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### CHAPTER FIVE

#### MEMBERS, GOALS, RESOURCES, AND STRATEGIES

This chapter takes a look at Congress from the members' perspective. What are their goals? What resources do they have for pursuing them? What strategies do they pursue? Wide variations in personal goals, resources, and strategies can be found among members, as you might expect, but there are important patterns and generalizations that can be made.

##### Setting Personal Priorities

Legislators have well-established policy attitudes by the time they arrive in Washington for the first time. For example, most of them can be characterized as liberals, moderates, or conservatives, with some variation on specific issues. Those attitudes are the product of many factors—personal experience, a track record in politics, the necessities of the campaign, and so on. In a general way, therefore, the behavior of most members is quite predictable. And yet members face many decisions for which their general policy outlook offers little guidance—how to vote on hundreds of roll-call votes on narrow issues, which committee assignments to request, how to allocate staff, which issues to emphasize, and how much time to spend in Washington and in the home state or district. Members' choices about these matters mold their legislative careers.

Members have wide latitude in setting their personal priorities and choosing strategies for pursuing their goals. No party leader or president dictates how members vote, what issues members pursue, how much time members spend in their home districts and states, or how members organize their staffs. To be sure, members are subjected to pressure from leaders, presidents, and many other people and groups, but members of the modern Congress are remarkably free to shape their priorities and determine their own strategies.

There is a catch. Time, staff, and budgets are limited so members must exercise care in allocating their resources. New members face the most difficult choices.<sup>1</sup> They must worry about organizing a staff, selecting and arranging new offices, requesting committee assignments, and responding to appeals from senior members competing for leadership posts—all while trying to find a place to live in a new city. Members do these things with incomplete information. In requesting committee assignments, for example, a member might like to know the career plans of committee and subcommittee leaders: Whether they plan to retire soon or to run for higher office will affect how quickly the member

might rise to chair a committee or subcommittee. In hiring staff, a member might like to know what issues will be hot in coming years so that he or she can appoint people with relevant expertise. In nearly every aspect of setting priorities, a member would like to know who future opponents are likely to be and whether economic and world conditions will favor his or her party. And every member would like to know if and when opportunities to run for higher office will arise. With the passage of time, members gradually resolve some uncertainties, acclimate themselves to others, and settle into routines that reflect their personal goals, campaign experience, and style.

### **Members' Goals**

Members of Congress tend to be quite purposeful. That is, most of what they do as legislators is connected to some goal or goals. They do not always articulate their goals, but they usually can explain how particular decisions affect their own political objectives. Moreover, they usually see connections between their goals and what they do every day. They try to use their limited resources effectively, if not always efficiently, and consciously move toward achieving their personal political goals. To be sure, not every move is calculated, but members generally think and act in ways that make it reasonable to characterize them as strategic politicians.

What are members' goals? For our purposes, focusing on the political goals that members mention when explaining their many decisions makes sense. Political scientist Richard Fenno, in studying differences among members sitting on different committees, found that three categories—reelection, good public policy, and influence—accounted for most of the goals expressed by members.<sup>2</sup> But other goals seem to be at work as well.<sup>3</sup>

### **Reelection**

Members of Congress are like the rest of us—most of them want to keep their jobs. They gain personal satisfaction from making contributions to public policy and serving the interests of people they care about, as well as from the prestige of holding high public office. Perhaps a few members like the income, have a craving for power, enjoy the attention given to them by lobbyists and others, or simply like to see themselves on television.

Members face a test for retaining their jobs that the rest of us do not. Periodically, at times fixed by law, they must seek the approval of a very large number of citizens they do not know personally. The opinion voters hold of their representatives and senators can turn on factors beyond the members' personal control. And campaigning, even for members who have won by wide margins in the past, involves a large commitment of time, money, and energy. Most of the rest of us do not face such an extraordinary test to retain our jobs once we have established a business or career.

We should not be surprised that many, if not most, members make obtaining reelection a high priority in their daily activities. In the view of critics, members care too much about reelection. Some critics assert that members ignore the general welfare of the country while pursuing the narrow interests of financial contributors, the special interests

of organized groups, and the parochial interests of their home constituents. Furthermore, critics contend that the reelection drive has become more intense in recent years. Supporters of term limits, in particular, claim that members have become obsessed by reelection, have become excessively parochial in their political outlook, and have built up staffs and perks—the resources that come with their office—that virtually ensure their reelection.

Even scholars often assume, at least for the sake of argument, that members are single-minded seekers of reelection. And for good reason: Nearly all members seek reelection, and much of what members do is best explained by the drive for reelection. Winning federal funds for projects in their states and districts, requesting assignment to committees with jurisdictions affecting their constituents, solving constituents' problems with federal agencies, evaluating legislation for its impact on their constituencies, and soliciting media attention are common activities that members pursue to enhance their chances of reelection. Political scientist David Mayhew neatly summarized these activities as credit claiming, position taking, and advertising.<sup>4</sup> And R. Douglas Arnold has shown how congressional leaders take into account the electoral calculations of members when designing strategies for building majority coalitions.<sup>5</sup>

Still, great care must be exercised in declaring reelection to be the sole motivating force of congressional action. Reelection is probably better viewed as a means to an end than as an end in itself. As we see it, people seek election and reelection to Congress primarily because they value membership in Congress in some way. If other goals were not served by membership, or if running for office were too onerous, few people would make the effort. Those other goals, whatever they may be, surely influence members' daily activities as well.

Moreover, reelection plays little role in many decisions and activities of members of Congress. Many committee and floor votes have no consequences for reelection, and actively advocating legislation and building coalitions involves much activity that is unseen and unappreciated at home. David Price, a political scientist and a Democratic representative from North Carolina, explains that “most members of Congress, most of the time, have a great deal of latitude as to how they define their roles and what kind of job they wish to do. If they do not have the latitude, they can often create it, for they have a great deal of control over how their actions are perceived and interpreted.”<sup>6</sup>

One way a member gains latitude and votes is to earn the trust of constituents. Political scientist Richard Fenno observes that trust is earned only over time, as a member's constituents come to see him or her as qualified, as a person who identifies and empathizes with them, and as someone who can defend his or her actions in Washington credibly. In seeking to develop such trust, members develop distinctive “home styles,” tailored to their own personalities and skills as well as to the nature of their constituencies.<sup>7</sup>

For one member of the House, Barney Frank (D-Massachusetts), wit has become a trademark. During his reelection campaign of 1992, a year in which a large number of members retired from office, Frank wrote a letter to supporters saying that

I feel somewhat apologetic about what I am going to tell you: I do not plan to quit Congress. As I read the praise which the media lavishes on my colleagues who are retiring, I'm afraid my eagerness to keep working on a broad range of public policy issues may be taken as a character defect. So I hope that as character defects go, this one will be considered sufficiently minor for you to overlook.<sup>8</sup>

Apparently, it was. Frank was reelected in 1992 with 72 percent of the vote and has been reelected five times since then.

Nearly all members of Congress seek reelection so it is reasonable to assume that concern about reelection plays a part in many, if not most, decisions that legislators' make. Because it is a goal that must be achieved periodically if a legislator is to continue pursuing other goals in public office, it isn't too surprising that reelection dominates all other considerations. Yet for most members, reelection does not explain everything.

### **Congressionally Speaking . . .**

The *pork barrel* is the term of art for local projects funded by Congress. Each year Congress approves funding for hundreds of local projects ranging from a university building to a youth center to a new dam or bridge. Legislators take credit for the projects by issuing press releases, including stories in their newsletters, and appearing at groundbreaking and opening ceremonies. As nonpartisan public works, almost everyone at home appreciates the "pork" projects and the legislators' efforts, a perfect combination for legislators eager to please voters.

A pork barrel is a large container filled with brine to cure pork. One can imagine legislators passing by to take a piece for each of the home states or districts.

