. *Independence* (measure 1) is a measure of agency independence based on principals' ability to remove lower officials. *Independence* (measure 2) is a measure of agency independence based on the principals' ability to review the actions of lower officials. Both measures are based on Selin (2015). *Dept alignment* is a trichotomous measure of whether an agency is in a department that is aligned with the sitting president's ideological orientation. *Agency alignment* is a trichotomous measure of whether an individual agency is aligned with the sitting president's ideological orientation. Both measures are based on Clinton and Lewis (2008). Full specification can be found in Table D.3.

Conclusion

Committees figure prominently in accounts of congressional policymaking, and no committee has been studied more than the House Appropriations Committee (see, e.g., Davis, Dempster and Wildavsky 1966; Fenno 1962, 1966; Geiger 1994; Kingdon 1966; Lowery, Bookheimer and Malachowski 1985; MacMahon 1943; Sharkansky 1965*a*,*b*; Woon and Anderson 2012). We make several contributions to this scholarship. First, we show how legislative committees affect policy outcomes. More precisely, we show how the ideological composition of appropriations subcommittees is associated with the subcommittees' willingness to enact budgets that reflect the president's preferences. Our results imply that appointments to subcommittees matter for the appropriations bills passed by Congress because differences in a subcommittee's composition would produce different funding levels for the agencies under its jurisdiction.

Second, our findings highlight the mechanisms through which Congress can constrain presidents' efforts to affect executive branch policymaking. An important body of literature highlights the president's agenda-setting powers in appropriations (Dearborn 2019; Krause 2022) and documents the conditions that enhance the president's strategic position in this context (Canes-Wrone 2001; Canes-Wrone, Howell and Lewis 2008; Howell, Jackman and Rogowski 2013). Our findings offer a reminder of the institutional advantages that Congress wields as it negotiates public policy with the White House. The power of the purse has long been viewed as a powerful constraint on the presidency, and we offer evidence about how this institutional prerogative operates through the committee system. This finding complements other scholarship that demonstrates how interbranch conflict moderates presidents' abilities to achieve their political goals (e.g., Bolton and Thrower 2021; Howell 2003; Kiewiet and McCubbins 1988). Even more pointedly, our findings highlight the role of small subcommittees in enabling Congress to overcome collective action problems that otherwise would inhibit Congress's ability to constrain the policymaking influence of the president.

Our analysis has some important limitations, however, and raises questions for further inquiry. First, while our account focuses on the ideological composition of the appropriations subcommittees, we noted the challenges in distinguishing their effects from other similar measures with which they are likely correlated. For example, a more conservative Congress is likely to have more conservative appropriations subcommittees and more conservative subcommittee chairs. Each of these actors plays important roles in scholarship on legislative outcomes, and it is empirically difficult to distinguish the unique effects of each. While our evidence supports our argument about subcommittees, our evidence does not suggest that other key legislative actors are not relevant. Second, while we considered the possibility that presidents strategically submit budget requests in anticipation of how legislators may respond, our empirical findings suggested that presidents do not behave in this way. While there may be good reasons for this, it is possible that presidents forgo some bargaining advantages by doing so. Further research would be useful to better understand how presidents craft their budget proposals based on their expectations about the congressional response. Third, while our research focused on the last half century of appropriations politics, we did not evaluate changes over time in the appropriations process and how they relate to the relevance of subcommittee composition. For example, as the degree of committee power (Rohde 1974) and congressional capacity (Bolton and Thrower 2021) change over time, these developments may have implications for how the appropriations subcommittees evaluate the president's request. Finally, while our case focused on the politics of appropriations, it is unclear whether and how our findings might generalize to other (sub)committees and policy domains. These questions present important opportunities for scholars to take a fresh look at the politics of congressional committees and their role in the separation of powers.

References

Adler, E. Scott. 2000. "Constituency characteristics and the "guardian" model of appropriations subcommittees, 1959-1998." *American Journal of Political Science* 44(1):104–114.

Aldrich, John H. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Party Politics in America.* University of Chicago Press.

Aldrich, John H. and David W. Rhode. 2000. "The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee." *Journal of Politics* 62:1–33.

Berry, Christopher R. and Anthony Fowler. 2016. "Cardinals or Clerics? Congressional Committees and the Distribution of Pork." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(3):692–708.

Binder, Sarah. 2015. "The Dysfunctional Congress." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18:85–101.

Black, Duncan. 1958. *The Theory of Committees and Elections.* London: Cambridge University Press.

Bloch Rubin, Ruth. 2017. *Building the Bloc: Intraparty Organization in the U.S. Congress.* Cambridge University Press.

Bolton, Alexander and Sharece Thrower. 2019. "The Constraining Power of the Purse: Executive Discretion and Legislative Appropriations." *Journal of Politics* 81(4):1266–1281.

Bolton, Alexander and Sharece Thrower. 2021. *Checks in the Balance: Legislative Capacity and the Dynamics of Executive Power.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Bonneau, Chris W., Thomas H. Hammond, Forrest Maltzman and Paul J. Wahlbeck. 2007. "Agenda Control, the Median Justice, and the Majority Opinion on the U.S. Supreme Court." *American Journal of Political Science* .

Cameron, A. Colin and Douglas L. Miller. 2015. "A Practitioner's Guide to Cluster-Robust Inference." *Journal of Human Resources* 50(2):317–372.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2):313–329.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2006. *Who Leads Whom?: Presidents, Policy, And The Public.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, William G. Howell and David E. Lewis. 2008. "Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power: A Reevaluation of the Two Presidencies Thesis." *The Journal of Politics* 70(1):1–16.

Christenson, Dino P. and Douglas L. Kriner. 2019. "Does Public Opinion Constrain Presidential Unilateralism?" *American Political Science Review* 113(4):1071–1077.

Clinton, Joshua D. and David E. Lewis. 2008. "Expert Opinion, Agency Characteristics, and Agency Preferences." *Political Analysis* 16(1):3–20.

Corwin, Edward S. 1978. *The Constitution and What it Means Today*. Princeton University Press.

Crosson, Jesse M., Alexander C. Furnas, Timothy Lapira and Casey Burgat. 2021. "Partisan Competition and the Decline in Legislative Capacity among Congressional Offices." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 46(3):745–789.

