

Ideology, Electoral Incentives, and Congressional Politics

The Republican House Class of 1994

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Following the work of Downs and Mayhew, some theories of legislative politics assume that candidates are motivated only by electoral interests and their behavior is driven by the median voter in their district. Other theories, however, posit that legislator behavior is driven by additional factors such as member's policy interests or those of the primary constituency. It is our theoretical expectation that Downs was not incorrect but rather incomplete. In this article, we classify the Republican freshman representatives elected in 1994 according to these different motives and conclude that different motives are related to systematic differences in behavior. We observe pressure from the district median, and the representatives' primary electorate and personal ideological commitments exert a significant and independent effect on the positions taken by representatives. Our results indicate that members are influenced by factors outside of their district median.

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The analysis of American congressional elections has been strongly influenced by the theoretical arguments of Anthony Downs (1957) and of other scholars who built on his work. Downs is best known for his assumption that parties are only motivated by the desire to win elections and that for

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the prediction (given his assumptions), two competing parties would converge to the middle of the dimension of competition. Explicitly building on Downs, David Mayhew (1974) wrote one of the most influential books in the congressional literature in which he explained the structure of the House and the behavior of its members by starting from the assumption that representatives were motivated only by the desire for reelection. As we will discuss shortly, other scholars departed from this perspective on members' motivations in a number of ways, both by amplifying the range of electoral considerations taken into account and by considering other than electoral motives.

In this article, we draw on both types of amplifications of the Downsian perspective and seek to provide empirical evidence that factors in addition to the median voter influence representatives' choices of what position to take on policy questions. Although a substantial number of researchers we will discuss below have adopted the theoretical perspective that members' motivations are broader than just satisfying the center of the electorate, few studies provide specific empirical evidence of the impact of these additional factors on roll call positions. The empirical focus of our analysis is on the Republican House class of 1994. This large class, many of the members of which have survived in office until today, has had a substantial and continuing impact on the operation of the House. In particular we seek to offer evidence regarding the impact of primary constituencies and members' own policy preferences on their floor behavior. Because many members of this class were known to have strong policy commitments—one manifestation of which was the almost universal commitment to the Contract with America (Gimpel, 1996; Killian, 1998; Rae, 1998)—it provides an especially useful arena for analysis.

The structure of the article is as follows. First, we will discuss the theoretical and empirical work that built from Downs's initial analysis. This will provide the theoretical basis for our expectations regarding the class of 1994. Next, we will offer our predictions about the position taking by the members of that class. Then, we will describe the particular data to be employed in testing the hypotheses, followed by a presentation of the evidence. Finally, we offer some conclusions and comments about future research.

The Median Voter and Other Forces in Congressional Elections Research

In 1957, Downs published *An Economic Theory of Democracy* in which he assumed that politicians were motivated solely by the desire to win elections. If voters cast their ballots for the party or candidate that was closest to them on policy, the candidates would be drawn toward the median of the

electorate to maximize their chance of winning. Drawing inspiration from Downs's work, Mayhew (1974) developed a theoretical argument based on the assumption that members of Congress were "single-minded seekers of reelection" (p. 5). Mayhew made clear that he did not necessarily believe that this assumption would account for all features of organization and behavior, but he did believe that it fit reality well and found the assumption attractive because it put the "spotlight" on individual politicians rather than parties, which he characterized as "analytic phantoms" (p. 6).¹

Shortly before Mayhew's contribution, an alternative perspective on the motivation of representatives was offered by Richard Fenno (1973). He argued that in addition to wanting reelection, some members were also motivated by the desire for power within the House and for good public policy. Then in his next book, Fenno (1978) explored the relationship between members and their constituencies. There he presented the view that members perceived a more elaborate constituency than was implied by Downs's (1957) emphasis on the median voter. Specifically, Fenno said that in addition to the geographic and reelection constituencies (respectively those within the legal boundaries and those who supported the member's reelection), there also were the primary and personal constituencies. The primary constituency is composed of a member's strongest supporters, those who would support her or him in a primary fight.² The perspectives Fenno offered in these two works imply that a member's primary constituency will have an effect on her or his legislative behavior separate from the impact of the reelection constituency and that some members' personal policy preferences will also have an independent effect on behavior. Although some scholars (e.g., Erikson & Wright, 2001; Hall, 1996; Rohde, 1991) have incorporated Fenno's goals that members have goals beyond reelection, they do not directly empirically test if this assumption influences member voting behavior above and beyond district preferences once they have arrived in the House.

A great deal of research has appeared in recent decades that relates to the issue of whether general election constituency preferences are clearly the dominant influence on member behavior or whether other factors are also important. One prominent strain of work relates to whether or not major-party candidates for Congress converge to the center of their respective constituencies. For example, Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) offered an analysis of the ideological positions of House candidates running for office from 1874 to 1996. To do this they conducted an initial analysis of the 1996 election, employing responses to a survey administered to all House candidates in that year. The survey was conducted by an organization called Project Vote Smart and included more than 200 policy questions on a wide

range of topics.³ The authors used the responses, coupled with roll call data, to measure the (public) positions of both representatives and their opponents in 1996. In addition, they employed the presidential election results in each district as a measure of district political preferences.