Of course, one district's pork is another district's wasteful spending. Senate John McCain (R-Arizona) has exploited the pork-as-waste theme by using his official Senate webpage to advertise pork barrel practices on Capitol Hill. Visitors to the site can read the senator's press releases and speeches on the subject.

### **Good Public Policy**

Among the other goals members pursue is to make good public policy. The cynics are wrong: most, if not all, members care about the country's future. Many members come to Congress with preexisting policy interests and often are deeply committed to certain

policy views. These commitments influence members' committee preferences, staffing decisions, and legislative activities.

The first major legislative effort of Senator Arlen Specter's (R-Pennsylvania) is described by political scientist Richard Fenno:

As closely as a legislative idea can be attached to a single legislator . . . the career-criminal bill introduced on October 1, 1981, by Arlen Specter belongs to him. It grew out of his own experience as the district attorney of Philadelphia. Its provisions were crafted by his own staff. No outside agency or group contributed to it. No constituency—in Pennsylvania or elsewhere—pressed for it. Viewed in terms of its congressional origins, it was one man's home-grown, pet policy initiative.<sup>9</sup>

To be sure, Specter was living up to constituents' expectations that his background as a prosecutor would influence his legislative work—expectations that he had fostered as a candidate for the Senate. Still, it is hard to imagine that Fenno isn't right that Specter's personal interests didn't shape his legislative priorities.

Many legislators acquire policy interests, sometimes quite accidentally, while serving in Congress. It could hardly be otherwise. Members are introduced to many subjects in the process of listening to constituents, sitting through committee hearings, and discussing issues with colleagues, staff, and outside experts.

### **Political Influence**

Many members also want influence—political power. Influence may be an end in itself, or it may be a means for pursuing certain policy goals, constituency interests, or even reelection. Most members try to develop a base of power within Congress so that they have more influence than other members do.

Influence can be acquired in many ways, but earning formal party and committee positions is particularly important in Congress. Incumbents of party and committee positions often enjoy certain procedural prerogatives and additional staff, both of which may give them an edge in influencing policy outcomes. Members striving for broad influence pursue party leadership posts by first seeking appointment or election to low-level party positions, in the hope of gaining a top post in the future. Holders of committee and subcommittee chairs are also advantaged, at least within the jurisdiction of their committees and subcommittees. Members might also try to gain a seat on committees with broad and important jurisdictions, such as House Appropriations and Ways and Means. Because the work of these types of committees is important to all members of Congress, and many special interests, a spot on one of them puts a player in a position to help fellow members. As Representative Norm Dicks (D-Washington) described the House Appropriations Committee, "It's where the money is. And money is where the Clout is."<sup>10</sup>

## **Serving Constituents**

Many members feel a strong obligation to look out for the interests of their constituents back home, even when doing so has little effect on their reelection prospects or when there is little connection between their constituents' needs and their own policy interests. Political scientists have sometimes called the duty to behave in accordance with the wishes of constituents the delegate role. The delegate role is often contrasted with the trustee role, in which the member exercises independent judgment about questions of public policy. Of course, members seldom make a conscious philosophical judgment about whether to act as a delegate or as a trustee. For many members, behaving as a delegate, comes naturally, at least on many issues. After all, most members grew up in the districts or states they serve. They often identify and empathize with their constituents, and believe that their constituents deserve good representation. But because their constituents have opinions about only a small fraction of the many policy questions Congress must confront, every member must behave like a trustee much of the time, no matter how committed he or she is to serving constituents' interests.

Not all constituents are of equal importance to members. It goes without saying that virtually every member would prefer a happy constituent to an unhappy one, but members know that they are choosing which constituents to give priority to when they select their committee assignments, set their personal policy emphases, and cast votes on divisive issues. Members naturally give priority to constituents who supported them when they were forced to make tough choices, and this makes it difficult for the outside observer to distinguish between members who are genuinely committed to their constituents' interests and members who are motivated by reelection alone.

## **Higher Office**

Higher office is on the minds of many members of Congress. They may not see their current position solely as a steppingstone to higher office, but many members are clearly ambitious. In 1992, for example, eleven House members ran for Senate seats and two ran for state governorships. In 1994, twenty-one more House members ran for a higher elective office. That may not seem like many in light of the size of the House, but the figures don't take into account the number of members who considered running for higher office and decided not to do so, at least for the time being. Considering the available opportunities, the number of House members who sought Senate seats appears more substantial. In the 1992 general election, there were only thirty-four Senate races, or sixty-eight major-party candidacies. Incumbent senators seeking reelection filled twenty-six of those candidacies. That left forty-two major-party candidacies (sixteen for open seats, twenty-six against incumbents) to be filled by nonincumbents. Thus, more than one-fourth of the available Senate candidacies in the 1992 general election were filled by House members. Between 1960 and 1990, a total of 158 House members ran for the Senate, 58 of them successfully.

Senators sometimes aim for governorships of large states, but generally they aim for the presidency. In 1992, four senators ran for the presidency or vice presidency. By the end of that year, as many as nineteen sitting senators had actually run for the presidency at some point or had been mentioned prominently as a potential candidate for the

presidency. For the general elections between 1960 and 2000, 22 of the 40 major-party candidates for president and vice president had served in the Senate. Indiana's Dan Quayle and Tennessee's Al Gore, of course, left the Senate to become vice presidents and Gore ran unsuccessfully for president.

### **Legislating**

The work of legislating seems to have an intrinsic appeal to many legislators. The legislative game can be fun. Formulating strategies, mastering complicated issues, learning the complexities of the policy-making process, building majority coalitions against talented opponents, making a lasting contribution to public policy, and associating with other bright and energetic people appear to motivate many members. Former senator Dan Quayle (R-Indiana) is a case in point. A close observer of Quayle reports that "in recounting his first year's activities [as a senator] he exuded enthusiasm for legislative work in general. 'I had fun on all of them,' he said after canvassing his first-year interests. 'There was no one highlight. The highlight is getting involved and accomplishing a whole lot of things.'"<sup>11</sup> Perhaps winners of the rough-and-tumble battles of politics and campaigns are disproportionately attracted to such activity.

### **Multiple Goals**

Most members appear to be motivated by more than one goal at once. In fact, much of what they do is consistent with pursuing several goals. After all, the more goals served by a particular activity or decision, the more valuable it is likely to be. For example, using a committee hearing to draw attention to a policy problem and to oneself may simultaneously further a member's reelection chances, prospects for higher office, and public policy objectives. And the media attention generated by a hearing may help influence colleagues' views about the member's intelligence and leadership ability as well as their views on the issue at hand.

Members can pursue a multifaceted strategy to avoid having to select among competing goals. For example, Senator Norm Coleman (R-Minnesota), a former mayor of St. Paul, sought an assignment on the Agriculture Committee, which has jurisdiction over farm programs important to large parts of his state, but also gained a seat on the Foreign Relations Committee, where he could pursue issues of personal interest.

Yet, with limited time, money, and staff, members often face making tradeoffs among goals. Generally, representatives face more severe trade-offs than senators do. With fewer committee assignments, a smaller staff and office budget, and a shorter term of office, representatives must more carefully allocate resources among the various activities they would like to pursue. But over the past few decades all members have benefited from an expanding base of resources.

### **Members' Resources**

Pursuing goals requires resources. A member's most important resource is the power to vote—in subcommittee, in committee, on the floor, or in conference. Committee and

party leaders enjoy certain additional prerogatives. Members also have many nonprocedural resources. As managers of numerous offices—personal, committee, and perhaps even party offices—with their sizable staffs and budgets, members might even be thought of as heading small political enterprises.<sup>12</sup>

Over the long term, a member's resources may expand. As a legislator takes on more important party or committee leadership positions, he or she will gain more influence and additional budget and staff support. Because most committee leadership posts are allocated on the basis of seniority, these additional resources are acquired by winning reelection repeatedly. In this way, the value of a House or Senate seat—to the member and to home constituents—increases with time.