Curry, James M. and Frances E. Lee. 2020. *The Limits of Party: Congress and Lawmaking in a Polarized Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Davis, Otto A., M. A. H. Dempster and Aaron Wildavsky. 1966. "A Theory of the Budgetary Process." *American Political Science Review* 60(3):529–547.

Dearborn, John A. 2019. "The "Proper Organs" for Presidential Representation: A Fresh Look at the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921." *Journal of Policy History* 31(1):1–41.

Deering, Christopher J. 1982. "Subcommittee Government in the U. S. House: An Analysis of Bill Management." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 7(4):533–546.

Fenno, Jr., Richard F. 1962. "The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System: The Problem of Integration." *American Political Science Review* 56(2):310–324.

Fenno, Jr, Richard F. 1966. *The Power of the Purse: Appropriations Politics in Congress*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company.

Fischer, Alexander and David Roodman. 2021. "fwildclusterboot: Fast Wild Cluster Bootstrap Inference for Linear Regression Models (Version 0.12.1).".

Galloway, George B. 1961. *History of the House of Representatives*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

Geiger, Shirley M. 1994. "The House Appropriations Committee, FY 1963-82: A Micro-Budgetary Perspective." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 19(3):397–416.

Groseclose, Tim. 1994. "Testing Committee Composition Hypotheses for the U.S. Congress." *The Journal of Politics* 56(02):440–458.

Hall, Richard L. and C. Lawrence Evans. 1990. "The Power of Subcommittees." *Journal of Politics* 52(2):335–355.

Hammond, Thomas H. and Jeffrey S. Hill. 1993. "Deference or Preference? Explaining Senate Confirmation of Presidential Nominees to Administrative Agencies." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 5(1):23–59.

Howell, William G. 2003. *Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Howell, William G. and Saul P. Jackman. 2013. "Interbranch Negotiations over Policies with Multiple Outcomes." *American Journal of Political Science* 57(4):956–970.

Howell, William G., Saul P. Jackman and Jon C. Rogowski. 2013. *The Wartime President: Presidential Power and the Nationalizing Politics of Threat.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kang, Myunghoon. 2022. "Let Presidents Fail: Congressional Deference to Presidents as Gambling on Failure." *Research & Politics* 9(2):1–6.

Kaufman, Aaron R. and Jon C. Rogowski. 2024. "Divided Government, Strategic Substitution, and Presidential Unilateralism." *American Journal of Political Science* 68(2):816–831.

Keith, Robert and Michelle D. Christensen. 2021. Submission of the President's Budget in Transition Years. Technical Report RS20752 Congressional Research Service Washington, DC: .

Kiewiet, D. Roderick and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1988. "Presidential Influence on Congressional Appropriations Decisions." *American Journal of Political Science* 32(3):713–736.

Kiewiet, D. Roderick and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1991. *The Logic of Delegation.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Kiewiet, D. Roderick and Matthew D. McCubbins. 1985*a*. "Appropriations Decisions as a Bilateral Bargaining Game between Presidents and Congress." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 10(2):181–202.

Kiewiet, D. Roderick and Matthew D. McCubbins. 1985*b*. "Congressional Appropriations and the Electoral Connection." *The Journal of Politics* 47(1):59–82.

Kingdon, John W. 1966. "A House Appropriations Subcommittee: Influences on Budgetary Decisions." *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 47(1):68–78.

Kousser, Thad and Justin H. Phillips. 2012. *The Power of American Governors*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Krause, George A. 2022. "Solving Collective Action Problems under Separated and Shared Powers: The Benefits of Consolidating Executive Budgetary Powers, 1895–1940." *Journal of Politics* 84(2):753–766.

Krause, George B. and Roger Qiyuan Jin. 2020. "Organizational Design and its Consequences for Administrative Reform: Historical Lessons from the U.S. Budget and Accounting Act of 1921." *Governance* 33(2):365–384.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1990. "Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?" *American Political Science Review* 84(1):149–163.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. University of Chicago Press.

Kriner, Douglas L. and Eric Schickler. 2016. *Investigating the President: Congressional Checks on Presidential Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Kuha, Jouni. 2004. "AIC and BIC: Comparisons of Assumptions and Performance." *Sociological Methods and Research* .

Lee, Frances E. 2008. "Dividers, Not Uniters: Presidential Leadership and Senate Partisanship, 1981-2004." *Journal of Politics* 70(4):914–928.

Lee, Frances E. 2016. *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levinson, Daryl J. and Richard H. Pildes. 2006. "Separation of Parties, Not Powers." *Harvard Law Review* 119(8):2311–2386.

Lewis, David E. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lewis, Jeffrey B., Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin and Luke Sonnet. 2022. *Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database*. https://voteview.com/.

Longley, Lawrence D. and Roger H. Davidson. 1998. Parliamentary Committees: Changing Perspectives on Changing Institutions. In *The New Roles of Parliamentary Committees*, ed. Lawrence D. Longley and Roger H. Davidson. Oxon, UK: Frank Cass and Company pp. 1–20.

Lowery, David, Samuel Bookheimer and James Malachowski. 1985. "Partisanship in the Appropriations Process: Fenno Revisited." *American Politics Research* 13(2):188–199.

MacMahon, Arthur W. 1943. "Congressional Oversight of Administration: The Power of the Purse." *Political Science Quarterly* 58(2, 3):161–190, 380–414.

McConachie, Lauros G. 1898. *Congressional Committees: A Study of the Origin and Development of Our National and Local Legislative Methods*. Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company.

McGrath, Robert J. and Josh Ryan. 2019. "Party Effects in State Legislative Committees." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 44(4):553–592.

Metzger, Gillian E. 2021. "Taking Appropriations Seriously." *Columbia Law Review* 121(4):1075–1172.

Moe, Terry M. 1985. The Politicized Presidency. In *The New Direction in American Politics*, ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Moskowitz, Daniel J., Jon C. Rogowski and James M. Snyder. 2024. "Parsing Party Polarization in Congress." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 19(4):357–385.

Neustadt, Richard. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Passachoff, Eloise. 2016. "The President's Budget as a Source of Agency Policy Control." *Yale Law Journal* 125:2182–2290.

Poole, Keith T. 2007. "Changing Minds? Not in Congress!" *Public Choice* 131:435–451.

Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 1991. "Patterns of Congressional Voting." *American Journal of Political Science* 35(1):228–278.

Prato, Carlo and Ian R. Turner. 2024. "The institutional foundations of the power to persuade." *American Journal of Political Science* .

Rohde, David W. 1974. "Committee Reform in the House of Representatives and the Subcommittee Bill of Rights." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 411(1):39–47.

Saturno, James V. 2021. Appropriations Subcommittee Structure: History of Changes from 1920 to 2021. Technical Report RL31572 Congressional Research Service Washington, DC: .

Selin, Jennifer L. 2015. "What Makes an Agency Independent?" *American Journal of Political Science* 59(4):971–987.

Sharkansky, Ira. 1965*a*. "An Appropriations Subcommittee and Its Client Agencies: A Comparative Study of Supervision and Control." *American Political Science Review* 59(3):622–628.

Sharkansky, Ira. 1965*b*. "Four Agencies and an Appropriations Subcommittee: A Comparative Study of Budget Strategies." *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 9(3):254–281.

Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Barry R. Weingast. 1985. "Policy Consequences of Government by Congressional Subcommittees." *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 35(4):114–131.

Shepsle, Kenneth A., Robert P. Van Houweling, Samuel J. Abrams and Peter C. Hanson. 2009. "The Senate Electoral Cycle and Bicameral Appropriations Politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 53(2):343–359.

United States Senate. 2022. *Committee on Appropriations, 1867-2022*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office.

White, Joseph. 1989. "The Functions and Power of the House Appropriations Committee." Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Whittington, Keith E. and Daniel P. Carpenter. 2003. "Executive Power in American Institutional Development." *Perspectives on Politics* 1:495–513.

Woon, Jonathan and Sarah Anderson. 2012. "Political Bargaining and the Timing of Congressional Appropriations." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 37(4):409–436.

Online Appendix

Mechanisms of Checks and Balances: Appropriations, Congressional Committees, and Interbranch Conflict

Contents

A Data Description

A.1 Summary Statistics

Table A.1: Summary of Continuous Variables

	Mean	SD	Min	Median	Max	N
Requested (in thousands)	5557.55	32 786.11	0.03	192.41	970 694.00	10800
Enacted (in thousands)	6374.74	36 986.00	−2903.00	209.00	1 032 711.00	10800
Diff (in thousands)	817.19	22 861.30	−819 099.00	0.00	761 419.00	10800
Pct Diff	−8.34	291.55	−23 275.00	0.00	212.00	10800
ln(|Diff| + 1)	9.57	4.53	0.00	10.34	20.67	10800
Real GDP Growth	0.02	0.02	−0.03	0.02	0.06	10800
House Seat Share (Pres Party)	0.48	0.08	0.33	0.46	0.67	10800
ln(Unemployment)	0.06	0.02	0.04	0.06	0.10	10800
Real Deficit (in hundreds)	−55.60	61.44	−330.13	−45.69	37.31	10800

A.2 Matching Subcommittees to Agency Appropriations

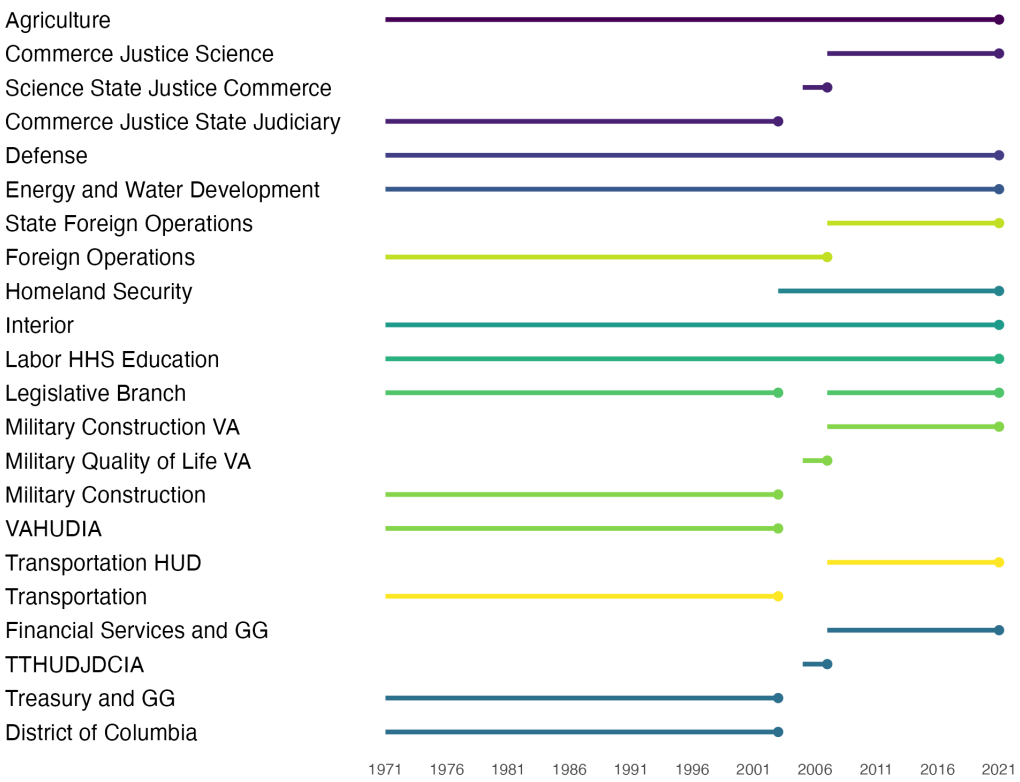
Most subunits in our appropriations data can be directly matched to appropriation bills, though in a few cases subunits are listed in the annual budget reports but not explicitly in the appropriation bills of the given year. These cases generally fall under three categories:

1. *Disbanded Empty Subunits*: Certain subunits were included in the presidential budget proposal, but received no appropriations and were disbanded or reorganized by the time Congressional appropriations were passed. For example, the President's Advisory Council on Executive Organization resigned in May 1971, prior to the introduction of the Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government Appropriation Act in July 1971. These subunits were left uncategorized and are omitted from the analyses.

