

THE ELECTORAL CONSEQUENCES OF LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS

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Abstract: One particularly influential theory of Congressional behavior, cartel theory, suggests that parties in Congress act to develop a “brand name” with voters through legislative victories (Cox and McCubbins 2005, 2007). Implicit in cartel theory is the assumption that individual voters reward members in response to legislative wins by parties in Congress. Recent work, however, suggests that it is the legislative success of the president that influences the electoral success of legislators (Lebo and O'Geen 2011). Such findings present a challenge to conventional wisdom about congressional behavior but are limited to conclusions in the aggregate. The question remains: do individual voters electorally reward or punish legislators based on the relative legislative success of the president or of parties in Congress? To answer this question, we design and conduct a survey experiment with a nationally representative sample to investigate the effects of differing cues about legislative success on individual voters' electoral preferences. In particular, we compare how individuals react to the legislative success of the president as opposed to the success of a congressional party.

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Introduction

Vote Seen as Referendum on Obama Strategies

Tuesday's midterm elections have been framed as a referendum on President Obama's 21 months in office, with the economy dominating the issues Americans will consider as they pick congressional and local officials. A recent Gallup Poll illustrated how powerfully the national debate favors Republican issues as economic conditions (43 percent), health care (23 percent), and the size and power of the federal government (18 percent) loom as the top concerns of likely voters...

- *San Francisco Gate* (October 31, 2010)¹

Axelrod: 2010 Will Be a 'Tough' Election

White House senior adviser David Axelrod repeatedly described the coming midterm election as "tough" but insisted that it would be a choice between the two parties rather than a referendum on President Obama.

- *The Washington Post* (October 20, 2010)²

How and to what extent do voters use information regarding legislative victories when making choices between congressional candidates? For the most part, two separate literatures addressing this question have developed. On one hand, the literature on voting has long argued that citizens, particularly in low interest elections such as congressional elections (Campbell 1960), are relatively uninformed and must rely on informational shortcuts (i.e., heuristics) to make decisions (e.g., Mondak & McCurley 1994). In addition to relying on the cues of partisanship (Bartels 2000; MacKuen, Erikson & Stimson 2002), incumbency (Jacobson 2001; Abramowitz, Alexander & Gunning 2006), and economic conditions (e.g., Kinder & Kiewit 1979; Fiorina 1981; MacKuen, Erikson & Stimson 1992), voters in congressional elections tend to rely heavily on evaluations of the president (Tufté 1975; Abramowitz, Cover & Norpoth 1986). In regard to the latter, citizens indicate their level of satisfaction with the president (about whom most people know more than their representative) by voting for or against members of his party in Congress. This simple notion can explain, for example, why presidents tend to lose seats at the midterm election (Tufté 1975; Kernell 1977; Campbell 1991).

At the same time, scholars of parties in government have formulated influential theories of legislating that focus on the 'brand name' of a party (Cox and McCubbins 2005, 2007). Like most

¹ <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/10/30/BUDJ1G3K4R.DTL#ixzz1qRRtnxV>

² <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/thefix/morning-fix/axelrod.html>

theories of parties in Congress (e.g., Aldrich 1995), it is assumed that reelection is the most proximate goal of representatives (Mayhew 1974). Cartel theory specifically posits that the key to electoral success is *the party's* brand name, which is largely a function of legislative output. Thus, when voters go to the polls, congressional representatives are judged by not only individualized factors such as race, sex (McDermott 1998) and roll call voting (Ansolabehere and Jones 2010), but also the (majority) party's legislative success while in office. It is clear that members of Congress are evaluated in large part on their party affiliation both in the aggregate (Cox & McCubbins 2007) and at the individual level (Bartels 2000). Moreover, there is some evidence that these electoral rewards and punishments are, in fact, a function of the party's legislative success (Lebo, McGlynn & Koger 2007).

Clearly, however, these two literatures produce opposing predictions about the nature of voting in congressional elections. One view holds that voters know little about what goes on in Congress and must rely on more salient and in some respects unrelated cues, such as the actions of the president (e.g., Rudolph 2003). The other view holds that voters are aware and responsive to the legislative outputs of the parties in Congress (Cox & McCubbins 2005, 2007). We argue that the truth lies somewhere in between – congressional voters are moderately aware of congressional actions, but are simply more interested in and thus respond electorally to the passage of presidentially-backed legislation. To investigate this question, we designed and conducted a survey experiment that allows us to begin to disentangle the electoral effects of legislative versus presidential success. And, in line with research demonstrating the effect of presidential approval in congressional voting, we find that voters, particularly the more politically sophisticated,³ reward and punish representatives more when they pass or reject the president's agenda than when voting on congressionally-backed bills.

In addition, we uncover evidence of a negativity bias (Gronke, Koch & Wilson 2003) – that is, voters respond more strongly to voting behavior that facilitates the passage of unwanted legislation than to voting behavior that facilitates the passage of desired legislation. In the language of prospect

³ We will have more to say on this at the panel.

theory, equivalent actions in the domain of gains (voting for liked legislation or against disliked legislation) and losses (voting against liked legislation or for disliked legislation) are not incorporated into decision making equivalently. Finally, our design allows for an investigation of legislative success versus prevention of legislative success. That is, the operationalization of legislative success in previous research has been inherently one-sided, in that the measure captures only the electoral rewards (punishments) for passing (failing to pass) the party's legislation. What we cannot tell from this data is whether *prevention* of legislative success is equally rewarded (punished). A large literature on attitudes demonstrates that negative information is weighted more heavily (Kahneman & Tversky 1972; Holbrook et al. 2001), suggesting that asymmetries should be expected in doling out electoral rewards and punishments (Gronke et al. 2003). The data does, in fact, indicate that voters are more responsive to the prevention of legislative success than efforts to pass legislation supported by one's own party, as long suspected by observers of voting behavior.

In the remainder of the paper we will briefly discuss the literature on congressional voting and legislative success, which will provide the foundation for explaining our theoretical perspective and stating our hypotheses. Then we will describe our survey experiment; experimental control over several aspects of the political environment, including the representative's vote for or against a bill, who backs the bill and whether the bill passes or fails, allows us to more cleanly delineate what role each plays in affecting how voters respond to congressional bills. After discussing the results, we will consider the implications of these findings for theories of parties in Congress and voting in congressional elections.

Voters and Their Representatives

Early analyses of voting behavior focused on the strong role that partisanship plays, particularly in low-information and low-interest elections (Campbell, Converse, Miller & Stokes 1960). Whether partisanship is conceptualized as the driving force behind more proximate determinants of voting (Green, Palmquist & Schickler 2002) or as the summation of these forces (MacKuen et al. 2002), there

is little doubt that one's party affiliation plays a large role in voting decisions at the congressional level. Over time, however, it has become clear that the role of party identification has declined and been partially replaced by incumbency (Cover & Mayhew 1981). Re-election rates of incumbents in the House have been over 80% since the early 1960s, even during elections when a party suffers historic losses at the polls, as in 2010 (although high reelection rates are partially a function of strategic retirement; see Jacobson 1989). In other words, although partisanship remains a strong cue for voters (Bartels 2000), the benefits of holding office such as campaign spending (Jacobson 2001; Abramowitz et al. 2006) and credit claiming (Fenno 1978; Cain, Ferejohn & Fiorina 1984) also help accrue electoral support among one's constituents.

In both of these instances, however, the voter is relying on "information shortcuts", or heuristics, to make a voting decision. Having quickly discovered the low levels of public awareness and interest in politics (e.g., Converse 1964), as well as the lack of anything resembling ideology (Campbell et al. 1960; Converse 1964), early scholars concluded that individual voters relied on these broad, quick heuristics rather than engaging in a careful information search and evaluating the congressman on more particularized information. As a result, much of the literature has employed aggregate data to explore what impacts voting at the congressional level (Kramer 1983). This methodological approach eliminates the problems associated with using "messy" individual level data since, in the aggregate, those who are inattentive and uninformed cancel one another out, leaving a macro-level "signal" of policy preferences (MacKuen et al. 2002; Stimson 1999). Nonetheless, the aggregate data largely confirmed what had already been revealed at the level of the individual: variables such as district partisanship, incumbency and presidential approval explain a vast majority of the variance in vote shares (cf. Jacobson 2001). Simultaneously, survey research continued to show that the public was woefully ignorant when it came to politics (Delli-Carpini & Keeter 1996); for example, many viewed the finding that most Americans could not name their representative (Mann 1978) as *prima facie* evidence that they were not actually responding to individual representation (see

also Weissberg 1978).