### **Personal Office and Staff Allowances**

For the first hundred years of Congress, personal staff aides were uncommon and were not funded by the government. In 1893, the House voted to permit the use of funds for staff members. Until then, members either paid for assistants with their own funds or relied on family members, usually wives and daughters. Even committee aides were rare until the mid-nineteenth century. Only after office buildings were built adjacent to the Capitol early in the 20th century did rank-and-file members acquire personal offices. Before then, only top party leaders and committee chairs were given separate rooms in the Capitol.<sup>13</sup>

In the modern Congress, a spending bill for the legislative branch is passed each year. It specifies a certain amount of money for members' personal offices. In 1973, the Senate consolidated the various funding accounts—office furnishings, postage, stationery, and so on—into a single office expenses account to give its members flexibility in using office funds. The House followed suit in 1978.

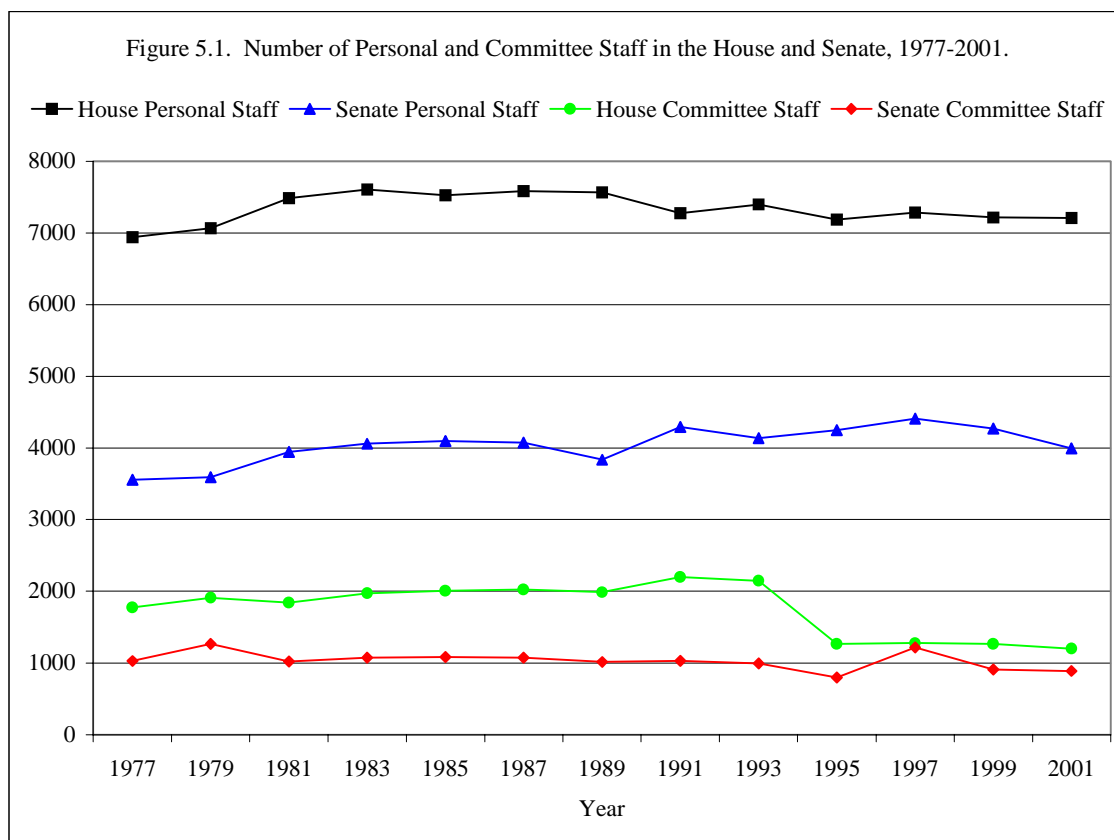
Members of both houses have their own accounts from which they pay staff assistants, office, and mailing expenses. House members each receive nearly \$1 million annually for this account and are entitled to hire up to twenty-two employees—eighteen full-time and four part-time. That limit is up from eight in 1955, ten in 1965, and eighteen in 1975. Although there are a few restrictions on how office funds may be used, representatives are largely free to allocate staff as they see fit. House members also have an official expense account, which varies from member to member depending on the cost of traveling to his or her district from Washington, long-distance phone costs to the district, and the cost of renting office space in the district.

In the Senate, there is no predetermined limit to the number of staff aides a senator can hire. Instead, the clerk-hire allowance varies according to state population. Consequently, senators from large states have many more staff assistants than do senators from small states. In addition, each senator may hire two aides to assist with committee duties. Senators also have official expense accounts to cover office, telephone, travel, and mailing costs. Increases for Senate office funding have not kept up with the rate of inflation since the early 1980s. Senators' personnel and office expense accounts average about \$3 million per year.



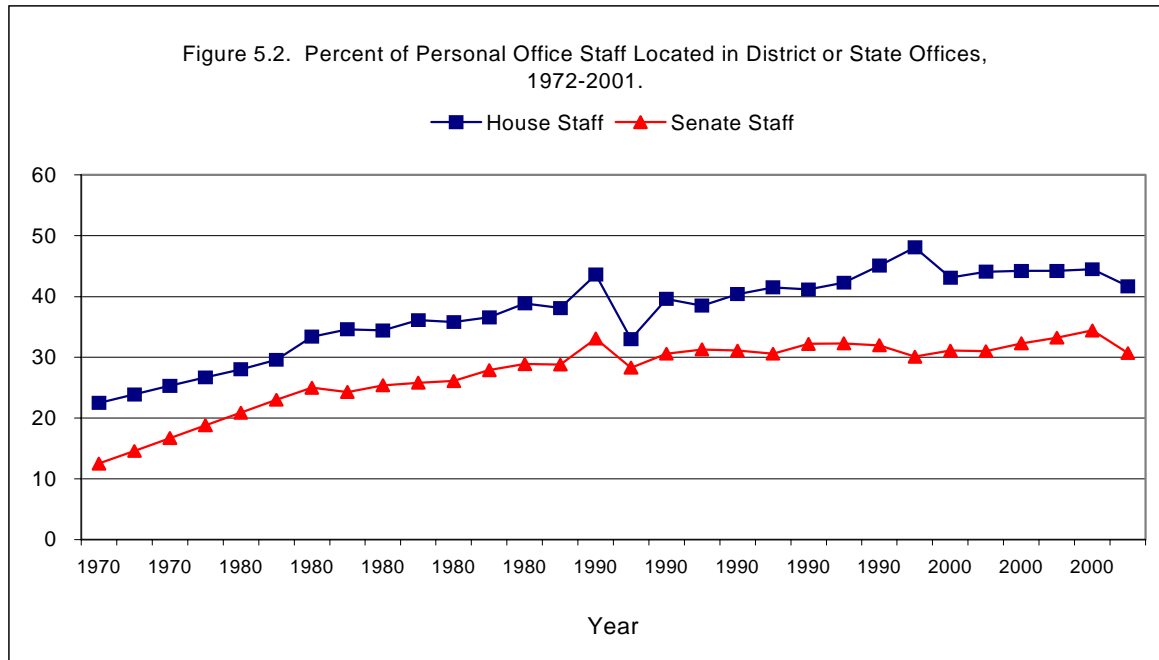
In addition to their personal staffs, many members enjoy sizable staffs in their capacity as committee leaders—chairs or ranking minority members. Committee staffs are particularly important to senators, nearly all of whom are committee or subcommittee leaders. From time to time, members shift staff between their committee and personal offices in response to changing priorities. The combined personal and committee staffs responsible to a member can be quite large. A large-state senator who chairs a committee can have more than one hundred staff assistants reporting to him or her.