2. *Extension by Continuing Resolution (CR)*: Some subunits may have received appropriations by a generic continuing resolution, which extends federal programs funding at the levels passed in the previous year. Continuing resolutions can include both small programs and agencies as well as entire departments. A particularly relevant case was the Energy and Water Development Appropriation Act (H.R. 12928) in the 95th Congress. President Carter vetoed this bill and Congress passed an emergency Continuing Resolution H.J.Res. 1139 to extend funding through FY 1979. Because of this variation, we categorized these subunits in two ways: (1) If the subunit was found in both the Appropriation bills in the previous and following year, and their parent unit (e.g. Department of Agriculture) was extended by continuing resolution, we extended the categorization from the previous fiscal year. (2) If the subunit was not found in the Appropriation bills in the previous and following year, we left the subunit uncategorized and omitted it from analysis.

3. *Generic Requests*: Subunits, such as "Ocean Shipping" and "Allowances," were overly broad, and difficult to match to a respective subcommittee. As such, they were left uncategorized and dropped.

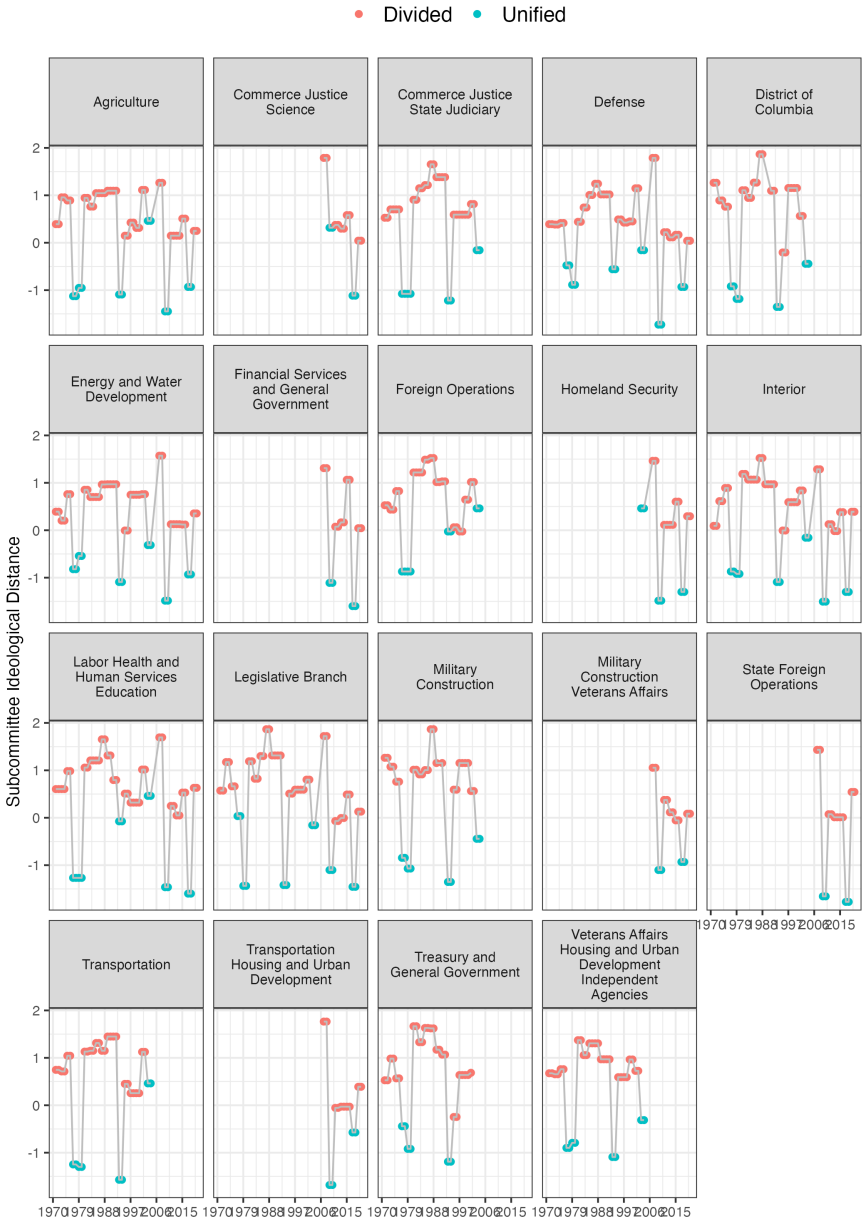
Figure A.1: Subcommittees of the House Appropriations Committee



Plot shows the fiscal years for which each subcommittee is present in the data. Subcommittee names reflect the departments and agencies over which they have jurisdiction. HHS=Health and Human Services; VA=Veterans Affairs; VAHUDIA=Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and Independent agencies; HUD=Housing and Urban Development; GG=General Government; TTHUDJDCIA=Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia, and Independent agencies.

A.3 Subcommittee Distance over Time

Figure A.2: Subcommittees of the House Appropriations Committee



Plot shows the greater of the ideological distances between the president and the median of the relevant House and Senate subcommittees over time. Subcommittee names reflect the departments and agencies over which they have jurisdiction. HHS=Health and Human Services; VA=Veterans Affairs; VAHUDIA=Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and Independent agencies; HUD=Housing and Urban Development; GG=General Government; TTHUDJDCIA=Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury, Housing and Urban Development, the Judiciary, District of Columbia, and Independent agencies.

B Robustness Checks for Table 1

B.1 Alternative Fixed Effect Specifications

Table B.1: Presidential Budgetary Success with Subcommittees with Alternative Fixed Effects

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Subcommittee Distance	0.384	0.384	0.224	0.367	0.315
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(0.041)	(<0.001)	(0.008)
ln(Request)	1.261	0.651	1.267	1.294	1.190
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Divided Government	−0.316	−0.371	−0.094	−0.235	−0.209
	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.630)	(0.310)	(0.307)
ln(Unemployment)	0.223	−0.214	−0.112	0.024	0.042
	(0.442)	(0.446)	(0.756)	(0.948)	(0.907)
GDP Per Capita	3.088	2.512	1.558	1.109	1.352
	(0.263)	(0.334)	(0.583)	(0.699)	(0.648)
Deficit	−0.002	−0.004	−0.003	−0.002	−0.002
	(0.192)	(0.008)	(0.070)	(0.181)	(0.149)
Num.Obs.	10761	10761	10761	10761	10761
R2	0.567	0.703	0.573	0.588	0.597
President FE			✓	✓	✓
Subcommittee FE				✓	
Subunit FE		✓			
Unit FE					✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