At the same time, congressmen have long admitted that potential electoral implications are an important factor in roll call voting (Miller & Stokes 1963; Kingdon 1981). In particular, congressmen know that voters are ignorant of most roll call votes, but some do become highly publicized and salient. For example, Brady and colleagues show that support for Clinton's agenda among Democratic incumbents was largely responsible for the Republican takeover in the House in 1994 (Brady, Cogan, Gaines & Rivers 1996). As a result, because it is often unknown ahead of time whether a particular bill will be one of the few that is particularly salient to her constituency or not, representatives vote as though they were being judged on the pattern of votes (Miller & Stokes 1963; Kingdon 1981; see also Mayhew 1974).

Indeed, recent analyses employing time series data have found that, in the aggregate, voters are more sophisticated than previously thought. For example, when examining the effect of roll call voting on the aggregate vote share of a party's members, members of the majority party are not only electorally punished for party polarization more generally (Jones 2010), but also individual representative party extremism specifically (Carson, Koger, Lebo & Young 2010; see also Canes-Wrone, Brady & Cogan 2002). Equally important, recent analyses have bolstered these findings at the individual level, demonstrating that congressional voters can and do use issues when electorally evaluating their congressman. Such findings have largely relied on large-N surveys (e.g., the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey) that enable sufficiently powerful tests that overcome the problem of measurement error (Achen 1975). This body of work suggests that individual citizens are at least moderately and in some cases highly aware of salient bills, and that voters' perceptions of how a representative votes in Congress is not only strongly determined by the congressman's actual voting behavior, but is also correct on average (Ansolabehere & Jones 2010; see also Gronke et al. 2003). In turn, perceptions of the representative's roll call voting affects citizens' vote choice (Ansolabehere & Jones 2010; Gronke et al. 2003). Similarly, other analyses indicate that, with a sufficient number of

questions to create reliable issue scales, voters can and do engage in issue voting (Ansolabehere, Rodden & Snyder 2008), contrary to long-held beliefs about the extent to which ideology affects voting behavior (Converse 1964)

Thus, it is increasingly evident that voters are aware of at least some legislation, and that this information, as well as how their congressman voted on these bills, is incorporated into voting decisions and electoral outcomes at the congressional level. This notion is further reinforced by major theories of parties in Congress, in which members of the majority party are affected electorally by the party's brand name (Cox & McCubbins 2005, 2007). In particular, this theory views individual representative's reelection chances as a function of both personal characteristics (e.g., incumbency) and the party's collective reputation (i.e., party affiliation). Importantly, this collective reputation is a function of the party's public record on legislation and, as a result, a party's record in regard to legislating should affect its members similarly. Indeed, voters are punished for voting with the party too often (see also Carson et al. 2010), but are indirectly rewarded for party extremism as a result of increased legislative success (Lebo et al. 2007).

Although informative, this research leaves two important questions unanswered. First and foremost, research on the link between roll call voting and electoral fortunes has focused on the agenda of parties in Congress, thus largely ignoring the potential impact of presidential-backing (and the lack thereof). As Lebo and O'Geen note, "As the head of his party, the president's role in the partisan politics of Congress should be central" (2011: 2). This is somewhat surprising, given that a number of studies have demonstrated the importance of presidential approval on congressional vote shares (e.g., Tufte 1975; Abramowitz et al. 1986; Campbell 1991).⁴ For example, it is clear that the public holds the president partially responsible for economic conditions (Rudolph 2003; Gomez & Wilson 2003) and, to the extent the national economy suffers, so too will the president's party (Kinder & Kiewit 1979;

⁴ There is also the long-standing paradox (Fenno 1976) that Congress is overwhelmingly reelected even as congressional approval reaches historic lows.

MacKuen et al. 2002). Similarly, there is a clear association between presidential approval and vote share in midterm elections (Tufté 1975; Kernell 1977) that holds above and beyond simply partisanship. Moreover, there is a long literature examining the effect of presidential coattails – that is, the effect a popular president has on co-partisans further down the ballot during the four-year election cycle (e.g., Jacobson 1976; Ferejohn & Calvert 1984; Campbell 1986; Mattei & Glasgow 2005). Overall, this body of work reinforces the idea that perceptions of the president play a large role in congressional elections.

The few empirical studies that have examined the role of the presidential agenda have, while demonstrating that it is important, analogously ignored the impact of legislative success (e.g., Brady et al. 1996; Gronke et al. 2003). One exception comes from Lebo and O’Geen (2011), who found that while both legislative and presidential success independently affected the electoral fortunes of the parties, only presidential success remains substantively large and significant when modeled simultaneously. However, this data makes it difficult to disentangle a number of issues, first and foremost which is causality. As in many studies of congressional voting, there is the problem of endogeneity (e.g., Carson et al. 2010; Green & Krasno 1988). Simply because there is a correlation between support for the president’s agenda and vote shares on Election Day does not mean that the former causes the latter; indeed, in line with the notion of strategic party government (Lebo et al. 2007), congressman from safer districts may be pressured more (or feel safer) to support the president’s agenda.

Secondly, the extant literature has failed to differentiate between facilitating preferred outcomes and enabling disliked outcomes. As Gronke and colleagues (2003) note: “There is at least some evidence in the literature... for a negativity bias – in other words, that representatives receive more punishment from voters for behavior at odds with their preferences than they do reward for behavior consistent with those preferences” (p. 799). Indeed, there is an abundance of evidence demonstrating that people weigh negative information more heavily than positive information (e.g., Kahneman &

Tversky 1972; Quattrone & Tversky 1984; Holbrook et al. 2001). For example, Kernell (1977) found strong evidence of “negative” voting, in that presidential disapproval had a greater effect on both turnout and defection than approval. This finding is supported more generally by prospect theory, which shows that equivalent gains and losses are not incorporated into overall perceptions of wellbeing equivalently – in particular, losses are weighed more heavily than gains.

Similarly, the extant literature has focused exclusively on legislative *success*, ignoring whether lack of success affects electoral fortunes similarly. That is, if negative information is truly weighted more strongly by voters than positive news, we would expect prevention of legislative success (which would be in the domain of losses) to have more of an electoral impact than facilitation of preferred legislation (the domain of gains). Using an experimental design, not only can we examine the effect of presidential versus legislative success, but also we can explicitly test whether there is an asymmetry in voters’ reactions to their representatives’ actions. That is, we can specifically examine the electoral effects of preferred versus disfavored legislation, and more narrowly whether prevention of success by the opposition is electorally punished more than facilitating the passage of desired legislation is rewarded.

Theory and Hypotheses

It is clear that voters can and do respond to roll call voting, and it appears that a congressman’s votes on at least some votes ultimately affects their electoral chances. At the same time, it is clear that voters also rely on attitudes toward the president when evaluating congressional representatives. We argue that previous research, in largely ignoring the role of presidential support, has improperly focused on a proxy variable – that is, *legislative success*. As a result, we expect that when the two are cleanly separated, electoral rewards and punishments will be greater when a congressman votes on a bill backed by the President than when she votes on a bill backed by party leaders in Congress (**H1**).

In addition, we argue that other aspects of roll call voting, such as whether the legislation is preferred or not, affects how congressional voters respond. Prospect theory would predict that voters

respond to negative information more strongly than positive information. We argue that this can appear in one of two ways. First, we expect that voters will respond more strongly to the actions of their congressmen when confronted with disliked legislative outcomes – that is, the congressman facilitates success by the opposition and/or prevents presidential success when the president is a co-partisan. In contrast, when a representative supports and ultimately facilitates passage of preferred legislation and/or prevents legislative success by the opposition, we expect that voters will be less electorally responsive (**H2**). This would align with a large body of research showing that individuals react differentially to equivalent changes, depending on whether one is in the domain of losses (in the former case) or in the domain of gains (in the latter case).