In one of their main findings, Ansolabehere et al. (2001) say,

One of the starkest facts revealed in the 1996 data is that candidates clearly do not converge, either nationally or district-by-district. Nationally, there appears to be two “pools” of candidates, one Democratic and one Republican, and little overlap between the two. (p. 141)

The data showed that with the exception of only one district, the Republican candidate was always more conservative than the Democrat and usually substantially so. The average difference between the two parties’ candidates is 0.47 points on a zero to one scale. The standard deviations of positions within the parties are both less than one third of this average difference. Thus, in 1996, most voters were presented with sharply different policy platforms by their congressional candidates.

Ansolabehere et al. (2001) were also able to extend their comparison of candidate divergence back in time to the 1870s for a subset of districts by matching the voting records in consecutive congresses of representatives who succeeded one another. In this portion of their work, they found that, in general, divergence had been the pattern during the whole period. Indeed in 1,814 races since 1874, only twice was there evidence that the two-party candidates had converged to the same position, although there was variation over time in the tendency of candidates to depart from the national party position and tailor their positions to district sentiments.

Erikson and Wright (2001) also used Project Vote Smart data to analyze candidate positions, in this case regarding the election of 1998. They used these data (sometimes supplemented with incumbents’ roll call data) to measure candidates’ ideological positions. In the 228 districts in which they were able to obtain position measures for both candidates, they did not find a single district with a Democratic candidate more conservative than the Republican candidate (p. 83). Moreover, the differences between the parties were generally quite pronounced. Still others have formally shown that if members possess personal preferences or are responsive to primary activists, then the Downsian convergence result no longer holds (e.g., Aldrich, 1983; Aranson & Ordershook, 1972; Calvert, 1985; Francis, Kenny, Morton, & Schmidt, 1994; Wittman, 1983).

This literature presents a puzzle for the Downsian perspective, captured by Fiorina (1999) in his question “Whatever happened to the median voter?”

That is, why do candidates not converge, and what are the forces that counteract the Downsian pull toward the center? Fiorina considers a variety of explanations, and we will not try to reproduce his entire presentation here, but two of the factors are particularly relevant to our analysis below. One possible explanation is the impact of policy-oriented party activists. A number of studies of party polarization have demonstrated that there are sharp policy differences between the major parties' groups of activists. Many also show that these differences have increased in recent decades.

For example, Aldrich and Rohde (2001, pp. 277-278) present data drawn from surveys conducted by *The New York Times* in 1996. The paper surveyed a national sample of the electorate and asked the same questions of delegates to the Democratic and Republican national nominating conventions, who represent the opinions among activists. The data show that across a variety of issues, the views of the delegates were considerably more polarized than the views of each party's voters.

Jacobson (2000) shows that in terms of average liberal-conservative self-identification, the difference between Democrat and Republican activists increased substantially between the 1970s and the 1990s. The increase, moreover, was much greater than the increase in the corresponding difference between Democrat and Republican voters. Another relevant result presented by Jacobson is that from the 1970s to the 1990s, the correlation between the party identification and ideology of all voters in House elections increased substantially. That is, over time liberals were increasingly likely to identify as Democrats and conservatives as Republicans.

Fiorina (1999) offers related findings on electoral developments. Analyzing the National Election Studies from 1964 to 1998, he examined the ideology of activists versus all voters. He compared the average ideology of Democratic respondents (activists and voters) in districts represented by Democrats in the House and also Republican respondents in districts represented by Republicans. Paralleling Jacobson's (2000) findings, he shows that the difference between party activists increased much more from 1970 to 1998 than did the corresponding difference for just voters.

Finally, Layman and Carsey (2000) show that the views of party activists have become increasingly polarized along multiple issue dimensions, including newer cultural issues and the older issues involving the role of government in promoting economic and racial equality. Their analysis indicates, however, that the polarization is not only because of replacement of more moderate with more extreme activists over time but also because of conversion of activists to more extreme positions.

Aldrich (1995) argues that relatively extreme policy-oriented activists can affect candidate divergence in a number of ways. One is through the primary

process, as noted by Fenno (1973) and Mayhew (1974) in our earlier discussion. Candidates must move away from the center of the entire electorate to appeal to their party's more extreme activists in the primary. Given these earlier commitments, it is infeasible to then reject them wholesale in the general election and still retain credibility.⁴ Moreover, such rejection of commitments could easily give rise to primary challenges in a later election. In addition, candidates depend on their pool of activists in the general election for workers and for money. Policy positions tilted away from the center and toward the activists are necessary to motivate them to participate.

A second explanation for candidate divergence considered by Fiorina (1999) involves the possibility that major-party candidates do not converge because one or both are policy oriented. This, of course, circumvents the Downsian expectation by simply changing the motivational assumption of the theory. If candidates are not motivated solely by winning, then there is no automatic expectation of convergence. Moreover, if candidates have policy preferences that are extreme relative to the general electorate and they advocate (at least to a degree) their true preferences in campaigns, then this fact alone could be enough to account for candidate divergence.⁵

There is little good systematic quantitative data on the policy preferences of candidates independent of public positions announced in campaigns or behavior in office, so it is not possible to present evidence comparable to that which we discussed regarding activists. There is, however, substantial anecdotal evidence about candidates with strong personal policy commitments that influenced their behavior, and there are additional good reasons to expect this to be an important influence on members.

One exception is Kingdon's (1973) study of roll call decision making. He argued that there were seven types of actors (e.g., interest groups or the constituency) in a member's "field of forces." Much of the time, she or he will perceive no conflict in that field, and when she or he does, Kingdon contended, she or he would vote for the position favored by the greatest number of actors. Of 104 cases where one or two actors were out of line with the field, 93 voted consistently with Kingdon's argument (p. 236). In 10 of the 11 deviant cases, the member voted with her or his own attitude against the field.