The total number of congressional staff workers has been climbing steadily since the 1930s, as shown in Figure 5.1.<sup>14</sup> The number of congressional staff has leveled off since the early 1990s. Personal and committee staffs expanded greatly in the 1960s and 1970s but have remained stable since the early 1980s. In 1991, the House had a little more than 7,800 personal staff and nearly 2,200 committee staff.<sup>15</sup> The number of staff has fallen since 1994.



One of the first decisions new members face is how to divide their staff between their home and Washington offices. Since the 1960s, as the size of lawmakers' personal staffs has increased, more members have placed staff aides in their home district or state. New members led the way in exploiting larger staff allocations to develop a more visible presence at home. As seen in Figure 5.2, the percentage of personal staff working in

district or state offices has gradually increased since 1970. In recent years, just under half of the personal staff of House members and about a third of the personal staff of senators have worked in district or state offices. Members have shifted more responsibility for constituency service to their home office staffs, allowing their Washington staffs to devote more time to legislative and policy work.<sup>16</sup> Senators, with larger staffs, keep a larger percentage of their staff in Washington.



Enlarged staffs have helped members meet increased demands for casework while at the same time more vigorously pursuing their legislative activities in Washington. Of course, members still differ in how they allocate their staff resources. First-term members seeking to solidify their hold on their seat often concentrate staff in their district. Senior members, who developed their staffing practices when members could not hire as many assistants and now have greater responsibilities in Washington, often are accustomed to having fewer local offices and tend to devote more staff resources to their Washington offices. In the House, a few committee and party leaders focus their personal staffs almost exclusively on constituency service and rely on committee or leadership staffs for their legislative work.

### Travel and Recesses

Just as an increase in staff has reduced the severity of the tradeoffs members must make in setting priorities, expanded travel allowances and official recesses have enabled members to spend more time with constituents at home without fear of missing meetings or votes on Capitol Hill. Since the 1960s, the amount of time incumbents spend in their home districts and states has grown steadily.<sup>17</sup> Before 1970, for example, House and Senate members averaged about two or three days per month at home. By 1980, House members were spending an average of about ten days each month at home, and senators

spent an average of six or seven days a month at home, a pace that they have maintained since then. In general, senior members spend less time in their districts, but members of both houses and at all levels of seniority make more trips home during an election year.

Both the House and the Senate have moved to accommodate members' need to travel to their home districts and states. The House, for example, rarely holds votes on Mondays or Fridays. Members are thus free to fly home on Thursday evenings and return to Washington in time for Tuesday votes. Members of the "Tuesday-Thursday club" can thus maximize their time at home among constituents without great cost to their performance in Washington. Many members of Congress do not even own or rent homes in the Washington area because they spend only two nights a week there. Former Representative Richard Arney (R-Texas), for example, slept on a cot in the House gym for several years rather than rent a place in Washington. Representative (now Senator) James Jeffords (R-Vermont) was also known to sleep in his office.

In both houses, the number of official recess days increased significantly in the late 1960s and has remained high since then. In most years, official recesses now consume more than one hundred days, a number that does not include weekends. The houses are in session about as many hours as before, but they now concentrate their sessions into somewhat longer days. Leaders also more carefully designate recess periods. No committee markups or floor sessions are held during recesses so members know that they are free to go home.

### **Congressional Mail**

Mail is a resource members use to remain visible in their districts between elections. By placing their signature where a stamp would go on an envelope (the "frank"), member of Congress may send mail through the Postal Service. Congressional offices are given budgets for this specific purpose. Members can maintain a presence at home by sending their constituents franked mail at the taxpayers' expense. Since World War II, the amount of mail sent by House and Senate members has grown steadily. Mail totals surge during election years and then drop in off years, a pattern that reflects members' efforts to advertise themselves as elections draw near.

#### **Those Nasty Letters from Constituents<sup>18</sup>**

Most famous among the many witty responses that members and their staff have devised for constituents is the standard reply of Ohio Representative Wayne Hays:

Dear Sir:

Today I received a letter from some crackpot who signed your name to it. I thought you ought to know about this before it went further.

Some of the increase in mail flowing away of Capitol Hill in recent decades is due to an increase in opinion letters from constituents and in requests for assistance from congressional offices (casework). As the population grows and constituencies become larger, legislators must respond by mail to a larger volume of demands. But that's only part of the story. Members more actively solicit opinions and casework in their newsletters and personal appearances—they are happy to be of service to voters. Moreover, most of the increase in outgoing mail is due to the vast increases in mass mailings from members' offices to their home districts and states. In fact, by one estimate, more than 90 percent of the mail sent by Congress consists of mass mailings of newsletters.<sup>19</sup> In fact, critics of congressional incumbents frequently cite the use of the frank for campaign-related publicity as an unfair incumbents' advantage, and there is some evidence to support their view. Incumbents argue that newsletters are essential for keeping their constituents informed about members' activities as their representatives.

### **Other Resources: Party Organizations, Support Agencies**

The resources made available to legislator (at public expense) have expanded on many dimensions. A very conspicuous development is the expansion of House and Senate radio and television studios. Legislators use satellite up-link equipment to make appearances on local stations without leaving Capitol Hill. The congressional parties have their own facilities, too. These facilities are used heavily—nearly four out of five House members send regular radio programs to district stations. These programs tend to be aired mostly, if not exclusively, by small-town stations with limited budgets and staff to purchase or produce their own programming. In addition, members sometimes can convince local television stations to use video news releases beamed in from Washington.<sup>20</sup>

The addition and expansion of congressional support agencies (see the box above) has made more expertise available to members seeking assistance and advice on policy questions. The assistance of policy analysts, scholars, lawyers, and other professionals in the support agencies makes it easier for rank-and-file members without large committee staffs to write bills and amendments, conduct studies, and meet constituents' requests for information.

Members are further aided by the computerization of Capitol Hill. Information networks give members and their staff instant electronic access to the text of bills and amendments, legislative summaries and analyses prepared by the Congressional Research Service, and a variety of databases on economic and social conditions and government programs. And computers allow members to transmit large volumes of information among their Washington and home offices.

The tremendous expansion of the interest group community in Washington has also bolstered rank-and-file members' access to experts and information.<sup>21</sup> By various counts, the number of lobbyists and others employed by interest groups doubled during the 1970s and 1980s, after having grown substantially in the preceding decades. Interest groups regularly distribute information favorable to their causes and make policy and legal expertise available to friendly members. Think tanks—non-profit organizations that

produce studies and policy recommendations—also have expanded the availability of expert advice and assistance.

### **Congressional Support Agencies**

Congress has created a number of support agencies within the legislative branch to provide a variety of functions that are not conveniently provided by standing committees and their staffs. These units serve as nonpartisan servants of Congress.<sup>22</sup>

*Congressional Budget Office (CBO).* Created in 1974, CBO provides economic forecasts, cost estimates for legislation, and other fiscal policy studies. CBO works most closely with the Budget, Appropriations, and Tax committees and has more than 200 employees.

*Congressional Research Service (CRS).* Created in 1970 from the Legislative Reference Service, CRS provides policy research in nearly all policy areas and functions as a library reference service. CRS has over 700 employees. It responds to requests from committees and individual members and often lends policy experts to committees.

*General Accounting Office (GAO).* Created in 1921, the GAO audits executive branch agencies, sets government accounting standards, settles certain claims against the government, gives legal opinions, and conducts policy studies as requested by formal acts of Congress, committees, and individual members. The GAO has over 3,000 employees.

Finally, the institutional positions held by members may be their most important resource. Committee and subcommittee chairs can hold hearings to publicize themselves and their causes. Committee and party leaders acquire additional staff. And members of important committees attract campaign contributions and often gain the cooperation and assistance of lobbyists for their legislative and political projects.