We also expect a negativity bias to appear in a more narrow sense: specifically, that prevention of legislative success by the opposition should be rewarded more than helping to pass legislation by one's own party (**H3**). This asymmetry in voting has long been suspected (Gronke et al. 2003), but previous empirical approaches have prevented a focused test of this hypothesis.

Our design also allows us to explore whether a congressman's actions in and of itself matters, or whether it is in fact the brand name of the party (as conceptualized by the president, rather than parties in Congress). That is, do voters care more about whether the party is actually successful or whether the congressman attempted to make the party successful? Previous research has been conceptually and operationally unclear on this point. In some instances, the congressman's level of support for the party of the president is used to measure legislative and presidential success respectively, despite the fact that a congressman's individual level of support does not indicate whether that legislation was successfully passed or not (e.g., Gronke et al. 2003; Lebo & O'Geen 2011). We suspect that the outcome of the bill does matter, such that electoral rewards and punishments are greater when the bill actually passes than when the congressman merely casts a symbolic vote in support of or against legislation (**H4**).

In addition to exploring the role of the President vis-à-vis Congress in explaining electoral

rewards for legislative success, we attempted to understand why the president is more important to voters when punishing and/or rewarding support for the president. Specifically, we hypothesize that voters care more about presidential success relative to the success of the party in Congress because of greater general interest among the public in the president relative to Congress (**H5**). Although it is clear that turnout is higher in presidential elections, inherently suggesting greater interest among the voting public, we know of no research that asks potential voters about their relative interest in the two branches explicitly.

Data and Methods

Our survey experiment was fielded by Knowledge Networks (KN), as part of the Time-Sharing for the Experimental Social Sciences (TESS). KN recruits respondents for their survey panel using an Address Based Sampling (ABS) frame and telephone interviews (see Rivers 2007 for details concerning the sampling methodology of KN). Respondents who indicate having no access to the Internet are given a computer and Internet connection for as long as they participate in the panel; all surveys (including ours) are subsequently completed via the web. Interviewing took place between September 30 and October 11, 2011. KN only recruited Republican and Democratic identifiers to participate in this study, based on responses to a pre-screening questionnaire during recruitment. Although there may be interesting variation in how (true) Independents react to legislative success and parties in Congress, a lack of strong theoretical expectations and an increase in design complexity led us to exclude them for the present study.

The original sample size was 876⁵. However, a small percentage of the sample completed the survey in one minute or less, raising questions about the extent to which they were able to read and respond to a survey with sixteen questions and two screens of text (1.5%; n=13). Similarly, a small proportion of the sample (5.0%; n=44) took 72 minutes or more to complete the questionnaire. In most

⁵ Actually, the original sample was 1,226, for a completion rate of 65.7%. However, 350 cases had to be removed due to incorrect assignment to the experimental conditions.

(if not all) instances the lengthy completion time was likely due to stopping and restarting the survey altogether (e.g., the longest completion time was a little more than 7 days); because we have no way of knowing where in the survey these respondents stopped, we dropped these observations from the analyses, leaving a final sample size of 815. Indeed, when we compare the proportion of respondents who got all three manipulation checks right among those who completed the survey in less than 2 minutes or more than 71 minutes to the rest of the sample, we find that they did significantly worse (42% of these respondents answered all three manipulation checks correctly, compared to 64% of the rest of the sample; two-sample test of proportions, $Z = 3.352$, $p < .001$).⁶

Several decisions had to be made about the manipulations and ultimately the number of conditions. Ideally we would have had a full factorial design, in which Republican and Democratic respondents are randomly assigned to receive a story about a representative that is a Democrat or Republican, votes for or against a bill that is backed by either a President or party leaders in Congress who are themselves Democrats or Republicans, and the bill either passes or fails. The full factorial design would have resulted in a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ between-subjects design blocked by respondent partisanship, creating 64 conditions altogether.

As a result, we designed the experiment so that Democrats only received information about Democratic congressmen, and Republicans only received information about Republican congressmen, effectively reducing the number of experimental conditions by half. We argue that reading about a congressman of the opposition party should, if anything, have a larger effect than what we find with our data. As noted above, a large literature demonstrates the reliable effect partisanship has on voting, particularly as a heuristic in low-information elections such as congressional elections. Given the minimalist nature of the design, we expect that partisanship is already a salient factor when making

⁶ Leaving these respondents in the analysis does not substantively change the results. The model is substantively and significantly identical for Democrats; for Republicans, some of the coefficients become attenuated, thus reducing the level of significance (although both bill backer and the interaction of bill backer with the outcome of the bill remain marginally significant; both p 's = .06).

voting decisions. Thus, the effect of our manipulations should, if anything, be amplified when it involves a representative of the opposing party. For example, we would expect a Democratic voter to dispense *less* electoral punishment if her Democratic congressmen voted against a Democratic bill than if a Republican representative voted against it. Similarly, we would expect a Republican voter to give greater electoral rewards to a Democratic representative who crossed party lines to support her party's bill, than a Republican congressman who "should" vote for the party's legislation anyway.

In addition, the representative's vote for or against the bill is conflated with the partisanship of the backer of the bill. That is, our fictional congressman always votes *for a Republican bill* or *against a Democratic bill* (that is backed by either the President or Congress). Nonetheless, we feel confident that this does not limit our conclusions, as the excluded conditions merely reflect repeat theoretical expectations. Figure 1 shows all 32 conditions with our expectations regarding electoral rewards and punishments, with the 16 that we ultimately chose to test highlighted by a gray background. For example, we expect that a Democratic congressman who votes against a Democratic President's bill is punished by Democratic respondents (rows 27 and 28) just as much as a Republican congressmen who votes against a Republican president's bill is punished by Republicans (rows 19 and 20). In other words, we believe it is unlikely that the Republicans dispense electoral rewards that are fundamentally different than the rewards dispensed by Democrats, and similarly that the electoral punishment meted out by Democrats is somehow qualitatively different than that dispensed by Republicans. In other words, we assume that Democratic and Republican voters have similar electoral reactions to actions committed *by members of their own party*.

[Figure 1 Here]

The survey experiment proceeded as follows: first, participants were presented with a short biographical sketch of a fictional congressman who had the same partisanship as the respondent. After requesting an initial, baseline likelihood of voting for the congressman on a 7-point scale, we presented

subjects with a newspaper article that described the congressman's vote 1a) for or 1b) against a bill in the House. Figure 2 shows an example of one of the newspaper articles presented to subjects, in particular the story presented to respondents assigned to row 28 of Figure 1. The phrases that were manipulated across conditions are in bold; the rest of the text was identical across all conditions.

[Figure 2 Here]

The bill's subject was randomly assigned from a list of four issues (i.e., energy policy, stem cell research, tax code reform and unemployment benefits), and was framed as being backed by either 2a) the president or by 2b) party leaders in Congress, and finally as either 3a) passing or 3b) failing. After a short battery of political sophistication questions that also served as a distracter, we asked respondents for their updated likelihood of voting for the congressman, using an identical question format. The dependent variable in all our analyses is thus the *change in vote likelihood* – that is, the difference between the likelihood of voting for the congressman after exposure to the manipulation relative to their initial likelihood of voting (i.e., vote choice after exposure to the experimental manipulation was subtracted from the initial, baseline likelihood of voting for the congressman). Both voting likelihood measures were recoded to range from 0 to 1 before taking the difference; as a result, the dependent variable ranges from -1 to 1, with -1 representing the greatest decrease in likelihood of voting and 1 indicating the greatest increase in voting likelihood.

We then asked respondents on a 4-point Likert scale the extent to which the issue on which the legislation focused is important. The survey concluded by asking about the respondent's interest in Congress, the president and politics generally, as well as a short series of manipulation checks (see Appendix for the text of the biographies as well as the exact wording of selected questionnaire items).