Furthermore, Fenno's (1973) study demonstrated that a significant portion of members interviewed had personal policy goals that influenced the member's choice of committee assignments and her or his behavior once assigned.⁶ Moreover, many accounts of specific legislative fights in Congress by both political scientists and journalists see personal policy preferences of some members as having a major impact. Note, for example, the behavior of GOP representatives from the extreme conservative end of the spectrum in the government shutdown fights of 1995 and 1996 and in the two revolts

against Newt Gingrich and the opposition to Bob Livingston's becoming speaker (e.g., Aldrich & Rohde, 2000; Drew, 1996; Maraniss & Weisskopf, 1996).

As Aldrich (1995) points out, the evidence on relatively intense and extreme policy commitments among party activists also should lead us to expect analogous results among candidates because the activist pool is a major source of candidate recruitment. This is not, of course, a claim that such candidates do not care about winning, only that policy is an additional motivation. Evidence of policy as a potentially additional motivation figures prominently in analyses related to the theory of conditional party government (Aldrich, 1995; Aldrich & Rohde, 2000; Rohde, 1991). In particular, these studies contain evidence that supports the view that representatives sometimes conspire with their party leaders to deny members the opportunity to vote on certain options favored by their constituents to achieve a policy outcome that the members prefer (see also Van Houweling, 2001).

Reelection, Ideology, and Republican Freshmen in the 104th Congress

We have seen that the literature on congressional elections has departed in two ways from the Downsian concentration on the dominance of the median voter in two-party competition where parties are concerned only with winning. The first of these "neo-Downsian" (Grofman, 2004) strains involved expanding the motivations thought relevant, whereas the other expanded the range of electoral considerations, particularly by focusing on primaries. Each of these alternative approaches contends that there are forces that counter the simple Downsian incentive toward convergence. Primary electorates (and the subsequent need to maintain some semblance of consistency in position taking) tug candidates toward the ends of the spectrum, whereas a candidate's own policy preferences can provide an independent basis for positions.

To examine these varying theoretical expectations, we will concentrate on the House Republican class of 1994—a class that has received quite a bit of scholarly attention in the past. For example, Rae (1998) and Killian (1998) detail how this class was able to reform Congress as part of passing the Contract with America and their subsequent battles with President Clinton over the budget and their struggles for reelection in 1996.⁷ Meanwhile, both Ornstein and Schenkenberg (1995) and Gimpel (1996) provide an analysis of the Republican's efforts during their first 100 days in the majority.

This focus has a number of advantages. Because all members are beginning service at the same time, the effects of forces that accrue during the

course of a career (and that would have to be controlled for if analysis included members of varying seniority) are removed. In addition, this is a large class (73 representatives) from a variety of electoral situations, ensuring variation in constituency preferences. In particular, some freshmen were elected from heavily Republican districts, whereas others were chosen from competitive districts that had Democratic incumbents. Furthermore, many members of the class were reputed to possess strong personal ideological commitments and were “motivated by deeper concerns over values and the country’s moral direction” (Rae, 1998, p. 58), which would hopefully provide variation on the other major variables of interest.⁸

Our theoretical expectations are based on this literature. Note that none of the analysis we reviewed contended that Downs’s (1957) emphasis on the importance of the median of the electorate was misguided. With two candidates, the center of the political spectrum exerts a strong pull. Therefore, we would expect that a measure of the district’s central tendency would have a significant impact on position taking. On the other hand, there are, as we have seen, good reasons to expect that primary electorates and personal ideological commitments will have a countervailing effect, pulling candidates toward the extremes. As a consequence, we hypothesize that measures of these countervailing forces should have a significant independent effect on positions. The contention is not that Downs was incorrect but rather incomplete and that when members take positions on roll call votes, we should observe pressures from both the median and the extremes.

Individual Member Variables and Measures

Below we present a variety of analyses concerning the way in which the Republican freshman class of 1994 behaved in both the 104th and subsequent Congresses. We first attempt to determine how close a member’s personal ideological platform and the district’s preferences coincide with legislative behavior. If we find separate effects for both measures, then we will have provided evidence that members do more than mimic their districts’ desires.

To measure legislative behavior, we use *w*-nominate scores from the 104th to 107th Congresses (see Tables 1 and 2).⁹ *W*-nominate measures members’ roll call behaviors on a scale from -1 to 1 , with higher positive numbers corresponding to increased conservatism. We employ *w*-nominate because it offers us an interval measure of the relative liberalism-conservatism of the roll call behavior of individual representatives.