### **Influences on Members**

Members act strategically. Their actions reflect not only their own goals and resources but also the actions and anticipated actions of others. Members care about other players—constituents, interest groups, party and committee leaders, presidents, and colleagues—because they are affected by what they do. Similarly, those other actors place demands on members of Congress because members have something they want: influence over policy choices affecting them. The nature of the demands placed on members is the subject of this section.

### **Constituencies**

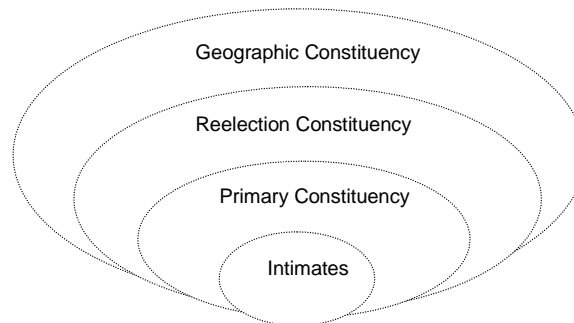
Most members share the perspective of most constituents on important issues. This connection between legislators and their constituents is perhaps the most important force in congressional politics. It originates in the process by which legislators are selected.

Voters tend to favor candidates whose views are close to their own. Liberal, Democratic districts tend to elect liberal Democrats to Congress, just as conservative, Republican districts tend to elect conservative Republicans. As a result, legislators represent their constituencies' views fairly well simply by following their own political dispositions. In this way, legislators' personal views, the views of their constituents, and even partisanship tend to be mutually reinforcing influences on members' decisions.

Nonetheless, constituents' views are an important parameter in most members' decision-making calculus. Constituents—and more specifically voters—have something members want: votes in the next election. Unfortunately, defining members' constituencies is difficult. After all, the public rarely speaks with one voice and is rarely attuned to what is going on in Congress. Fenno proposes that we see concentric circles of constituencies (see below). A member's strongest political friends (intimates) are at the center, and they are encircled by a larger group of constituents who support the member in primary elections. Next is an even larger group that supports the member in general elections but whose support is more tenuous. The entire district population stands as the fourth, or geographic, constituency. Fenno observes that legislators develop styles—home styles, he calls them—for relating to each of these constituencies.

### Members' Perceived Constituencies

Political scientist Richard F. Fenno, Jr., observes that many members view their constituencies as a set of concentric circles, ranging from their closest political confidants (the intimates) to their strongest supporters in the electorate (the primary constituency), voters who vote for them (the reelection constituency), and their whole state or district (the geographic constituency). A great source of uncertainty for members is the variable composition of the primary and reelection constituencies.<sup>23</sup>



Concern about how activities in Washington will play at home often preoccupies legislators. Members have to anticipate whether a roll-call vote or other public action will come back to haunt them in a future campaign. Party and coalition leaders, lobbyists, and presidents seeking support from a member must consider how that member's vote will be regarded back home. All participants know that high-profile issues—abortion, tax increases, social security, and congressional pay raises—always attract a more attentive

public, whose views must be considered. On some issues only a narrow constituency takes an interest, but its interest may be so intense that members are compelled to pay attention to it. On other issues—perhaps, even, on most matters that come before Congress—members need not be overly concerned about the electoral consequences of their decisions. Still, the uncertainty of electoral consequences may keep some members guessing about the political costs and benefits at home of their actions.

Representatives and senators have several ways to gauge constituents' opinions. When a particularly controversial issue comes up, a wave of letters and phone calls is likely to flood members' district and Washington offices. Much of the incoming mail takes the form of preprinted letters or cards supplied by lobbying groups. Because it takes little effort to send that kind of mail, legislators may not put much stock in it. Still, members are attentive to groups of constituents with intensely held preferences. In such cases, members usually take note of where the letters are coming from and bear in mind the level of interest expressed. Members also learn constituents' opinions during their many trips home. Most members hold town meetings or other forums to give constituents a way to express their views. While at home, attentive members are almost always asking questions of and listening to their constituents.

### **Interest Groups and Lobbyists**

For many people, lobbyists and interest groups represent the unseemly, even corrupt, side of congressional politics. “Money talks,” “the best Congress money can buy,” and “the golden rule of politics—whoever has the gold rules” —are among the clichés that capture common fears about who really runs Congress. Just where the line between legitimate representation and bribery falls is one of the ambiguities confronting every democratic system of government. On the one hand, lobbying is protected by constitutional guarantees of free speech, free association, and the right to petition the government for redress of grievances. And lobbying often involves building support for a position by bargaining, providing assistance to legislators, and even providing timely campaign contributions. On the other hand, lobbying can cross the line into bribery when cash or other material considerations are traded for certain official actions, such as introducing a bill or casting a particular vote. Although the modern Congress appears to be remarkably free of outright corruption of this sort, the whole business of lobbying seems tainted to many.

Perhaps the most important change in Washington in recent decades has been the great expansion and fragmentation of Washington's interest group community. The best study of the subject indicates that most interest groups were formed after World War II, that the formation of groups has accelerated in recent decades, and that more and more groups are locating in Washington, D.C. (see Chapter 11). Many single-issue groups have been created and nearly every industry group has professional representation in Congress. In the health care industry, for example, the older American Medical Association is joined by associations for hospitals, medical schools, medical equipment manufacturers, health insurance companies, and a variety of professional associations of nurses, dentists, and others.

Particularly noteworthy is the rise of “citizens’ groups” or “public interest groups,” groups organized around a general cause rather than a narrow economic interest. Good-government groups such as Common Cause, environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, and consumer product groups such as the Consumers’ Union are examples. About one-fifth of all lobbying groups counted in 1980 were citizens’ groups.<sup>24</sup> In addition, more corporations, state and local governments, universities, and other organizations have established Washington offices to house lobbyists.<sup>25</sup> By one estimate, the number of corporations with Washington offices increased tenfold between 1961 and 1982.<sup>26</sup> One consequence of this expansion in Washington-based representation of organized interests is that the clout of individual lobbyists and groups has actually declined.<sup>27</sup> Often, large coalitions of lobbyists and interest groups pool their resources to overcome the fragmentation in the interest group community.

### **Managing E-Mail**

Not surprisingly, large volumes of e-mail pour into Capitol Hill computer networks every day. In 2000, more than 117 million e-mail messages arrived.

When e-mail became popular in the 1990s, congressional offices were not prepared to deal with it. Most offices sent automatic responses saying that they could not respond to e-mail and the writer should send a letter by regular mail. That has changed. According to a 2001 survey of House offices, more than a quarter of members’ offices were responding to e-mail with individualized e-mail responses. More than half of congressional offices are asking writers to use an on-line web form to communicate. Web forms reduced the volume of spam—junk mail and mass mailings from interest groups.<sup>28</sup>

### **Party Leaders**

Party pressures in congressional politics are weaker in the United States than in most other national legislatures. Representatives and senators rarely are dependent on national party organizations—national or local—to secure reelection. And party leaders in Congress have relatively few ways to compel rank-and-file members to comply with their wishes. Indeed, party leaders generally want their party colleagues to pursue legislative strategies that will enhance their chances of reelection. When members of a congressional party vote in unison, it is due more to their shared policy views and similar constituency expectations than to pressure from party leaders.

Still, partisan pressures are ever-present in Congress. Many decisions members make have no direct electoral consequences so members are free to meet the demands of party leaders. Moreover, much of the influence of party on legislators’ behavior is indirect. For example, party leaders set the floor agenda and, particularly in the House, shape the alternatives from which members must choose. But occasionally, particularly on close



votes, the direct pressure of party leaders can be critical. Even then, the leaders target just a few members whose votes will make the difference between winning and losing.