In sum, what our design manipulated was 1) whether the congressman voted for a Republican or against a Democratic bill, 2) whether that bill was backed by the President or Congress, and 3) whether the bill passed or failed. Thus, this is a 2 x 2 x 2 between subjects design, blocked by respondent partisanship. The independent variables in the model are simply dummy variables and their

interactions indicating the condition to which a respondent was assigned. Specifically, the dummy variable for *Bill Backer* is coded 1 if the bill was backed by the President and 0 if backed by party leaders in Congress; the dummy variable for congressman's vote (*MC Vote*) is coded 1 if the representative voted for a Republican bill, and 0 if he voted against a Democratic bill; finally the dummy variable *Bill Outcome* is coded 1 if the bill passed, and 0 otherwise. The three two-way interactions and single three-way interaction between these three dummy variables are also included in the model. Finally, the model was run separately for Republicans and Democrats, since equivalent actions by a congressman should be punished by voters of one party but rewarded by members of the other.

Results

As Table 1 shows, the KN sample was sufficiently representative of the national electorate. In particular, the weighted sample closely mimics the benchmarks provided by the Census Bureau, although the highest and lowest categories of education were underrepresented in the sample.⁷

[Insert Table 1 Here]

Preliminary analyses revealed that random assignment of our respondents to the sixteen experimental conditions worked in regard to gender, age, education, income, marital status, and geographic region (all p 's $> .10$, two-tailed tests).⁸ More importantly, none of these variables produced differences in voting behavior (all p 's $> .05$, two-tailed tests) and so are not discussed further. However, chi-square tests indicated that race and ethnicity were not randomly assigned across the conditions and were thus included as control variables in the model (not shown).⁹ In addition, the particular issue which the bill concerned did appear to impact voting behavior: relative to a bill concerning the tax code, Democrats were significantly more likely to vote for their congressman when

⁷ Including education as a control variable does not affect the results.

⁸ Unless otherwise specified, all p values reported are for one-tailed tests given that we had strong *a priori* directional hypotheses.

⁹ Exclusion of race and ethnicity does not affect the model for Democrats at all; for Republicans it reduces the statistical significance of the dummy variable for bill outcome.

the bill concerned energy policy or unemployment. There were no significant differences found for bills that concerned stem-cell research. In contrast, Republicans were significantly more likely to vote for a congressman faced with a bill that concerned energy policy, the tax code or unemployment, compared to a bill that focuses on stem cell research. No other significant differences between the bills emerged for Republicans. As a result, the models include dummy variables for the issues, as well as a four-point ordinal measure of issue importance, recoded to range from 0 to 1. Finally, the biographies had no significant effect on voting intention for Democrats (all p's > .30; two-tailed test), whereas the biographies did appear to affect the Republicans. As a result, dummy variables for the biographies were also included in the models (not shown).¹⁰

Perhaps the first thing that stands out from our results is that there was an overall level of dissatisfaction with the congressman voting, regardless of what he did. That is, voters were significantly less likely to vote for the congressman across all conditions (n=815, paired t=8.46, p < .001). Given the historically low levels of congressional approval during this time, it is perhaps not surprising that, on average, citizens are dissatisfied with anything Congress does. Importantly, however, Democrats were significantly less likely to vote for their congressman after exposure to the experimental manipulation than Republicans (t = -2.61, p < .01), since Democrats received accounts of congressmen voting against their own party or for the opposition, whereas Republicans received accounts of congressmen voting for their own party or against the opposition.¹¹

However, for the most part we are more interested in the individual factors that explain changes in vote intention *within* each party. Table 2 shows the OLS regression coefficients for the effect of

¹⁰ Exclusion of the biographies as controls does not affect the model for Democrats at all; for Republicans it reduces the statistical significance of the dummy variable for bill outcome.

¹¹ As a result, rather than speaking in terms of punishment and less punishment for Republicans it is easier to “center” the variables and speak in terms of reward and punishment. In other words, the tables display estimates for the raw values of the data and the figures show the means for the average change in vote likelihood for Democrats, but the average change in vote likelihood minus the mean for Republicans. In other words, the figures display graphically how much Republicans reward or punish their congressmen *relative to* the average change in vote intention for Republicans, respectively. Thus it is important to make comparisons across conditions, rather than relative to a fixed number (such as whether the reward or punishment is significantly different from zero).

each of our independent variables of interest for Democrats (column 1) and Republicans (column 2) separately. First, note that issue importance is negative and significant for Democrats but not for Republicans. This indicates that the more important a Democratic respondent found the issue, the more likely she was to punish her congressman (since the Democratic congressman operates entirely in the domain of losses). In addition, as noted earlier, the issues have a much greater effect on voting among Republicans than among Democrats, whereas they do not have any significant impact on Democratic respondents' voting behavior.

[Insert Table 2 Here]

Above we noted the expectation that electoral rewards and punishments will be greater when a representative votes on a bill backed by the president than when she votes on a bill backed by party leaders in Congress (**H1**). As column 1 of Table 1 shows, the dummy variable for *bill backer* is negative and significant for Democrats, suggesting that when the congressman votes against his own party and the bill fails, the congressman is electorally punished more for thwarting the President's agenda relative to leaders in Congress ($t=-2.14$, $p=.02$). Similarly, *bill backer* is positive and statistically significant for Republicans (see column 2; $t=2.17$, $p=.02$). In other words, Republican congressmen are rewarded more for voting against and ultimately rejecting a bill backed by a Democratic president than for voting against a bill backed by Democratic leaders in Congress.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that both of these effects are relative to the reference category, which is the condition in which the congressman (Republican or Democrat) votes against a bill backed by Democratic leaders in Congress and the bill fails. Thus, although this provides preliminary support for our primary hypothesis, it is restricted to only instances in which the bill is backed by Democrats and ultimately fails. To see whether the effect of presidential backing holds across other scenarios, it is easier to examine the group means graphically. Figure 3 shows the group means for Democrats when their congressman votes *against* a bill sponsored by the Democrats, and how electoral punishments are affected by the backer of the bill and passage of the bill. Figure 4 shows

the same information, but when the congressman votes for a Republican bill.

[Figures 3 and 4 Here]

First, looking at Figure 3, we see the effect of the dummy variable replicated: voting against the president when the bill fails is electorally punished significantly more than when the bill is backed by Congress. Interestingly, however, this effect does not appear when the bill passes. This provides support for **H4**, which held that voters respond electorally when the congressman's vote matters, rather than when it is merely symbolic. In other words, in this situation congressmen do not receive punishments (rewards) for merely preventing (facilitating) desired legislation; whether the party is successful or not is ultimately to what voters respond.

Figure 4, however, tells a different story. The graph shows the change in voting likelihood as a function of the backer of the bill and whether the bill passes or fails when a Democratic congressman votes *for* a Republican bill. Although Democrats do respond significantly differently depending on whether the bill was backed by the president or party leaders in Congress, it is not the way in which we would have expected. Specifically, voters are largely unresponsive to whether the bill was backed by a Republican president or leaders in Congress when the bill passes. Similarly, when the congressman crosses party lines and votes for a bill backed by a Republican president that ultimately fails, electoral punishment is minimal. However, our fictional congressman receives significantly greater electoral punishment for supporting Republicans in Congress when the bill fails ($t = 1.45$, $p = .07$).

One possible interpretation of this unexpected finding is that representatives are ignored for exhibiting bipartisanship toward the president regardless of the outcome of the bill. Another possibility is that respondents, faced with a manipulation featuring a Republican president, found the situation too unrealistic and removed from reality¹²; why the member would be significantly punished more when voting for a Republican congressional bill and the bill fails remains unclear, however. In either case,

¹² We do not believe this criticism applies as readily to manipulations featuring a Democratic majority in Congress, since it is much more likely respondents would know the partisanship of the president than who controls the House, particularly given divided control of the legislature during this time.

situations in which a congressman demonstrates bipartisanship is certainly not rewarded, and, for the most part, not particularly punished, either.