We use several variables to calculate a member’s personal or primary constituency’s ideology. Ideally, we would have separate measures of these two

Table 1
Summary Statistics—104th Congress

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Min | Max | <i>n</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|-------|----------|
| Primary position | 0.863 | 1.11 | 0 | 3 | 73 |
| Evidence of Christian Right | 0.644 | 0.734 | 0 | 2 | 73 |
| 100% rating | 0.575 | 0.498 | 0 | 1 | 73 |
| Ideology | 0.659 | 0.479 | 0 | 1 | 44 |
| Presidential vote | 0.508 | 0.059 | 0.384 | 0.665 | 73 |
| W-nominate | 0.679 | 0.151 | 0.354 | 0.981 | 73 |

Table 2
Summary Statistics—104th to 107th Congresses

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Min | Max | <i>n</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|-------|----------|
| Primary position | 0.802 | 1.05 | 0 | 3 | 222 |
| Evidence of Christian Right | 0.644 | 0.752 | 0 | 2 | 222 |
| 100% rating | 0.595 | 0.492 | 0 | 1 | 222 |
| Ideology | 0.609 | 0.490 | 0 | 1 | 133 |
| Presidential vote | 0.520 | 0.065 | 0.384 | 0.708 | 222 |
| W-nominate | 0.699 | 0.156 | 0.329 | 0.997 | 222 |

influences, but at this point we do not. Our measures have to be seen as reflecting some combination of these things that we cannot disentangle. The first variable, primary position, is the ideological position of the winning GOP candidate in the 1994 primary elections. This variable is divided into four categories: no good information, most conservative (reflecting that the candidate nominated was the most conservative one in the GOP primary), not most conservative, and unopposed. The information for coding this variable was obtained by reading all campaign-related stories in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, and *CQ Weekly*.¹⁰ This measure is particularly useful because it depends on views and behavior not only before the candidate is elected but before the candidate was even nominated.

The second variable, evidence of Christian Right, measures evidence of political involvement by the candidate with the Christian Right according to the same news sources cited above. A candidate was coded as being involved with this group if it appeared that she or he identified with or received support from the Christian Right. This included supporting issues such as the right to life that are supported by Christian Right groups.¹¹ If there is evidence that the freshman is a moderate or supports abortion rights with no other mention

of the religious Right, then it is coded as no evidence. If there is no information whatsoever, then it is coded as such.

Several studies that relate to the influence of the Christian Right on congressional politics have appeared in the past 10 years. Green (1995) has argued that since the early 1990s, the Christian Right has been a “cornerstone of a resurgent Republican Party” (p. 16) and its influence has been a direct result of its association with candidates. The Christian Right recruited candidates and provided campaign resources for candidates who had an agenda close to that of the Christian Right (Diamond, 1988; Rozell & Wilcox, 1995; Wilcox, Rozell, & Coker, 1995). They also mobilized voters who identified as members of the Christian Right and subsequently voted for the Republican candidate (Green, Guth, & Wilcox, 1998; Regernus, Sikkink, & Smith, 1999). This recruitment or support occurs even when there is a trade-off between candidate electability and corresponding agendas.¹²

Green et al. (1998) found that in 1994 the Christian Right had some form of organizational presence in more than two dozen states. This was a result of both a demand by the people for traditional values in the face of modernization and a mobilization of the Christian Right as political entrepreneurs. According to the authors, the Christian Right became increasingly influential because of its “legitimacy, access of organizational resources, and a key role in nomination and platform politics” (p. 122).

Moen (1996) examined the influence of the Christian Right on voters in both presidential and congressional elections. In his discussion, he mentions four of the 1994 Republican freshmen advancing a proposal backed by the Christian Right.¹³ This indicates that the evolution of the Christian Right and political strategy by candidates and members has created a close relationship between religious conservatives and the Republican Party (p. 462). Based on this research, it is clear that the Christian Right played an important role in the electoral fortunes of many of the 1994 class. Thus, many members who identify with this group, either because of their own personal ideology or because they chose the attachment purely for electoral reasons, will likely act more conservative, *ceteris paribus*.

In addition to the Christian Right variable, we create a composite variable from Christian Right and primary position, which for convenience we call ideology. This variable produces a measure of the level of conservatism which we use as a proxy for personal ideology and/or policy commitments in the primary.

Table 3 shows how the variables are categorized and how consistent the measures are across groups. In no case was there evidence of the Christian Right where a representative was coded not the most conservative, and when

Table 3
1994 Primary Ideological Position and Evidence of Christian Right

| Christian Right | Primary Position | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| | Most Conservative | Not Most Conservative | Unopposed | No Information |
| Evidence | 9 | 0 | 3 | 13 |
| No evidence | 0 | 6 | 1 | 4 |
| No information | 4 | 4 | 6 | 23 |

Table 4
1994 Christian Coalition 100% Rating

| | |
|-------------|----|
| 100% rating | 42 |
| No rating | 31 |

a representative was coded the most conservative, there were no cases in the no evidence category. With this, it is possible to combine the variables to obtain a more encompassing measurement of ideology and also limit the loss of cases because of missing data. For the composite variable, any time a member was either the most conservative and/or there was evidence of the Christian Right, the representative was coded as most conservative or Right (which we term *conservative*), and for those who were not the most conservative or had no evidence of the Christian Right, they were coded as not most conservative or Right (or *not conservative*).¹⁴ In total, we had 29 conservative members and 15 not conservative members. The 23 cases where there was no good information on either variable were treated as missing values on the ideology variable, decreasing our sample size from 73 to 44 members when using this variable.

As a supplement to the other variables, we also measure ideology using the 100% rating from the Christian Coalition. This includes GOP freshmen with a 100% rating from the Christian Coalition as of January 1995, which was prior to any votes cast in the 104th House.¹⁵ Table 4 illustrates the breakdown of those with either a 100% Christian Coalition rating or no rating. For this variable, we had information for all of the 73 freshmen. Referring back to Table 3, an examination of the number of observations in the *no information* category of both primary position and Christian Right involvement shows that we are lacking information for more than half of the class. Nevertheless, by using all three measures to test our theory, we are able to at least

partially alleviate any problems associated with lack of good information on any one variable. It is our contention that members who are coded conservative according any of our measures should vote in a more extreme fashion than their district preferences would otherwise predict.