B.2 Alternative Standard Error Specifications

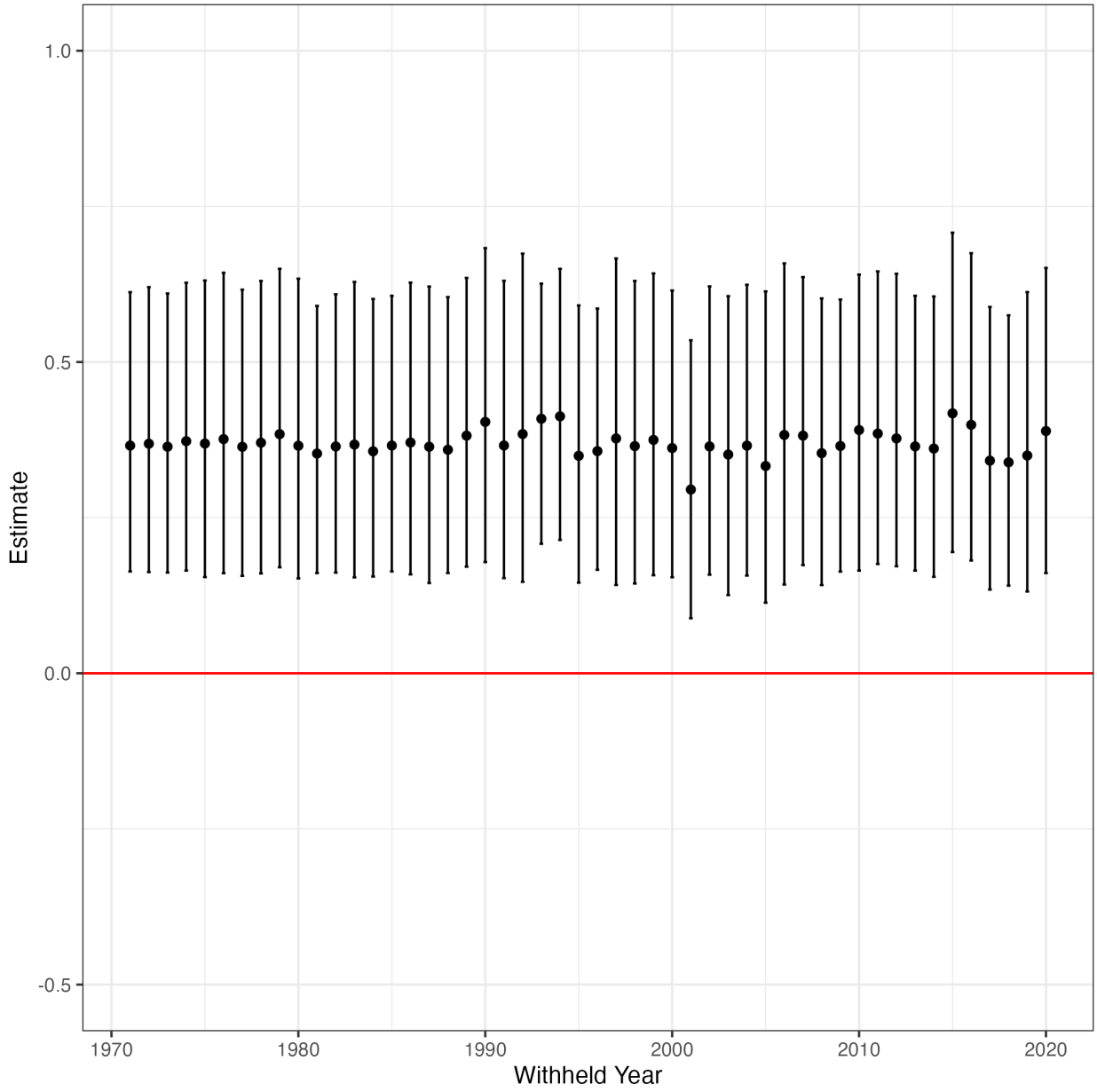
Table B.2: Presidential Budgetary Success with Subcommittees with Alternative SE

	Model 1	Model 2
Subcommittee Distance	0.370	0.370
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
ln(Request)	0.693	0.693
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Divided Government	−0.273	−0.273
	(0.010)	(0.037)
War	0.149	0.149
	(0.522)	(0.115)
ln(Unemployment)	0.023	0.023
	(0.891)	(0.928)
GDP Per Capita	2.370	2.370
	(0.321)	(0.113)
Deficit	−0.002	−0.002
	(0.050)	(0.025)
Num.Obs.	10761	10761
R2	0.706	0.706
Subunit FE	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓
Clustered SE	Unit	Subunit