Figure 5 displays the means for all eight conditions for the Democrats side by side. The first four bars display the change in voting likelihood when the bill is backed by the president, and the second four when the bill is backed by party leaders in Congress. This graphical presentation enables more ready comparisons between the groups, which can be made individually (e.g., bar 1 versus bar 5) or ignoring the outcome of the bill (e.g., bars 3 and 4 versus bars 7 and 8). From this perspective, two significant differences stand out. The first is that the difference in electoral punishments is marginally significantly greater for voting against the president (bars 1 and 2) than voting against Congress (bars 5 and 6; $t = -1.55$, $p = .06$). The second is that this difference is entirely driven by the change in voting likelihood when the bill fails ($t = -1.93$, $p = .03$). In contrast, the differences in electoral behavior when the bill is backed by Republicans is not significant when backed by the president or Congress regardless of the outcome of the bill, or when the bill passes (all p 's $> .05$). However, as indicated in Figure 4, voting for a bill backed by the Republicans in Congress received marginally significantly more electoral punishment when the bill fails than when it is backed by the president ($t = 1.45$, $p = .07$).

[Figure 5 Here]

Turning now to the Republicans, we get what is perhaps the cleanest test of the electoral implications of cartel theory – whether voters respond to legislative success by one's own party or, conversely, respond to prevention of legislative success by the opposition. Column 2 of Table 1 shows the estimates for this model.

This model immediately reveals that the effect of bill backer is replicated among Republicans. That is, when our fictional congressman votes against a Democratic President and the bill fails, voters are significantly more likely to dispense electoral rewards than when the bill is backed by parties in Congress. Once again, however, we will turn to graphical representations to more easily understand the differences across the conditions.

[Figures 6 and 7 Here]

Figure 6 shows clearly that, as among the Democrats, Republicans respond more strongly when a bill is backed by the President than when it is backed by leaders in Congress, but only when the bill fails. When the congressman votes against the Democrats and the bill passes, the backer of the bill has no effect on electoral rewards. Figure 7 shows, although less clearly, that this is also true when the congressman votes for a Republican bill. That is, the congressman was electorally rewarded more for voting for a presidentially-backed bill relative to a bill that is backed by the Republicans in Congress and fails. However, when the bill passes, there were no significant differences in electoral rewards between backers of the bill.

[Figure 8 Here]

Figure 8 is analogous to Figure 5, but for the Republicans. Once again, we can make comparisons ignoring the outcome of the bill or individually (i.e., taking the outcome of the bill into account). Doing this we find that, when the bill fails, the congressman is not significantly rewarded more when voting for a Republican than when voting for a bill backed by the Republicans in Congress. In contrast, the congressman received significantly greater electoral rewards when helping to defeat a bill backed by a Democratic president ($t=1.76$, $p = .04$) than one backed by Democratic party leaders. This supports **H3**, which stated that prevention of legislation success by the opposition would elicit greater electoral rewards than passing legislation backed by one's party. Importantly, however, if we ignore the outcome of the bill, the differences between the groups become masked and are not significantly different from one another. Thus, as for the Democrats, the outcome of the bill matters. Although this conforms with **H4**, it is not in the way that we would have expected: rather than responding to whether the bill passes or fails, the simple act of voting against a bill seems to draw more attention by voters, particularly when that vote, in part, helped defeat legislation.

In sum, for Democrats we see clear evidence that voters care about congressmen's votes in regard to the president's agenda, whereas a member's vote for or against legislation backed by parties

in Congress has no effect on voters. Importantly, however, this effect is only operative when the bill under consideration fails. That is, voting against a bill that ultimately fails is electorally punished more when it is sponsored by the president of one's party than by leaders in Congress. On the other hand, displays of bipartisanship (voting for a bill sponsored by a president of the opposing party) do not appear to affect voters.

For Republicans we see that, rather than responding to legislative success, voters respond much more strongly to prevention of legislative success by the opposition. In particular, when a member of Congress helps prevent success by the opposition, co-partisans dispense electoral rewards. In contrast, congressmen are not rewarded when the vote is ultimately symbolic and the bill passes in spite of the congressman's vote. However, this is also true when the congressman votes for a bill backed by his party: bills backed by the president are electorally rewarded more than bills backed by parties in Congress, but only when the bill fails.

We also expected voters to respond electorally more when in the domain of losses than in the domain of gains (**H2**). Comparing the models for Democrats (who are operating in the domain of losses) and Republicans (gains), we see that the data supports this hypothesis in two ways. First, we see that the difference in the group means is much more dramatic for Democrats than Republicans. Specifically, the maximum range of group means is .08 for Republicans, and more than double that (.17) for Democrats. Secondly, the overall fit of the two models shows that the model explaining voter reactions to unfavorable circumstances is a much better fit and explains more variance than a model explaining voter reactions to favorable circumstances. In particular, when conducting a joint-F test for the control variables vis-à-vis the experimental manipulations, we find that the manipulations are jointly significant for Democrats ($F(7, 373) = 6.72, p < .001$), but not for Republicans ($F(7, 406) = 1.04, p = .40$). In contrast, the controls are jointly significant for Republicans ($F(10, 406) = 3.49, p < .001$) and marginally significant for Democrats ($F(10, 373) = 1.80, p = .06$). Not surprisingly, then, the adjusted R^2 for the Democrats is more than double than that for the Republican model.

Last but not least, we hypothesized that the reason voters care more about presidential backing of a bill is because of greater interest in the President vis-à-vis Congress (**H5**). Indeed, our sample did express having significantly greater interest in what the President does than Congress (paired $t = 10.3$, $p < .001$). Moreover, this difference holds whether one looks at Democrats ($t = 8.9$; $p < .001$) or Republicans ($t = 5.7$; $p < .001$), or whether the respondent was assigned to a condition in which the bill was backed by the President ($t = 7.0$; $p < .001$) or Congress ($t = 7.6$; $p < .001$).

Discussion

Experimental designs have long been useful for understanding public opinion (e.g., Sullivan, Piereson & Marcus 1978) and voter turnout (e.g., Gerber, Green & Larimer 2008), but less often for understanding the electoral effects of congressional actions. In the present study we designed and conducted an experiment that permits us complete control over a variety of interesting theoretical factors that are difficult to study using existing data. In particular, we argue and find some evidence to support the argument that voters respond more to presidential initiatives and ultimately their legislative success, rather than agendas of parties in Congress. In particular, we find that when a congressman prevents passage of desired legislation, he is electorally punished much more when it is backed by the president than when it is backed by parties in Congress. Similarly, congressmen are electorally rewarded more for successfully preventing legislative success by the opposition when the bill is sponsored by the president than when it is sponsored by party leaders.

Our finding concerning the negativity biases in voting is consistent with a large literature more generally, but also provides evidence for a suspicion long held by schools of congressional voting (Gronke et al. 2003). Not only do voters react more strongly to unfavorable outcomes than to favorable outcomes, but also voters focus more narrowly on prevention of legislative success by the opposition than facilitation of legislation favored by one's own party. Similarly, prevention of legislative success by one's own party is more important to voters than facilitation of legislative success sponsored by the opposition; in fact, the latter receives no electoral punishment when the bill is backed by the president,

suggesting a desire for bipartianship (at least in an abstract scenario).

This suggests that theories of parties in Congress should distinguish between legislative success and prevention of success by the opposition. Voters clearly understand the stakes of the legislative game: members of Congress are viewed as political actors who are not only required to govern effectively, but also to act strategically to prevent the other side from enacting disfavored policies. Certainly the 2010 elections provide a recent and salient example of this, given the large number of Republicans who rode a tidal wave of opposition to health care into Congress.

We conclude with a comment on the practical and substantive significance of these effects, which has largely been ignored to this point. One might tend to view these effects as “small”, given their numeric size. However, the change in voting likelihood is on a scale that theoretically ranges from -1 to 1. Thus a change in means that is .1 or .2 (as we find in the model for Democrats) can be conceptualized as a 5-10% shift on the scale of voting intention. Moreover, in many instances the scale does not actually range from -1 to 1, and is “truncated” within conditions (as few respondents switched from initially being extremely likely to vote for the congressmen to extremely unlikely, or vice versa)¹³; thus within many conditions the change in voting intention represents a larger shift when compared to the actual range of the dependent variable. Finally, as noted at the outset, we did not observe what happens when voters are given information about a representative of the opposition party. In theory, these effects should be even larger when, for example, a Republican voter learns that her Democratic representative voted against a bill backed by a Republican president, and this bill failed.