To create a measure of district policy preferences, we use the Republican two-party presidential vote from the presidential election that either precedes or coincides with the respective congressional election. These data came from various editions of *Congressional Quarterly's Politics In America*.¹⁶ Districts with a high Republican percentage of the two-party presidential vote are seen as more conservative than those with lower percentages.¹⁷ Therefore, these data allow us to measure the ideological makeup of each district at various points in time. Such a measure is essential for determining how well a representative matches up both ideologically and behaviorally with her or his district. Although none of our variables is perfect, they nevertheless provide useful measures of district preferences, member ideology, and legislative behavior.

Results

In this section, we will first present some preliminary analyses comparing members' floor behavior, their policy commitments using the measures outlined above, and their districts' preferences. For each of the sections, we are only dealing with the original 1994 Republican freshman class and their policy positions taken before they were first seated in Congress. To examine their behavior over time, we hold the preelection personal preferences constant but allow their voting behavior and presidential vote in the district to vary during the next three Congresses, the 105th to the 107th. After discussing our initial findings through a series of cross-tabulations, we will then move on to a succession of regressions that predict floor behavior, controlling for the same district and personal policy preferences. For each of the measures, we expect members who were conservative before getting elected to act in a similar fashion when voting on the House floor.

Floor Behavior and Policy Preferences

In Table 5, we compare the mean first dimension w-nominate scores for the freshman class with the first of our measures of pre-roll call policy preference, the members' relative ideological positions in the 1994 Republican primary. First, it should be clear from the table that members who were the most conservative candidate in their primary election also voted conservatively after they were elected, with a mean w-nominate score of 0.743 for the

Table 5
1994 Primary Ideological Position and Mean W-Nominate Values

| Congress | Primary Position | | | | | | | |
|----------|-------------------|----------|-----------------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------------|----------|
| | Most Conservative | | Not Most Conservative | | Unopposed | | No Information | |
| | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> |
| 104 | 0.743 | 13 | 0.558 | 10 | 0.698 | 10 | 0.684 | 40 |
| 105 | 0.764 | 9 | 0.568 | 9 | 0.761 | 5 | 0.705 | 34 |
| 106 | 0.738 | 8 | 0.592 | 9 | 0.792 | 4 | 0.734 | 29 |
| 107 | 0.744 | 7 | 0.609 | 8 | 0.804 | 4 | 0.741 | 23 |

104th Congress, and continued to do so in subsequent terms.¹⁸ The opposite holds true for members who were not the most conservative in their primary. They tended to vote more moderately on the House floor relative to the conservative primary candidates. Both of these results match our earlier theoretical expectations. For the 104th Congress, the difference between the two categories was 0.19, which is statistically significant ($t_{21} = 3.58, p < .05$), but it is not altogether clear whether or not this difference is substantively significant. To put these sometimes abstract w-nominate values in context, it might be easier to report and interpret these results in light of members who represent the average legislator in each category. In terms of this subset of representatives, the difference between the two categories is the equivalent of moving from Gil Gutknecht (MN 1) to Mark Foley (FL 16). Gutknecht was the 26th most conservative member of the class at 0.743, whereas Foley's w-nominate score was 0.560, making him the 54th most conservative member of the class. This jump of 28 members represents nearly 40% of the group, which is clearly a substantive and statistically significant difference.

As for members who ran unopposed in the primary, a group for which we do not have as clear expectations, their behavior placed them between the most conservative and not most conservative groups for the 104th and the 105th Congresses. In contrast, by the 106th and 107th Congresses, the roll call voting of the survivors rated them among the most conservative in their class. We must be careful, though, in interpreting any changes in behavior over time, both within and across groups, because the comparisons are not always made over the same subset of legislators for each Congress because of electoral defeats, retirements, and so on. For example, we cannot tell just from Table 5 if the increasing conservative measures of behavior are because of members actually becoming more conservative or that only the most con-

Table 6
Evidence of Christian Right in 1994 Election and W-Nominate Values

| Congress | Evidence | | No Evidence | | No Information | |
|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> |
| 104 | 0.740 | 25 | 0.494 | 11 | 0.693 | 37 |
| 105 | 0.805 | 17 | 0.508 | 10 | 0.699 | 30 |
| 106 | 0.827 | 15 | 0.489 | 8 | 0.718 | 27 |
| 107 | 0.819 | 12 | 0.583 | 8 | 0.720 | 22 |

servative members who were unopposed in 1994 returned each Congress, although their behavior remained the same. This first table supplies some preliminary evidence that there is a relationship between pre-roll call preferences and behavior once the members begin to vote.

The next measure of member preference, displayed in Table 6, is evidence of Christian Right support in the 1994 election campaign. If we make the simple assumption that involvement with the Christian Right indicates that a member is more conservative relative to those with lack of involvement, then similar to the first measure, roll call behavior again matches members' preferences. When a member identified with or was involved with the Christian Right during her or his campaign, she or he acted much more conservatively compared to when there was no evidence of association. The difference between the two groups was 0.246 ($t_{34} = 5.35, p < .05$) for the first term, and the pattern continued during the next three Congresses. With respect to actual members, Randy Tate (WA 9), the 27th most conservative legislator, is the average member with evidence of Christian Right, whereas the 63rd most conservative member, Steve LaTourette (Ohio 19), represents the typical member who was not affiliated with the Christian Right. The divergence here is even larger than before, with the difference between the two means consisting of almost 50% of our study, or 36 members.