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

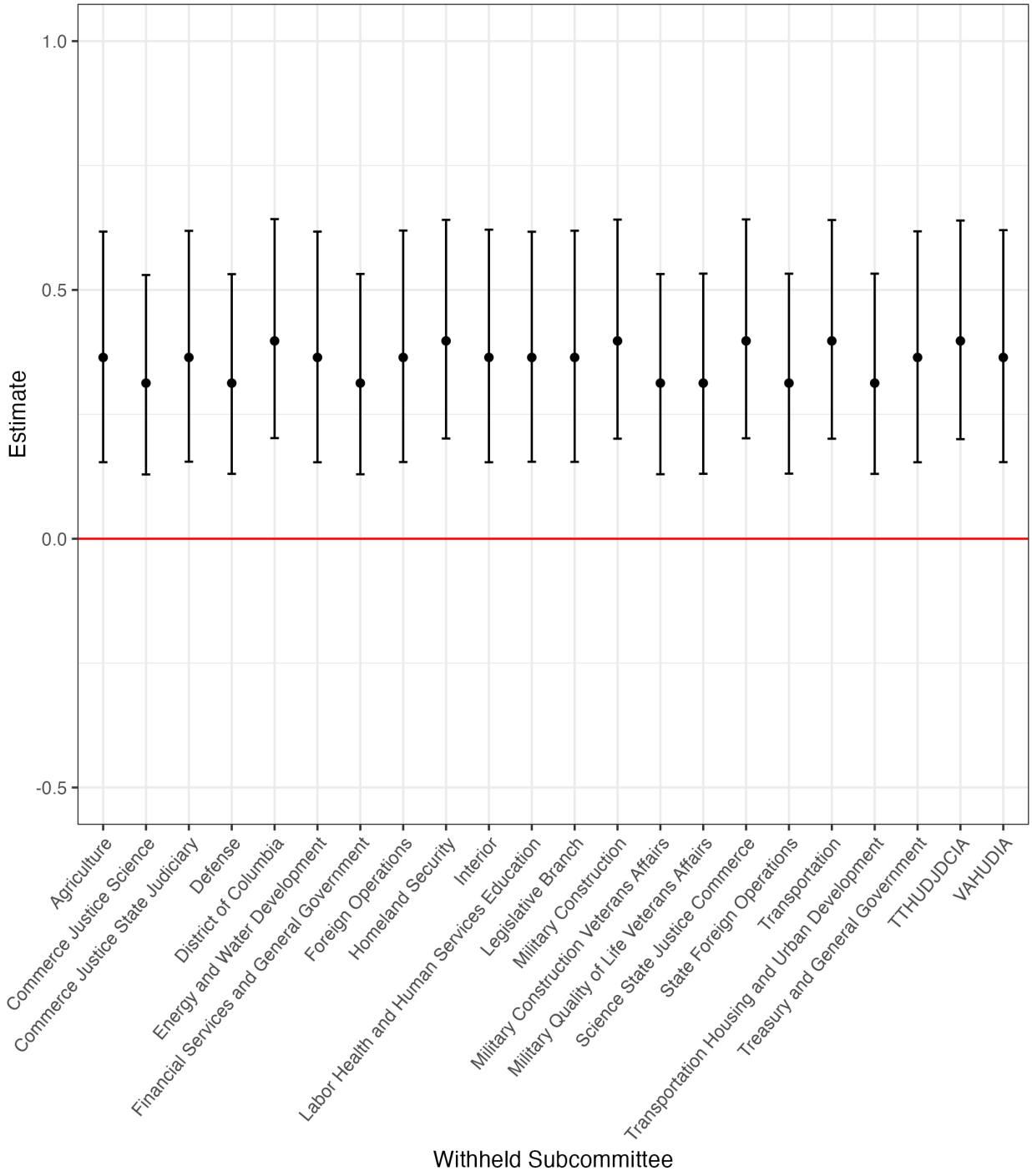
B.3 Sample Robustness

Figure B.1: Omitting one year at a time



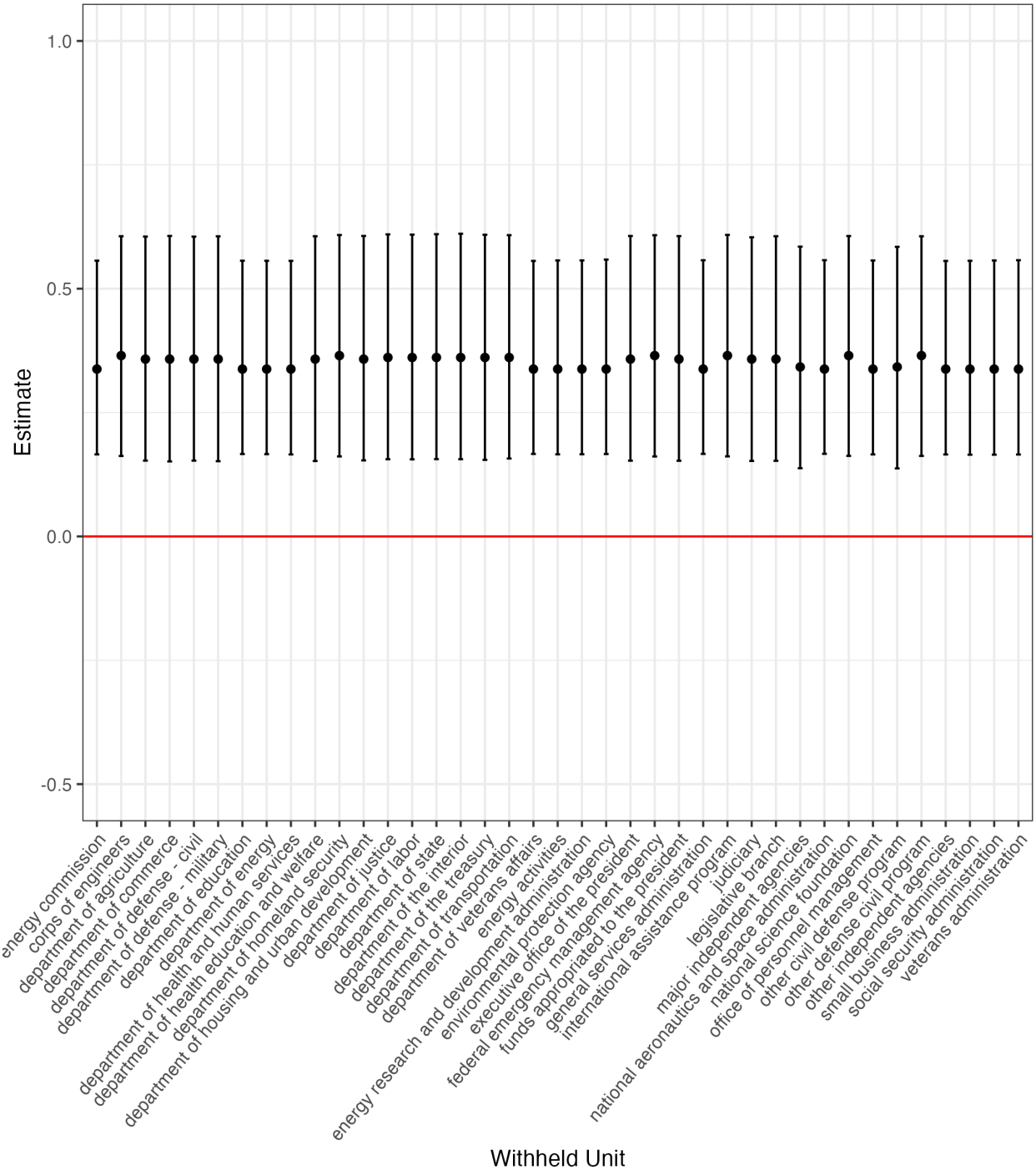
Plot shows the coefficient estimates and standard errors for *subcommittee distance* when estimating the model specification from column (4) of Table 1, while omitting one fiscal year at a time. Years listed along the x-axis indicate which fiscal year was omitted when estimating the model.