¹³ Because the dependent variable had such high kurtosis we also ran the models as ordered probits, with the dependent variable coded as 1 if the respondent became more likely to vote for the congressman at all, -1 if the respondent became less likely to vote him, and 0 if the respondent indicated no change. The results were substantively the same.

TABLES

Table 1: Distribution of Key Sociodemographic Variables in the Sample

	TESS Sample (Unweighted)	TESS Sample (Weighted)	2010 Census/ACS
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	52	50	49
Female	48	50	51
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
White, Non-Hispanic	76	71	64
Black, Non-Hispanic	9	11	12
Hispanic	9	11	16
Other, Non-Hispanic	7	7	8
<i>Age</i>			
18-34	20	29	31
35-44	14	17	18
45-54	19	19	19
55-64	23	18	16
65+	24	18	17
<i>Education</i>			
HS grad or less	43	42	36
Some college	28	29	44
BA/BS or more	30	29	20

N=815. Entries are percentages. Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

Table 2: How the Congressmen's Vote, the Backer of the Bill, And the Outcome of the Bill Affect Congressional Voters

	Change in Vote Likelihood	
	Democrats	Republicans
Bill Backer	-.116*	.099*
1=backer by President	(.054)	(.046)
0=backer by Congress		
MC's Vote	.066	.052
1=vote for Republican	(.060)	(.045)
0=vote against Democrat		
Bill Outcome	-.059	.070*
1=Bill passes	(.059)	(.044)
0=Bill fails		
MC's Vote * Bill Backer	.195**	-.067
	(.080)	(.063)
MC's Vote * Bill Outcome	.112	-.021
	(.085)	(.064)
Bill Backer * Bill Outcome	.110	-.125*
	(.081)	(.061)
MC's Vote * Bill Backer * Bill Outcome	-.187*	.058
	(.114)	(.088)
Issue Importance	-.146**	-.042
	(.049)	(.036)
Tax Code Reform	-.035	.102**
	(.039)	(.033)
Unemployment	.050	.066*
	(.041)	(.031)
Energy Policy	.022	.082**
	(.040)	(.031)
Constant (Stem Cell Research)	-.038	-.136*
	(.065)	(.062)
	N = 391	N = 424
	F(17, 373) = 3.91**	F(17, 406) = 2.39**
	Adj. R ² = .11	Adj. R ² = .05

Note: Entries are OLS regression coefficients.

* p < .05 ** p < .01 (one-tailed tests)

Dummy variables for the biographies and race/ethnicity were included in the models as control variables (not shown).

FIGURES

Figure 1: Experimental Design and Theoretical Expectations

Condition	Respondent/ MC PID	Vote	Who Supports?	Supporter(s)' PID	Bill Outcome	Expectation
1	Republican	For	Congress	Republican	Passes	+
2	Republican	For	Congress	Republican	Fails	+
3	Republican	For	President	Republican	Passes	++
4	Republican	For	President	Republican	Fails	+
5	Republican	Against	Congress	Democrat	Passes	+
6	Republican	Against	Congress	Democrat	Fails	+
7	Republican	Against	President	Democrat	Passes	+
8	Republican	Against	President	Democrat	Fails	++
9	Democrat	For	Congress	Democrat	Passes	+
10	Democrat	For	Congress	Democrat	Fails	+
11	Democrat	For	President	Democrat	Passes	++
12	Democrat	For	President	Democrat	Fails	+
13	Democrat	Against	Congress	Republican	Passes	+
14	Democrat	Against	Congress	Republican	Fails	+
15	Democrat	Against	President	Republican	Passes	+
16	Democrat	Against	President	Republican	Fails	++
17	Republican	Against	Congress	Republican	Passes	--
18	Republican	Against	Congress	Republican	Fails	-
19	Republican	Against	President	Republican	Passes	-
20	Republican	Against	President	Republican	Fails	---
21	Republican	For	Congress	Democrat	Passes	--
22	Republican	For	Congress	Democrat	Fails	-
23	Republican	For	President	Democrat	Passes	---
24	Republican	For	President	Democrat	Fails	-
25	Democrat	Against	Congress	Democrat	Passes	--
26	Democrat	Against	Congress	Democrat	Fails	-
27	Democrat	Against	President	Democrat	Passes	-
28	Democrat	Against	President	Democrat	Fails	---
29	Democrat	For	Congress	Republican	Passes	--
30	Democrat	For	Congress	Republican	Fails	-
31	Democrat	For	President	Republican	Passes	---
32	Democrat	For	President	Republican	Fails	-

Note: Rows highlighted in gray are the experimental conditions that we explicitly test. See text for further justification. Rows left blank for theoretical expectations means that we expect no electoral reaction.

Expectations: + Minor electoral reward
 ++ Moderate electoral reward
 - Minor electoral punishment
 -- Moderate electoral punishment
 --- Strong electoral punishment

Figure 2: Sample Text of Experimental Manipulation

President Fails to Get Tax Code Reform Passed

Late last evening, Congress **failed to pass** a comprehensive legislation package, considered a key component of **the President's** agenda, aimed at **reforming the tax code**. HR 107 was rejected 228 to 206, with two members voting present. **The President, a Democrat**, had strongly backed the bill, touting it as a "big step in the right direction."

Tax code reform took center stage last fall, when candidates nationwide campaigned on the issue. Given its central importance to **the President's** agenda, many observers had viewed passing this legislation as critical. "**I am** obviously disappointed with the outcome today, but am not willing to give up on this extremely important issue," **the President** said in a statement issued shortly after the floor vote.

Representative Bill Dyerson (**D**) voted **against** the bill's passage. "There was no question in my mind what was the right thing to do. This legislation should **have never come to a vote in the first place**," he said. "**The President's** agenda is out of touch with the American people," he added. The bill was aimed at **closing loopholes and consolidating the filing process**.

Republicans had argued that the bill would actually increase bureaucracy and inefficiency. A spokesperson for the party said: "We believe reform is necessary, but do not believe that HR 107 was the right vehicle to do so. There needs to be greater analysis and more debate on the issues; **the President** should know you can't propose solid solutions without understanding the root of the problem first."

Figure 3: The Electoral Effects Among Democratic Voters when the Congressman Votes Against the Democratic Party

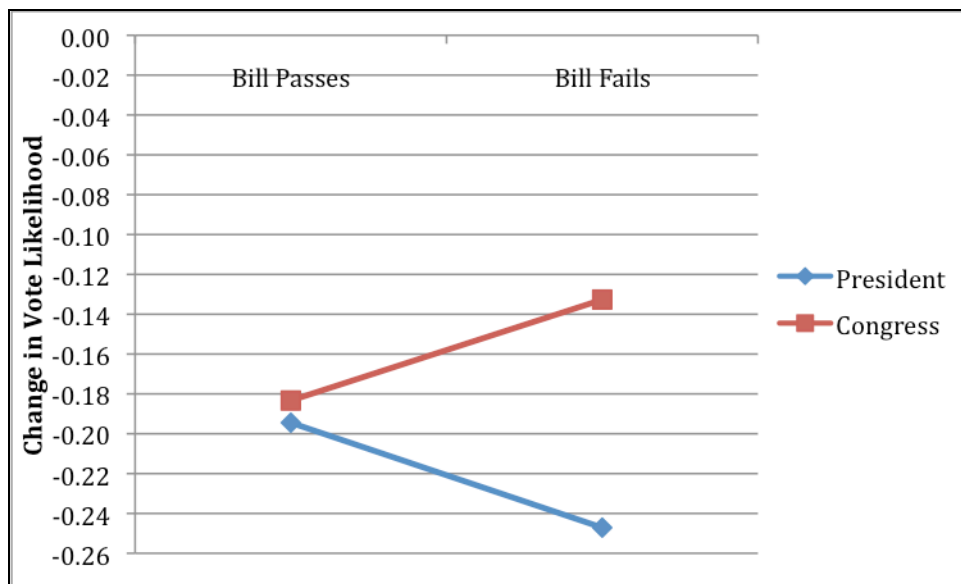


Figure 4: The Electoral Effects Among Democratic Voters when the Congressman Votes For the Republican Party