The third measure of member preference is the 100% rating given by the Christian Coalition during the 1994 election and is displayed in Table 7. One advantage to this measure is that for the first time, we have information for each member of the 104th freshman class. Again, the results match our expectations, showing that members with the 100% rating acted more conservatively in their roll call behavior compared to their colleagues without the rating ($t_{71} = 5.19, p < .05$). Gutknecht, for the second time, is the average member of the more conservative category, and Robert Bass (NH 2), the 52nd most conservative member of the class, is the typical member who did not score the rating from the Christian Coalition. Because the results pre-

Table 7
Christian Coalition 100% Rating in 1994 Election
and Mean W-Nominate Values

| Congress | 100% Rating | | No Rating | |
|----------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> |
| 104 | 0.747 | 42 | 0.588 | 31 |
| 105 | 0.757 | 33 | 0.616 | 24 |
| 106 | 0.779 | 31 | 0.608 | 19 |
| 107 | 0.777 | 26 | 0.632 | 16 |

Table 8
Ideology in 1994 Election and Mean W-Nominate Values

| Congress | Conservative | | Not Conservative | |
|----------|--------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>n</i> |
| 104 | 0.725 | 29 | 0.523 | 15 |
| 105 | 0.786 | 20 | 0.539 | 14 |
| 106 | 0.803 | 18 | 0.560 | 12 |
| 107 | 0.785 | 14 | 0.605 | 11 |

sented above are consistent across all three of our measures, it suggests that we do not suffer from selection bias in the first two categorizations of member preference.

Finally, in Table 8, we show the mean w-nominate value for each of the two categories of the composite ideology variable discussed above. As one would expect, representatives who were either the most conservative in their primary and/or were associated with the Christian Right voted, on average, more conservatively than did their counterparts ($t_{42} = 4.78, p < .05$). In sum, these four tables show that once members reached the House floor, they acted consistently with various measures of pre-roll call preferences. Legislators whom we could label as conservative during their campaigns continued to perform in a similar fashion on the floor, whereas the opposite pattern revealed itself for the other less conservative group. Although these results did match our expectations, they clearly do not tell the entire story nor provide convincing evidence that members bring and act on their own policy preferences once they are seated in the Capitol. It may be the case that our measures of preference are just acting as proxies for district preferences and these results are purely spurious. To test if this is indeed true, we need to see if our measures of personal policy goals and district preferences coincide.

Table 9
Ideology, Christian Coalition 100% Rating in 1994 Election,
and Mean Republican Two-Party Presidential Vote

| Congress | Ideology | | | | Christian Coalition Rating | | | |
|----------|--------------|----------|------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| | Conservative | | Not Conservative | | 100% Rating | | No Rating | |
| | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> | % | <i>n</i> |
| 104 | .51 | 29 | .50 | 15 | .52 | 42 | .49 | 31 |
| 105 | .52 | 20 | .48 | 14 | .52 | 33 | .49 | 24 |
| 106 | .52 | 18 | .49 | 12 | .52 | 31 | .50 | 19 |
| 107 | .58 | 14 | .52 | 10 | .58 | 26 | .54 | 16 |

Policy and District Preferences

In Table 9, we show a simple cross-tabulation between the average Republican share of the two-party presidential vote in the district with two of the measures of member preference, the ideology variable and the Christian Coalition 100% rating. In each case, the difference between the categories is minor.¹⁹ For the 104th Congress, only 1% of the vote separates the two groups as measured by ideology, and there is a 3% difference between members who received a 100% rating from the Christian Coalition and those who did not. Although the 3% difference is just statistically significant ($t_{71} = 2.00$, $p = .049$), it is still substantively quite small. These minimal differences between district and member preferences contrasted with the large differences between member preferences and floor behavior gives us some indication that our measures of individual policy and district preferences are not likely serving as proxies for each other. To more thoroughly test our hypotheses, we next turn to a bivariate and then multiple regression analyses that can provide more definitive results. Because our dependent variable, *w*-nominate, is theoretically continuous, we use ordinary least squares with the Huber-White sandwich estimator of variance used to obtain robust standard errors to correct for any heteroskedasticity.

Floor Behavior, District, and Policy Preferences

Table 10 reports a series of regressions with members' *w*-nominate scores as the dependent variable. Models 1 to 4 on the left-hand side of the table are for the 104th Congress only, whereas models 5 to 8 on the right are the same regressions tested during the 104th to 107th Congresses with the addition of Congress-specific dummy variables to control for any changes across terms. The independent variables are the same as discussed above with the presi-

Table 10
Relationship Between Member's Ideology, District Preferences, and Floor Behavior

| Variable | 104th to 107th Congress | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Constant | .035 (.122) | .089 (.106) | -.005 (.131) | .012 (.123) | -.030 (.067) | .009 (.066) | .027 (.086) | .032 (.080) |
| Presidential vote | 1.27* (.245) | 1.01* (.226) | 1.05* (.254) | .958* (.229) | 1.40* (.133) | 1.18* (.138) | .993* (.175) | .954* (.161) |
| 100% rating | | .131* (.031) | | .125* (.045) | | .123* (.018) | | .077* (.027) |
| Ideology | | | .192* (.040) | .119* (.045) | | | .188* (.022) | .141* (.027) |
| 105th | | | | | .020 (.023) | .019 (.021) | .044 (.026) | .039 (.024) |
| 106th | | | | | .027 (.027) | .023 (.023) | .059* (.030) | .053 (.020) |
| 107th | | | | | -.042 (.024) | -.034 (.022) | .024 (.026) | .020 (.027) |
| <i>n</i> | 73 | 73 | 44 | 44 | 222 | 222 | 133 | 133 |
| <i>F</i> statistic | 26.86* | 37.16* | 25.11* | 18.15* | 32.22* | 49.98* | 41.04* | 33.01* |
| Adj. <i>R</i> ² | .24 | .41 | .50 | .59 | .29 | .44 | .54 | .57 |
| Root mean square error | .132 | .116 | .116 | .105 | .131 | .117 | .114 | .110 |

Note: Dependent variable is first dimension w-nominate. Robust standard errors are in parentheses.