Figure B.2: Omitting one subcommittee at a time



Plot shows the coefficient estimates and standard errors for *subcommittee distance* when estimating the model specification from column (4) of Table 1, while omitting one subcommittee at a time. Subcommittees listed along the x-axis indicate which subcommittee was omitted when estimating the model.

Figure B.3: Omitting one unit at a time



Plot shows the coefficient estimates and standard errors for *subcommittee distance* when estimating the model specification from column (4) of Table 1, while omitting one unit at a time. (Recall that the subunits—such as the National Park Service—are nested within units—such as the Department of the Interior.) Units listed along the x-axis indicate which unit was omitted when estimating the model.

B.4 Filtering Years

Table B.3: Presidential Budgetary Success with Subcommittees (HJ Filter)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Subcommittee Distance	0.127	0.116	0.302	0.278
	(0.026)	(0.038)	(0.010)	(0.005)
ln(Request)		0.676	0.673	0.670
		(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Divided Government			−0.345	−0.362
			(0.051)	(0.046)
War			0.381	0.395
			(0.002)	(0.003)
ln(Unemployment)				−0.387
				(0.309)
GDP Per Capita				−3.351
				(0.162)
Deficit				−0.004
				(0.011)
Num.Obs.	9098	9098	9098	9098
Subunit FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

Table B.4: Presidential Budgetary Success with Subcommittees (HW Filter)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Subcommittee Distance	0.210	0.203	0.378	0.382
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
ln(Request)		0.702	0.700	0.698
		(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Divided Government			−0.335	−0.287
			(0.066)	(0.158)
War			0.150	0.166
			(0.027)	(0.014)
ln(Unemployment)				0.076
				(0.813)
GDP Per Capita				2.231
				(0.418)
Deficit				−0.002
				(0.148)
Num.Obs.	10537	10537	10537	10537
War Controls			✓	✓
Economic Controls				✓
Subunit FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

B.5 Nokken-Poole

Table B.5: Subcommittee Composition and Presidential Budgetary Sucess using Nokken-Poole Scores

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Subcommittee Distance	0.200	0.189	0.333	0.313
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(0.002)	(0.016)
ln(Request)		0.697	0.695	0.693
		(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Divided Government			−0.275	−0.206
			(0.118)	(0.299)
War			0.117	0.133
			(0.050)	(0.022)
ln(Unemployment)				−0.029
				(0.939)
ln(GDP per capita)				2.245
				(0.416)
ln(Deficit)				−0.002
				(0.123)
Num.Obs.	10761	10761	10761	10761
R2	0.695	0.706	0.706	0.706
Subunit FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

C Alternative Specifications

C.1 Distinguishing Unified and Divided Government

Table C.1: Divided Government, Subcommittee Composition, and Presidential Budgetary Success

	Divided	Unified	Full
Subcommittee Distance	0.440	0.222	0.373
	(0.235)	(0.365)	(0.011)
Subcom Distance x Divided Government			−0.013
			(0.945)
Divided Government			−0.270
			(0.228)
ln(Request)	0.708	0.539	0.693
	(<0.001)	(0.002)	(<0.001)
War	0.111	0.479	0.148
	(0.225)	(0.126)	(0.019)
ln(Unemployment)	−0.285	2.959	0.021
	(0.560)	(0.002)	(0.954)
ln(GDP per capita)	−2.246	7.575	2.324
	(0.336)	(0.027)	(0.316)
ln(Deficit)	−0.004	0.030	−0.002
	(0.085)	(<0.001)	(0.121)
Num.Obs.	7799	2962	10761
R2	0.718	0.740	0.706
Subunit FE	✓	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

C.2 Distinguishing the House and the Senate

Table C.2: Subcommittee Composition and Presidential Budgetary Success: Differences across Chambers

	Model 1	Model 2
House Distance	0.333	
	(0.003)	
Senate Distance		0.080
		(0.312)
Divided Government	−0.372	0.133
	(0.080)	(0.404)
ln(Request)	0.695	0.694
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
War	0.276	0.060
	(0.011)	(0.328)
ln(Unemployment)	−0.072	−0.226
	(0.826)	(0.556)
ln(GDP per capita)	1.934	2.463
	(0.467)	(0.377)
ln(Deficit)	−0.002	−0.003
	(0.210)	(0.033)
Num.Obs.	10777	10784
R2	0.707	0.706
Subunit FE	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

C.3 Incorporating Legislative Actors

Table C.3: Presidential Budgetary Success with Varying Legislative Actors as Constraints

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Subcommittee Distance	0.370				
	(<0.001)				
House Chair Distance		0.183			
		(0.070)			
House Median Distance			0.223		
			(0.035)		
Senate Chair Distance				0.010	
				(0.929)	
Senate Median Distance					−0.141
					(0.221)
Divided Government	−0.273	−0.118	−0.223	0.148	0.223
	(0.173)	(0.671)	(0.304)	(0.398)	(0.063)
ln(Request)	0.693	0.695	0.694	0.696	0.696
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
War	0.149	0.183	0.168	0.080	0.101
	(0.017)	(0.052)	(0.048)	(0.236)	(0.121)
ln(Unemployment)	0.023	−0.260	−0.248	−0.401	−0.704
	(0.949)	(0.409)	(0.445)	(0.253)	(0.137)
ln(GDP per capita)	2.370	2.039	1.331	2.204	1.395
	(0.384)	(0.460)	(0.618)	(0.430)	(0.616)
ln(Deficit)	−0.002	−0.003	−0.003	−0.004	−0.004
	(0.133)	(0.074)	(0.054)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Num.Obs.	10761	10777	10777	10731	10784
R2	0.706	0.706	0.706	0.706	0.706
AIC	51139.4	51229.6	51233.4	50997.3	51255.4
BIC	55808.3	55899.4	55903.2	55664.3	55925.6
Subunit FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