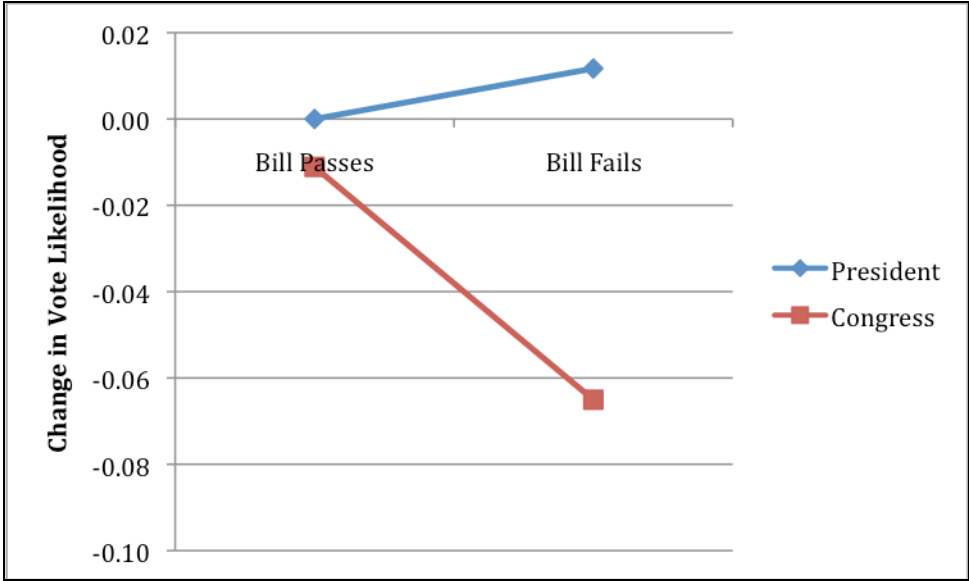


Figure 5: Change in Voting Likelihood by Experimental Condition

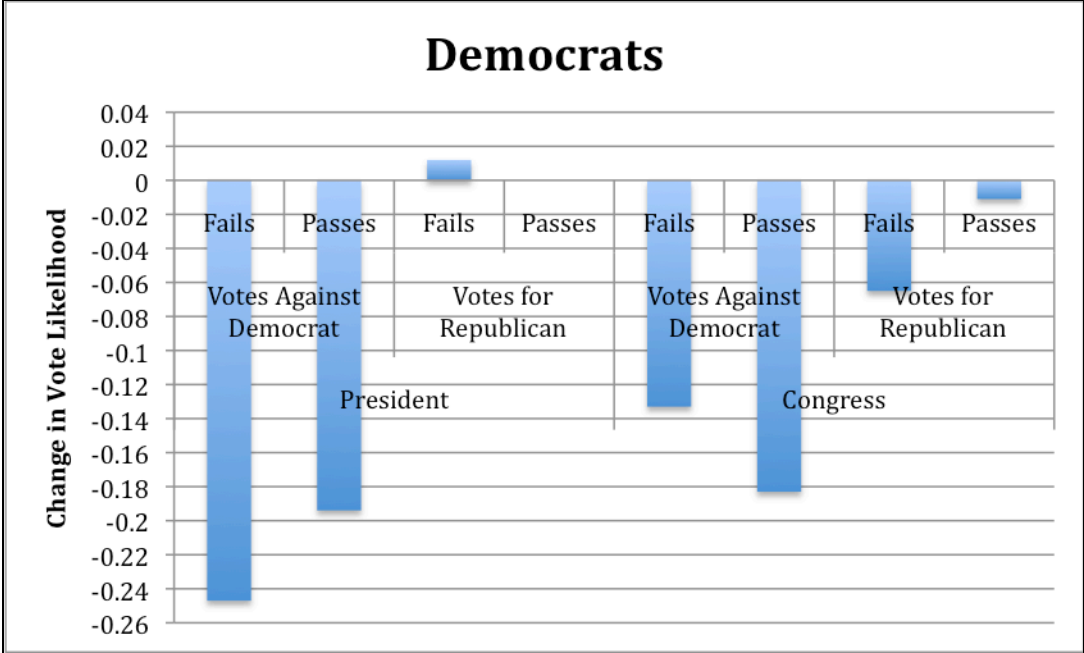


Figure 6: The Electoral Effects Among Republican Voters when the Congressman Votes Against the Democratic Party

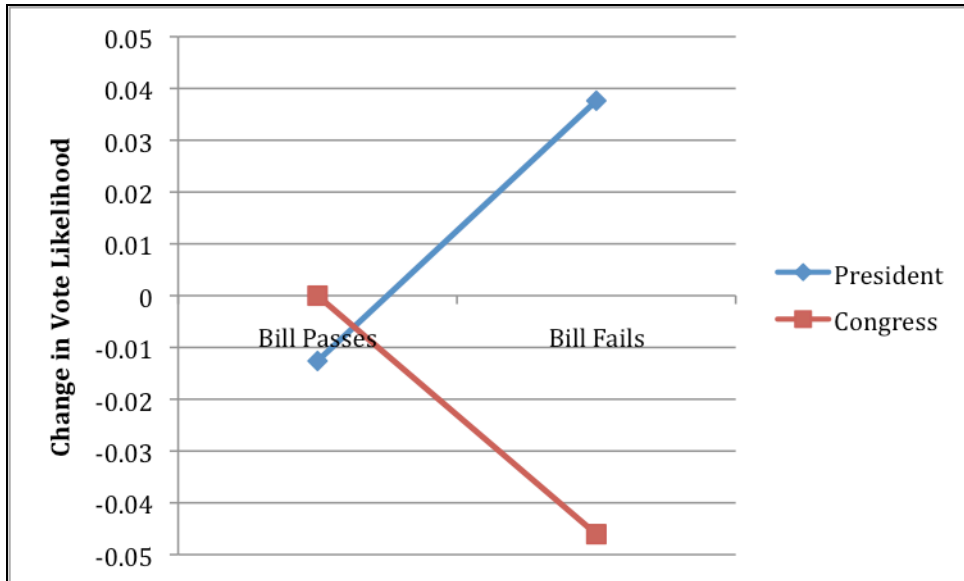


Figure 7: The Electoral Effects Among Republican Voters when the Congressman Votes For the Republican Party