**p* < .05.

dential vote measured as the two-party vote in the district, and each of the dichotomous policy preference variables are coded 1 when present and 0 otherwise if we had information. The first of our models, model 1, is the presidential vote in the district regressed on floor behavior. Presidential vote is significant at $\alpha < .05$ and in the expected direction. So as the Republican share of the vote increases, members become more conservative. This simple bivariate regression “explains” 24% of the variation in members’ behavior and confirms the hypothesis that members are responsive to their districts’ preferences, or at least behave as if they are.

To test if members also are responsive to their primary and personal policy preferences and if these variables do measure something separate from district preferences, we predict behavior controlling for both preference sets. In model 2, the 100% rating variable is included with the presidential vote in the district. In this case, and indeed in each of the subsequent models, measures of both personal and district preferences are statistically significant and in the expected direction.²⁰ When we include both variables in model 2, the influence of presidential vote decreases, suggesting omitted variable bias may have existed in model 1 and the effect of presidential vote on floor behavior was inflated because of lack of proper controls. Now, a 1% increase in the Republican two-party vote corresponds to a 0.0101 increase in the w-nominate score, whereas before it was 0.0127. When a member received the 100% rating they were, *ceteris paribus*, 0.131 more conservative than members who were not so highly rated by the Christian Coalition. Substantively, this means that if two members represented a district with the same reelection constituency, a member who was affiliated with the Christian Coalition would act much more conservatively. This result is illustrated by Mark Sanford (SC 1) and Steve Largent (OK 1). Both of their respective districts received 62% of the Republican vote in the 1992 presidential election, indicating they represent rather conservative districts. However, Largent, who was coded 1 for this measure, had a w-nominate score of 0.966, versus Sanford who did not get the rating and scored only 0.637. Although this example is larger than the average difference (see Table 10), it does demonstrate that members who represent similar districts can act quite differently once they reach the floor.

The overall fit of model 2 is much better, with the new adjusted R^2 increasing to .41 and the root mean square error decreasing from .132 to .116.²¹ The results are similar when tested with the other measure of member preference, ideology. In model 3, the ideology variable is statistically significant and positive, even though our set of legislators is reduced to 44 because of lack of information.²² Again, this model proves to be a better fit than the naive model 1 with the R^2 measuring .50. As a last test of primary or personal preference

influencing behavior in the 104th Congress, we ran model 4, which includes both the 100% rating and ideology variables. Even though these two variables are correlated at .57, they are both positive and significant, along with the presidential vote.²³ This indicates that these two variables capture to a certain degree different influences on members.

To make sure our findings are not a function of members' bringing their personal or primary preferences with them to the Capitol and then discarding them after a congress or two in favor of only securing the reelection goal, we test our hypotheses again, but this time pool the data from the 104th through the 107th Congresses. If members continue to act on their own preferences separate from the reelection constituency, then the 100% rating and ideology variables should be positive and significant in each of the pooled models. As models 5 through 8 indicate, the results are not time bound to the first congress served after election.²⁴ Although members had to make policy compromises to secure reelection (see Rae, 1998), our results indicate that members continue to act on their own or primary constituencies' preferences during the course of their careers, and these influences appear to hold steady throughout.

Conclusion

In this article, we examined the relationship among the Downsian (1957) model of congressional behavior that posits that "parties formulate policies to win elections" (p. 28) and two other theories that incorporate multiple goals including the desire for good public policy and the influence of the primary constituency. Our results demonstrate that, in fact, members' behaviors are shaped by both the reelection goal and either their own policy preferences or those of the primary constituency. As the Downsian model predicts, the district median has a big impact on voting behavior; however, our results indicate that other factors in addition to the median have an impact. As our argument predicts, the people with the strongest attachment to conservative positions are more conservative than we would expect given their districts' political leanings.

Our results allow us to conclude that Fenno's (1973) theory and the neo-Downsians may better capture the realities of congressional voting behavior compared to the simple Downsian model. The evidence indicates that a substantial portion of the House GOP class of 1994 was influenced by primary forces or their own preferences to take more conservative positions than would be expected based on their general election constituencies. Moreover, we see that this impact was not limited to the 104th Congress but continued through the 107th. These results, therefore, offer part of the explanation for

the increased polarization and partisan conflict in the House during the period of Republican control. The evidence is also related to the dominance of conservative preferences in agenda setting and policy formation.

Although our work and that by Erikson and Wright (2001) suggest that congressional scholars should not lightly disregard a member's individual preferences and/or those of the primary constituency, we must be careful not to overinterpret our findings. This is because of the fact that our measures do not allow us to disentangle the representatives' personal policy predispositions or those of their primary constituencies. However, what is clear is that our measures that combine these concepts have effects that are independent relative to the preferences of the reelection constituency.