### **The President**

Presidents need support from legislators for their own legislative programs, and they can wield considerable influence in their efforts to gain it. Much of the support presidents get from lawmakers comes from their partisan ties to members. Because members' own electoral fortunes are affected by the popularity of the president, members of the president's party have a stake in the president's success and thus provide a natural base of support. The size of that base of support depends on past congressional election outcomes, the diversity within party coalitions, and the president's popularity. Every member must decide when to stick with the president and when it is safe to ignore the president's wishes.

Presidents also influence members' choices by influencing the congressional agenda. By pushing major legislative proposals, presidents can help define the issues that dominate the congressional agenda and how the major alternatives are debated. A successful president draws the attention of the media, the public, and legislators away from issues that hurt him and toward issues that help him. An effective president also knows that his influence over the congressional agenda is tenuous. Presidents, after all, cannot require either house of Congress to vote on their proposals. And they certainly cannot require that members take their proposals seriously.

The task of presidents is primarily one of persuasion. Presidents have a variety of tools for influencing individual legislators (see Chapter 9). Presidents' primary source of influence is their formal power to sign or veto legislation, which gives them a source of leverage over members who want to see their own legislation enacted into law. Presidents' ease of access to the media gives them an advantage over members and other players in shaping public opinion. In addition, their influence on agency decisions that affect many interests gives presidents more clout. That clout can be used to coax interest groups to work in support of presidents' legislative proposals or to prod legislators whose constituents are affected by executive branch decisions.

### **Staff**

A popular theory is that members of Congress have been captured by their staffs. Michael Malbin's book, *Unelected Representatives*, lends credence to this view. Malbin, a political scientist who worked for many years as a Capitol Hill reporter and staff member, argues that "the staffs—individually well educated, hard working, and, in general, devoted to what they perceive to be the public good—collectively create a situation in which many of the elected members fear they are becoming insulated administrators in a bureaucratized organization that leaves them no better able to cope than they were when they did all the work themselves."<sup>29</sup> Malbin observes that staff assistants do a good job of representing their bosses; but, he continues, members delegate to their aides too much authority to initiate legislation, negotiate compromises, and narrow the range of policy choices offered to them. Staff assistants have created more work for members, distanced members from one another, and turned members into office

managers. Staff influence is pervasive: It is felt both in the early stages of the legislative process, in the setting of members' and committees' agendas, and at the late stages, when the final details of legislation are worked out.

### **Congressionally Speaking . . .**

Most members of Congress have a few staff assistants in their personal offices dedicated to *casework*, the term used to describe constituents' problems that members are asked to solve. Casework ranges from getting a problem with social security checks solved to arranging for a leave for a soldier who just had a death in the family. The staff assistants in charge of handling casework are usually called *caseworkers*. Caseworkers often are located in district or state offices where they can deal with constituents in person and from where they correspond to departments and agencies phone, email, and fax.

Staff assistants who respond to mail are often called *legislative correspondents* (LCs) and those who are responsible for legislative work are *legislative assistants* (LAs). The top personal aide to a member is usually called an administrative assistant (AA), or sometimes a chief of staff.

### **Choosing Strategies**

Political scientists have no comprehensive theory to explain how members' goals, resources, and political environment combine to produce their strategies. Nevertheless, they have done a reasonably good job of describing and explaining members' behavior in one decision-making arena: roll-call voting on the floor. A newer area of research looks at policy leaders' coalition-building strategies, where the focus is on how members solicit support from their colleagues. This section briefly reviews what we know about the typical member's approach to roll-call voting and coalition leadership and contrasts the strategies in these two areas of legislative activity.

#### **Roll-Call Voting on the Floor**

Casting roll-call votes is one activity members consider to be mandatory. Every member wants a good attendance record so that future opponents will not be able to say that he or she is shirking on his responsibilities. Maintaining a good attendance record is not easy, and maintaining a perfect record is nearly impossible. In recent Congresses, the average member voted on about 95 percent of the roll-call votes held, which have numbered between five hundred and one thousand per Congress. Plainly, members are forced to cast votes with such frequency that they cannot possibly study each issue with care. Yet they are aware that they may have to explain their vote to some constituents, perhaps in response to a challenger's charges in some future campaign, or to some party or committee leader. Therefore, most members develop a general strategy for how to approach roll-call voting.

From time to time, members are confronted with particularly difficult choices. A few years ago, Senator Terry Sanford (D-North Carolina) was once torn between appeals from his party and from the White House concerning whether to vote to override President Ronald Reagan's veto of a highway funding bill. As the roll-call vote proceeded, it became obvious that the outcome would turn on Sanford's vote. If Sanford sided with his own party's leadership, the veto would be overridden, and the president would suffer an important defeat.

Sanford's response was indecision of the most embarrassing sort. First he voted "present." Then he voted with the president. But just before the voting was closed, he reversed his position and turned the president's victory into a defeat. The Senate's television cameras captured Sanford's anguish, and the tape of Sanford was replayed on C-SPAN and a few television news programs. The great drama of Sanford's predicament is not a common occurrence, but members are frequently called on to cast difficult votes.

Political scientist John Kingdon conducted an ingenious study of the vote decision.<sup>30</sup> Kingdon interviewed members about how they had made up their minds on a series of fairly important votes on controversial issues that had been the subject of substantial political activity. Kingdon asked a simple question about each vote: "How did you go about making up your mind?" He then noted whether the members mentioned their constituencies spontaneously, only in response to a follow-up question, or not at all. For most members, the votes concerned issues that fell under the jurisdiction of committees on which they did not sit. Thus, most members interviewed by Kingdon had not had the benefit of listening to expert testimony in hearings.

Members' responses to Kingdon's questions show several important patterns (see Table 5.1 below). First, constituency considerations are nearly always present but are not always the most important factor. Members mentioned constituencies spontaneously 37 percent of the time, less frequently than they mentioned fellow members but more frequently than they mentioned any other group of players. Members mentioned constituencies in response to probes 50 percent of the time and failed to mention constituencies altogether only 13 percent of the time, far less than they left out any other set of players.

Kingdon also found that the more salient the issue, the more likely members were to consider constituents' wishes to be of major importance in making their decisions and the more likely they were to vote in agreement with the constituency opinion they identified. Nevertheless, even on issues of low or medium salience, members were likely to give weight to, and vote in agreement with, constituency opinion.<sup>31</sup>

On most issues, members rely on trusted colleagues for cues about how to vote. In response to Kingdon's questions about their voting decisions, members mentioned their colleagues either spontaneously or after prompting 75 percent of the time (Table 5.1). As one member noted, "On a run-of-the-mill vote, on an obscure bill, you need some guidance. You don't know what's in it, and don't have time to find out."<sup>32</sup> That is, fellow

members serve as informants who reduce uncertainty about the policy and political implications of a roll-call vote.

Table 5.1. The Frequency with Which Members Mentioned Political Actors as Being Involved in Their Roll-Call Vote Decisions. <sup>33</sup>					
	Political Actors Involved in Vote Decision				
	Constituency	Fellow Members	Interest Groups	Administration	Party Leaders
Mentioned spontaneously	62%	13%	25%	35%	60%
Mentioned in response to a question	37	40	31	25	10
Not mentioned	50	35	35	14	28

With so many staff assistants and lobbyists circulating on Capitol Hill, why do members rely so heavily on one another? Members turn to certain colleagues because they trust that their fellow representatives and senators, professional politicians with problems similar to their own, will make comparable calculations about which course of action to pursue. Indeed, members tend to rely on colleagues with known expertise in a specific area (such as committee members), colleagues with greater experience than themselves, and, perhaps most importantly, colleagues with whom they generally agree.

Members also tend to rely on colleagues from the same party, state, and region—colleagues who can help them assess the electoral consequences of voting one way or the other. In addition, fellow members often have the advantage of being at the right place at the right time—on the floor as roll-call votes are being conducted.