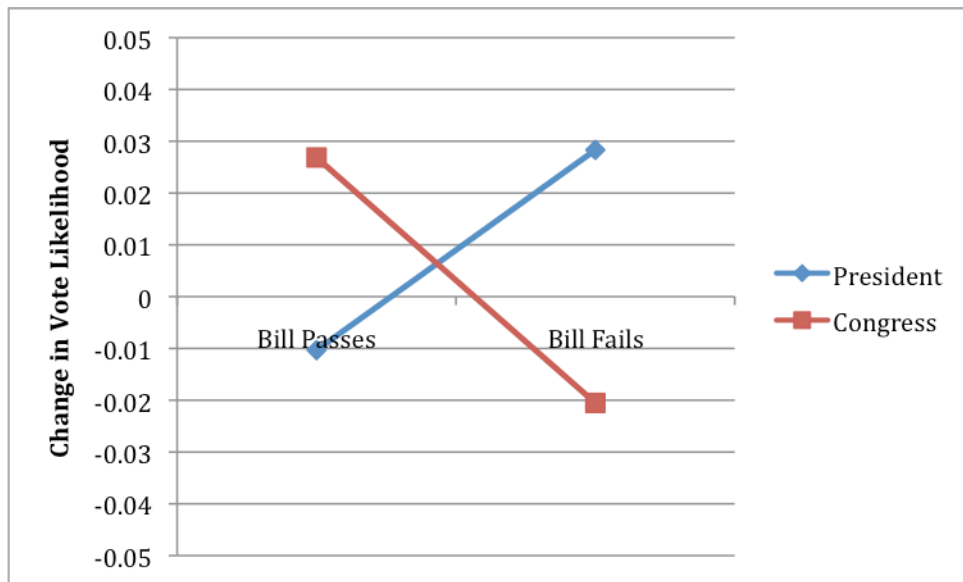
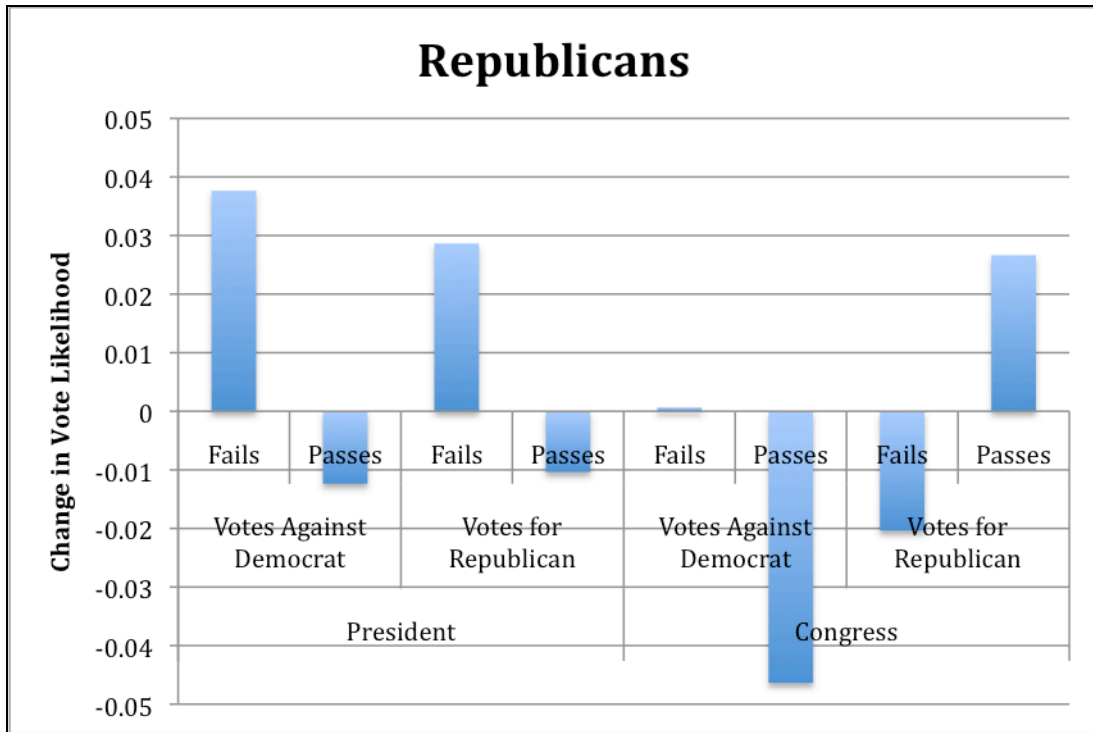


Figure 8: Change in Voting Likelihood by Experimental Condition



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Appendix

Text of Biographies

Congressmen Bill Dyerson ([D/R]) is an incumbent in his second term, having easily defeated the [Republican/Democratic] challenger in his first election and receiving 52% of the vote in his first reelection bid. The 48-year old has been married for twenty years to Lisa, and they have two girls together, ages 15 and 18, who both attend the local high school. Dyerson is a former attorney and partner of Schwartz, Dyerson & Studebaker. He received his bachelor's at the state university where he also served as president of the pre-law club and was a member of the Young [Democrats/Republicans]. After a stint in the Peace Corps, Dyerson received a JD from Hofstra University on Long Island, specializing in estates. After practicing law for nearly twenty years, Dyerson successfully ran for an open seat in the state House in 2000. He served six years before running for Congress in 2006. When he isn't serving his community, Dyerson likes to hike and camp with his family upstate and watch his daughters' soccer games.

Congressmen Bill Dyerson ([D/R]) is an incumbent running for his second term, having easily defeated the [Republican/Democratic] challenger for an open seat in his first election. The 33-year old has been married for five years to Molly; they have no children. Prior to his service in Congress, Dyerson worked in real estate. He received his bachelor's degree at a local private university, where he also served as president of the Student Assembly and was a member of the Young [Democrats/Republicans]. Dyerson is also active with Habitat for Humanity and has headed several large projects for the charity, most recently in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. When he isn't serving his community, Dyerson enjoys baseball and spending time with his Labrador Retriever, Checkers.

Congressmen Bill Dyerson ([D/R]) is an incumbent in his third term, having easily defeated the [Republican/Democratic] challenger in his first election and receiving more than 60% of the vote in each of his reelection bids. The 53-year old has been married for twenty years to Alice, and they have one son, age 20, who attends the local high school. Dyerson is a former school administrator and educator. He received his bachelor's at a small liberal arts college where he served as president of the local chapter of the Young [Democrats/Republicans]. After graduating, Dyerson received a Master's degree in education from the state university. As a school administrator he spearheaded an initiative to institute a mentoring program for local, at-risk students. Before beginning his congressional career, Dyerson served as mayor of his hometown between 1994 and 2004. When he isn't serving his community, Dyerson enjoys golf and, as an accomplished musician, playing the guitar.

Congressmen Bill Dyerson ([D/R]) is an incumbent in his second term, having easily defeated the [Republican/Democratic] challenger in his first election and receiving 65% of the vote in his first reelection bid. The 37-year old has been married for fourteen years to Samantha, and they have two girls together, ages 12 and 13, who both attend the local public middle school. Dyerson is a former state trooper and received his bachelor's at the state university. In college he was involved in ROTC and was a member of the Young [Democrats/Republicans]. After a stint in the army and more than ten years in law enforcement, Dyerson successfully ran for an open seat in the state Senate in 2004. He served only two years before running for Congress in 2006. Having served in the military, Dyerson is particularly interested in issues involving veterans and sits on the House Committee on Veteran's Affairs. When he isn't serving his community, Dyerson likes playing tennis and fishing.

Congressmen Bill Dyerson ([D/R]) is in his first term, having easily defeated the [Republican/Democratic] incumbent in his first election. The 29-year old has been married for five

years to Emily, and they have a four-year-old daughter. Prior to his service in Congress, Dyerson worked as political consultant and legislative aid. He received his bachelor's degree at a mid-sized university, where he also served as president of the Student Assembly and was a member of the Young [Democrats/Republicans]. Dyerson is active with Big Brothers Big Sisters and other charities assisting less privileged children. When he isn't serving his community, Dyerson enjoys running and playing chess.

Selected Items from Questionnaire

PREVOTE: If Bill Dyerson represented your district, how likely is it that you would vote for him in the upcoming election? We understand you have very little to go on, so please give us your gut reaction.

1. Very unlikely
2. Somewhat unlikely
3. Slightly unlikely
4. Neither likely nor unlikely
5. Slightly likely
6. Somewhat likely
7. Very likely

Randomly rotate order of response options (forward or backward).

POSTVOTE1: Now, if Bill Dyerson represented your district, how likely is it that you would vote for him in the upcoming election? We understand you have very little to go on still, so please give us your gut reaction.

1. Very unlikely
2. Somewhat unlikely
3. Slightly unlikely
4. Neither likely nor unlikely
5. Slightly likely
6. Somewhat likely
7. Very likely

Assign order of response options (forward or backward) to match randomly assigned order in PREVOTE.

ISSUEIMP: How important is the issue of [Insert issue from NEWS1] to you? Would you say that it is:

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Slightly important
4. Not at all important

INTEREST: In general, how interested are you in what's going on in government and politics?

1. Extremely interested

2. Somewhat interested
3. A little interested
4. Not at all interested

Randomly rotate INTEREST_C and INTEREST_P.

INTEREST_C: How interested are you specifically in what Congress does?

1. Extremely interested
2. Somewhat interested
3. A little interested
4. Not at all interested

INTEREST_P: How interested are you specifically in what the President does?

1. Extremely interested
2. Somewhat interested
3. A little interested
4. Not at all interested