C.4 Investigating Potential Change over Time

Table C.4: Presidential Budgetary Success with Subcommittees over Time

	1971-1994	1995-2020	1971-2020
Subcommittee Distance	0.007	0.378	0.333
	(0.955)	(<0.001)	(0.007)
ln(Request)	0.537	0.622	0.702
	(0.001)	(0.005)	(<0.001)
War	0.283	0.116	0.245
	(0.062)	(0.417)	(<0.001)
ln(Unemployment)	−0.805	0.808	−0.655
	(0.029)	(0.074)	(0.021)
ln(GDP per capita)	−4.088	17.486	−1.026
	(0.050)	(0.006)	(0.741)
ln(Deficit)	0.007	−0.003	−0.006
	(0.312)	(0.208)	(0.016)
House Subcom Dist x 1980			−0.107
			(0.271)
House Subcom Dist x 1990			0.244
			(0.076)
House Subcom Dist x 2000			0.280
			(0.010)
House Subcom Dist x 2010			−0.196
			(0.234)
Num.Obs.	4662	6099	10512
R2	0.738	0.726	0.706
Subunit FE	✓	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓	

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

C.5 Strategic Proposal Making: IV Specification

Table C.5: Strategic Proposals (IV)

	First stage	Second stage
Subcommittee Distance	0.031	0.303
	(0.023)	(0.194)
Divided Government	−0.040	−0.199
	(0.030)	(0.293)
ln(Request)		3.001
		(4.100)
First Term	0.015	
	(0.022)	
Year 2	−0.009	
	(0.015)	
Year 3	0.007	
	(0.014)	
Year 4	0.012	
	(0.019)	
War	0.021	0.095
	(0.020)	(0.122)
GDP Per Capita	−0.421	3.141
	(0.366)	(3.435)
Deficit	−0.0004	−0.001
	(0.0003)	(0.003)
ln(Unemployment)	−0.033	0.052
	(0.109)	(0.435)
Num.Obs.	10761	10761
Subunit FE	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓
F-statistic		0.44

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

D Full Specifications

D.1 Approval Full Specification

Table D.1: Presidential Approval and Congressional Constraints on Presidential Budgetary Success

	(1)	(2)
Subcommittee Distance	0.434	0.396
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Subcom Distance x Low Approval		−0.063
		(0.342)
Subcom Distance x High Approval		0.137
		(0.356)
Subcom Distance x Approval Rating	0.010	
	(0.017)	
Low Approval		−0.075
		(0.425)
High Approval		0.396
		(0.012)
Approval Rating	0.006	
	(0.042)	
Divided Government	−0.268	−0.277
	(0.225)	(0.177)
ln(Request)	0.694	0.694
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
War	−0.157	−0.128
	(0.059)	(0.056)
ln(Unemployment)	0.372	0.282
	(0.300)	(0.430)
ln(GDP per capita)	1.270	1.887
	(0.668)	(0.516)
ln(Deficit)	−0.001	−0.001
	(0.398)	(0.368)
Num.Obs.	10277	10277
R2	0.707	0.708
Controls	✓	✓
Subunit FE	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses. *Low approval* indicates presidential approval ratings at 40 percent or below, and *High approval* indicates presidential approval ratings at 60 percent or higher.

D.2 Public & Presidential Priorities Full Specification

Table D.2: The Politics of Issue Priorities and Congressional Constraints on Presidential Budgetary Success

	(1)	(2)
Subcommittee Distance	0.311	0.298
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Subcom Distance x MIP	0.004	
	(0.164)	
MIP	0.013	
	(0.011)	
ln(Request)	0.702	0.797
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Divided Government	−0.174	−0.220
	(0.408)	(0.334)
War	0.152	0.219
	(0.097)	(0.064)
ln(Unemployment)	0.093	−0.041
	(0.789)	(0.908)
ln(GDP per capita)	4.064	3.466
	(0.209)	(0.356)
ln(Deficit)	−0.003	−0.004
	(0.076)	(0.014)
Subcom Distance x Topic Prop		0.006
		(0.137)
Topic Prop		−0.003
		(0.568)
Num.Obs.	8817	7746
R2	0.708	0.713
Subunit FE	✓	✓
President FE	✓	✓

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients

with *p*-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses. *Public priority* indicates the annual proportion of the public that identified each issue area as the "most important problem." *Presidential priority* indicates the annual proportion of the president's state of the union address that references each issue area.

D.3 Agency Full Specification

Table D.3: Agency Characteristics and Bargaining Success

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Subcommittee Distance	0.217	0.219	0.188	0.131
	(0.128)	(0.155)	(0.061)	(0.775)
Subcom Distance x Removal	0.068			
	(0.347)			
Removal	0.126			
	(0.855)			
ln(Request)	1.199	1.187	0.800	1.591
	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)	(<0.001)
Divided Government	0.132	0.132	0.056	1.352
	(0.485)	(0.508)	(0.710)	(0.266)
War	0.112	0.111		
	(0.060)	(0.110)		
ln(Unemployment)	0.224	0.202		
	(0.566)	(0.590)		
ln(GDP per capita)	4.098	4.099		
	(0.168)	(0.173)		
ln(Deficit)	−0.002	−0.002		
	(0.347)	(0.334)		
Subcom Distance x Review		0.005		
		(0.891)		
Review		0.341		
		(0.080)		
Subcom Distance x Dept Align			−0.006	
			(0.940)	
Dept Align			0.626	
			(0.149)	
Subcom Distance x Pres Align				−0.063
				(0.761)
Pres Align				−0.670
				(0.018)
Num.Obs.	5023	5023	2378	834

Dependent variable is the absolute value of the difference (plus one), logged between a presidential budget request and the enacted appropriation. Entries are linear regression coefficients with p-values calculated using the wild bootstrap clustered on subcommittees in parentheses. *Independence* (measure 1) is a measure of agency independence based on principals' ability to remove lower officials. *Independence* (measure 2) is a measure of agency independence based on the principals' ability to review the actions of lower officials. Both measures are based on Selin (2015). *Dept alignment* is a trichotomous measure of whether an agency is in a department that is aligned with the sitting president's ideological orientation. *Agency alignment* is a trichotomous measure of whether an individual agency is aligned with the sitting president's ideological orientation. Both measures are based on Clinton and Lewis (2008).