Members obtain guidance from fellow members in many ways. One way is to read the “Dear Colleague” letters that are routinely sent to all members, explaining bills and soliciting support for amendments. These letters are usually concise arguments in favor of a bill, and they often explain how a bill’s opponents plan to distort the bill’s true intent. For more detailed information on a bill, members or their staffs are likely to turn to the written reports that accompany most bills when they are reported by committee.

Members also talk informally to colleagues on the floor or in the cloakroom prior to voting, and these interactions often help them decide how to vote. Of course, members can also observe chamber proceedings on closed-circuit television in their offices, picking up cues on how to vote from the floor debate. And it is not uncommon for a House member to check the electronic voting board to see how certain colleagues are voting. Senators often check with colleagues, leadership staff, or the voting clerk to find out how trusted colleagues have voted before seeking recognition to cast their votes.

### **A Profile in Courage?**

On October 16, 1990, Senator Boschwitz was one of 34 senators to vote against a conference report on a controversial civil rights bill. With a vote of 62-34, the bill passed but was three votes short of the support needed to override an anticipated veto by President Bush. As presented to the president, the bill would have reversed several Supreme Court decisions that made it tougher for workers to challenge discriminatory employment practices. As expected, President Bush vetoed the bill, calling it a “quota” bill.

Then, with only a couple of weeks to go before the 1990 midterm congressional elections, Senate leaders brought the bill back before the chamber to try to override the veto. As the voting began, all eyes were on a few senators who might switch their votes to defy the president. As the balloting drew to a close, it appeared that the Senate would not muster enough votes to defeat the president.

Senator Boschwitz was slow to cast his vote. Facing an unexpectedly strong challenger in his campaign for a third term and with the election only weeks away, Boschwitz was torn by the vote. If he voted to sustain the president, he faced considerable criticism from his challenger, Paul Wellstone. If he voted to override the president, he risked disappointing his president, as well as charges that he changed his position in a political ploy to get votes before the election.

What does a senator with a tough re-election fight and a record of loyalty to the president do? He waits until the last possible moment. Boschwitz knew it would take sixty-seven votes to override the president. When it was clear that he could vote to override the bill without tipping the balance against the president, he switched his position and cast the sixty-sixth vote in favor of an override. The override effort failed, Bush maintained his perfect veto record, and Boschwitz? He lost in an upset on election day to challenger Wellstone, who did not let Boschwitz’s political flip-flop go unnoticed. (Wellstone died in a plane crash just before the 2002 elections.)

As Kingdon notes, members are more likely to turn to colleagues for voting cues on less important matters than they are to seek guidance on controversial issues. On more important issues, members are likely to hold established views, and they are likely to be inundated with information from many sources. Lobbyists and administration officials, along with newspaper reporters and columnists and radio and television commentators,

are likely to provide more information than many members can absorb. Senator Sanford seemed positively bewildered by the contradictory advice he was receiving on the highway bill.

Table 5.1 indicates that, after constituents and fellow members, interest groups and the administration rank as the most important influences on members' voting decisions. Most interest group influence, Kingdon found, came from groups connected to members' constituencies. For example, farm groups played an important role for members from agricultural districts. Presidential influence is greater for members of the president's party—members who are politically connected to the president and have the highest stakes in the president's success.

Finally, party leaders and staff aides appear to have influence only at the margins. In more recent years, party leaders probably have become more important than Kingdon found in the late 1960s, when he conducted his study. (Chapter 6 describes the revitalization of party leadership in Congress.) Similarly, as roll-call votes have become more numerous, other burdens on members' time have grown, and staffs have expanded in the decades since Kingdon's study, members may have become more dependent on staff assistants for guidance.<sup>34</sup>

In summary, members adopt strategies in response to the unique character of individual voting decisions. Roll-call voting is repetitive, very public, consumes little time and few resources, is well documented, and is considered politically compulsory. Members rely on cues from colleagues to simplify their decision-making process and assess the political risks of specific votes. Members appear to be heavily influenced by constituency opinion and electoral considerations, which they assess by seeking advice from trusted colleagues and information from interest groups. At the same time, however, constituency considerations are seldom the sole or even the decisive influence on members' votes.

### **Coalition Leadership**

Serving as a coalition leader on a legislative issue lies at the other end of the spectrum of legislative activities. In contrast to roll-call voting, assuming a leadership role on an issue may not be very visible to the general public, is difficult to document, consumes more time and resources, and is normally discretionary. Consequently, the strategies of policy leaders may be shaped by a quite different mix of considerations than are voting decisions.

Political scientist David Mayhew observes that the goal of reelection, although nearly universally held by members, motivates little leadership activity within Congress. The effort to mobilize colleagues for or against legislation is worthwhile for a reelection-oriented member only if constituents or important financial contributors are paying close attention to the member's behavior. On most matters, merely advertising one's position and token efforts—citing speeches made, legislation introduced, and amendments offered—may be all that is required to receive maximum electoral benefit from an issue. Certainly members do not actually have to win legislative battles as long as the people

who affect their reelection prospects—people with votes, money, or endorsements—believe they have put up a good fight.<sup>35</sup>

If Mayhew is right—and we think he is—most genuine leadership is motivated by goals beyond reelection. A member aspiring to higher office may seek special distinction and media attention by championing a legislative cause. A committee chair, seeking to preserve a reputation for influence, may assume the lead in writing legislation and soliciting support simply to avoid being overshadowed by a rank-and-file member who would otherwise take over. That same rank-and-file member may pursue a policy leadership role because no one else seems equally committed to his or her policy views.

Senator Pete Domenici (R-New Mexico), who is a prominent legislator in budgeting and fiscal policy, is a good example of a policy leader motivated by objectives beyond reelection. Fenno, in his book about Domenici's rise as a Senate leader, explains:

From the beginning of his Washington career, Pete Domenici's most transparent goal was to become a policy-making "player" inside the Senate. The chairmanship [of the Budget Committee] brought him that influence. His first two years in that position, he said later, "made me a senator." He wanted to keep or expand the policy influence he had gained. A second goal—institutional maintenance—has been imposed on him by this chairmanship. And Domenici adopted that one, too—to protect and to preserve the budget process itself. The two goals did not always lead to the same decision.... In the two years ahead, he would often be forced to choose between his desire for inside policy influence and his desire to keep the budget process alive.<sup>36</sup>

Domenici's reelection prospects, Fenno recounts, were greatly enhanced by his prominence in the Senate, and he won reelection easily in 1984 and 1990. Domenici's success as Budget Committee chair led him to run for party leader in late 1985, but Robert Dole won the post.

Domenici's story seems typical in many respects. Electoral concerns did not seem to drive his leadership activity in Washington, even though that activity paid dividends at home. Similarly, Domenici's run for the top party leadership spot did not appear to drive his strategies as Budget chair, although his service as chair positioned him for the leadership race. Thus, partly by good fortune and partly by personal skill and dedication, Domenici's multiple goals of obtaining influence, making good public policy, and gaining reelection were served by his leadership activities. And yet his goal of reelection cannot account for the priority he gave to his chairmanship and the legislative tactics he pursued as chairman.

Some relevant evidence about members' goals in pursuing leadership responsibilities is available. In 1985, a political scientist asked top legislative aides of a sample of 121 members of both houses to identify issues on which their boss had taken a central leadership role and to offer explanations for their boss's involvement in those issues.<sup>37</sup> All aides reported that their boss had taken a leading role on some issue, large or small. But few members had taken on more than two or three issues at one time. Senators' aides tended to mention more issues than did representatives' aides, reflecting important

differences between the two chambers. In the Senate, members have more committee assignments and staff, and they receive more demands from larger, more diverse constituencies.