Although we hope that these analyses make a contribution to our understanding of congressional behavior, there is still a good deal more work to be done. In the future work, we hope to compare members' roll call voting longitudinally to see if changes occur relative to shifts in district preferences. This will allow us to uncover if members who did not match up with their districts when first elected either converge to district medians or do not. In regards to electoral fortunes, are members who converge more likely to be reelected than those who fail to match their district? If this is the case, this would suggest that members who do not converge are not willing to disregard their individual policy preferences for those of the district.

Notes

1. Mayhew (1974, p. 16) does not argue that members do not possess personal or policy goals, only that those goals can be safely ignored in his explanation of member behavior if reelection is treated as members' proximate goal.

2. The personal constituency is the small set of the member's intimate advisers. Note that Mayhew (1974, p. 45) also recognized that the member's primary constituency exerted an independent effect on the member's behavior that could pull the member away from the district median.

3. Ideally, we would have used the Project Vote Smart data in this article. However, the researchers conveyed to us that they no longer make these data available to the public.

4. On this point, see Aranson and Ordershook (1972) for a formal model of sequential elections leading to divergent candidates.

5. Calvert (1985) has demonstrated this formally within the Downsian framework.

6. Bullock (1976) and Smith and Deering (1983) have also demonstrated that policy goals play a role in shaping members' committee assignment preferences.

7. See Evans and Oleszek (1997) for a more focused analysis of the Republican congressional reforms. For other research on Congress in the wake of the 1994 election, see Abramowitz (1995), Tuchfarber, Bennett, Smith, and Rademacher (1995), Owens (1997), Abramowitz and Saunders (1998), McSweeney and Owens (1998), Andres (1999), Sinclair (1999), Aldrich and Rohde (2000), and Bickers and Stein (2000).

8. Ideally, we would have collected data on multiple classes to expand our analysis. However, we were unable to find comparable data across other years. Future research should seek to test the generalizability of our results.

9. These data were obtained from Keith Poole's Web site (<http://www.voteview.com>). Summary statistics appear in Tables 1 and 2.

10. To ensure reliability of our measures, this variable was recoded by two additional coders, and the discrepancies (only 3 out of 73) from the original coding were corrected by the second set of coders. The results, however, are similar if the data from either set of coders are used. Note also that although Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) earned his nomination in a convention because of Dean Gallo's withdrawing after the primary, we treated the case as if he won in the primary election. Either dropping Frelinghuysen from the data set or alternative codings would not change the conclusions we draw. Our data are available on request.

11. We do not mean to infer that all Christians are conservative, nor that all conservatives are Christians; we infer only that members who support issues that are favored by the Christian Right (prolife, anti-gay marriage), a core constituency of the Republican Party and source of candidates can safely be considered conservative. This also does not mean that members who are conservative on these social issues are also conservative on all issues. In a sense we are only capturing one dimension of conservatism with this variable, but it is one that we feel can be used to measure one aspect of a member's personal views or primary constituency.

12. For a more detailed discussion, see Green, Guth, and Hill (1993).

13. These representatives were Barr (GA), Bryant (TN), Myrick (NC), and Largent (OK).

14. The 29 conservative members came from adding the values in the *most conservative* column with the values in the *evidence* row. For the 15 not conservative members, we added the values in the *not most conservative* column and the *no evidence* row. In both cases, we did not double count for cells that fell in the intersection between rows and columns.

15. Although the name *100% rating* implies that each member has a score from 0 to 100, the coding was taken from a list that only gave the names of members who received a score of 100 from the Christian Coalition. The original Web site (<http://www.ifas.org/fw/9501/100-percent.html>), last accessed on June 30, 1998, is no longer active.

16. More specifically, for the election to the 104th Congress, we used George H.W. Bush's share of the two-party vote. For the 105th Congress, we used Bob Dole's share of the two-party vote, and so on. See Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart (2001) and Jacobson (2000) for a more extensive discussion of the advantages of employing district presidential vote as a more direct measure of the partisan or general ideological predisposition of each congressional district. We tried alternative codings of this variable, such as changing how we divided any third-party candidate votes, and none of them substantively changed the results. Again, although this measure is not perfect, other more nuanced measures of district preferences that take into account other factors such as demographic characteristics are highly correlated with presidential vote in the post-Republican takeover period (Levendusky, Pope, & Jackman, 2005), so we doubt that this measure is driving our results.

17. This is especially true in the past 10 years (Oppenheimer, 2005).

18. As a benchmark for comparison, the mean score for the entire Republican Party for the 104th Congress was 0.665.

19. The results (not shown) are similar for the primary position and Christian Right variables.

20. For ease of exposition, we refer to these variables as measures of personal preferences. But we emphasize again that we cannot, with these data, disentangle personal preferences from the preferences induced by the primary electorate.

21. Because these models are nested, we ran a nested F test and found that model 2 is a significantly better model than is model 1. The same applies for model 1 versus model 3, which includes the additional ideology variable.

22. As a robustness check, we also ran model 1 on the same 44 members present in model 2 and received similar results.

23. Tests for problems related to multicollinearity did not reveal any problems.

24. The results from models 5, 6, and 7 are similar when tested over individual Congresses. However, model 8 starts to break down because of high collinearity between ideology and 100% rating (maximum of 0.69) and few cases (minimum of 25 by the 107th Congress).

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