For each issue the aides mentioned, the researcher asked them, “Why did (Senator/Representative ———) take the lead on this issue?” They often mentioned several reasons. For 52 percent of the issues mentioned, they noted the importance of the issue to the member’s district or state, although for only 17 percent was reelection or some other constituency-related reason the sole motivation mentioned. For 72 percent of the instances of policy leadership described, the aides mentioned their boss’s personal interest or policy commitments as a motivating factor. In addition, 28 percent of the issues pursued by members were related to their responsibilities as committee or subcommittee leaders. Just 3 percent of the instances of policy leadership were described as being connected to a member’s pursuit of higher office.

We are led to this conjecture: Leaders—whether they are party, committee, or self-identified coalition leaders—are motivated by more than reelection, whereas their followers are motivated primarily by reelection. Followers, most of whom are not sufficiently motivated to assume a leadership role on most issues, allow their default goal—reelection—to orient their behavior. Of course, if members’ reelection prospects seem unaffected by a particular issue, as they often are, they are free to pursue policy positions for other reasons. Leaders must devise strategies that account for the full mix of goals potential followers may pursue. To do otherwise would be to risk losing support that might be critical in committee, at the Rules Committee, on the floor, or in conference. Nevertheless, it seems fair to say, coalition building on most important issues typically involves interaction between policy- or influence-oriented leaders and reelection-oriented followers.

Concluding that members ignore their reelection interests when they pursue other objectives would be a mistake. On the contrary, members often discover issues that fit them well—issues that allow them to simultaneously pursue multiple goals, including reelection. Indeed, 47 percent of the staff assistants in the 1985 study readily identified more than one goal served by their boss’s policy leadership activities. Forty-eight percent reported that reelection in combination with some other goal, usually good public policy, motivated policy leadership activities.

A good example of a member who discovered an issue that fit is former senator Dan Quayle (R-Indiana), who was vice president under President George Bush (1989-1992). In the mid-1980s, congressional liberals were pushing legislation designed to reduce the effect of political influence on decisions about the acquisition of military equipment, to introduce more competition into the process of bidding for defense contracts, and to limit the ability of former Department of Defense officials to take jobs in defense industries. Quayle was chair of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Defense Acquisition Policy, so the task of resisting the liberal onslaught and developing legislation acceptable to the Republican administration fell to him. Quayle had become the chair of the



procurement subcommittee in 1983 because more senior Republicans had chosen other subcommittee chairs.

Two considerations appeared to motivate Quayle's initial eagerness to take on procurement reform. The first was his concern that bad publicity about procurement practices might undermine the nation's commitment to defense spending, which he had worked to increase in the early 1980s. The issue was getting some media attention because of a few highly publicized cases of wasteful defense spending (a \$700 toilet seat for a military transport plane, for example). The second was his interest in reinforcing his developing reputation as an effective legislator. He saw an opportunity to assume a leading role on an emerging issue, and he took it. Quayle asked the Armed Services Committee chairman, John Tower (R-Texas), to create a task force on procurement, which he then chaired and later turned into a regular subcommittee. Taking the lead and being reasonably successful were important to Quayle for reasons beyond his reelection prospects. He devoted considerable personal time, as well as the time and energy of his senior aides, to the issue.

Quayle soon saw new angles to the procurement reform issue. Developing his own reform legislation, which Quayle did, was a good way to score political points at home. Quayle also realized that Indiana had a number of defense contractors and subcontractors whose business might be affected by radical reforms. By working to protect Indiana businesses and jobs, Quayle was doing himself a favor. In a press release issued just before the 1986 election, Quayle's press secretary listed eight major accomplishments of Quayle's first term. The seventh was this:

Senator Quayle had consistently supported the long-overdue strengthening of our national defense to meet the threat to our freedom. The help he has provided Indiana defense contractors and subcontractors in their dealings with Congress and the Pentagon has contributed substantially to the Hoosier State's economic development over the past six years; during that period, Indiana's share of defense procurement dollars has more than doubled—from \$1.43 billion in FY 1980 to \$3.16 billion in FY 1985. Quayle also succeeded in protecting the jobs of more than 800 federal workers in the drive to reform the Pentagon's purchasing practices to make sure our essential investment in national security is prudently managed.<sup>38</sup>

Pairing support for more defense spending with the procurement reform effort allowed Quayle to deflect Democratic criticism that he and other Republicans were throwing money at defense. The paired issues were mentioned in radio and television ads as well. The procurement issue was not given the highest priority in Quayle's advertising, but he obviously found a way to use his Washington activity effectively at home. In addition, taking the lead on more moderate reforms than those proposed by liberal Democrats yielded an influx of campaign contributions from defense contractors.

Just as important, Quayle soon developed a personal interest in procurement politics and policies. Mastering procurement procedures, mediating bureaucratic battles within the Department of Defense, and dealing with powerful defense contractors proved

challenging. He appeared to develop a personal commitment to devising good reform legislation.

Assuming a policy leadership role, then, is far more discretionary than casting a roll-call vote. In addition, taking a leadership role on an issue requires an investment of resources far in excess of those involved in casting a vote. Members cannot afford to take on more than a handful of issues at a time. Because such efforts may have only small direct electoral benefits and take up time and resources that could be devoted to other activities, the potential value of the effort must be high in terms of policy objectives, personal influence or reputation, or other goals.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have viewed the legislative process from the perspective of the individual member. Members' goals, resources, and strategies combine to shape their policy positions and political careers. We have seen how those goals, resources, and strategies evolve as a function of members' own choices, changes in members' institutional positions, and the evolution of Congress's political environment.

The roll-call voting and policy leadership examples in this chapter illustrate the two broad political purposes of members' strategies—avoiding blame and claiming credit. Avoiding blame seems to be the dominant situation in roll-call voting. The fact that roll-call voting is politically mandatory creates many hazards for members. Particularly in the House, where individual members have little control over the issues on which they must vote, members must frequently choose between groups of constituents in casting their votes. In contrast, claiming credit is the more dominant motivator in policy leadership. Senator Quayle's experience with procurement reform illustrates how goals, resources, and strategies can be combined opportunistically and give a member more control over the choices he or she confronts.

Since the late 1970s, members' opportunities for policy leadership have declined as budget constraints have limited new policy initiatives. Most members have not been as lucky as Senator Quayle. As a result, members have found that it is more difficult to counter the inevitable criticisms associated with voting by promoting one's own legislative successes. It certainly has contributed to the greater dissatisfaction with service in Congress that members have expressed in recent years and has intensified pressure on leaders to structure floor decision making more carefully.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Representative David Price (D-North Carolina) reports that on his first visit to Washington as an elected member of Congress, he “plunged immediately into a series of briefings on everything from ethics to setting up an office to survival techniques for families.” David E. Price, *The Congressional Experience: A View from the Hill* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Congressmen in Committees* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), Chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher J. Deering and Steven S. Smith, *Committees in Congress*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1997), Chapter 3; Richard L. Hall, “Participation and Purpose in Committee Decision Making,” *American Political Science Review* 81 (March 1987), pp. 105-127.

<sup>4</sup> David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Price, *The Congressional Experience*, p. 146.

<sup>7</sup> See Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978).

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Craig Winneker, “That Was The Year That Was . . . Whew!” *Roll Call*, December 21, 1992, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Learning to Legislate: The Senate Education of Arlen Specter* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1991), pp. 44-45.

<sup>10</sup> As quoted in Deering and Smith, *Committees in Congress*, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *The Making of a Senator: Dan Quayle* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1989), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Robert H. Salisbury and Kenneth A. Shepsle, “U. S. Congressman as Enterprise,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 6 (November 1981), pp. 559-576.

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed analysis of congressional staff, see Harrison W. Fox, Jr., and Susan Webb Hammond, *Congressional Staffs: The Invisible Force in American Lawmaking* (New York: Free Press, 1977); and Michael J. Malbin, *Unelected Representatives: Congressional Staff and the Future of Representative Government* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

<sup>14</sup> Figures 5.1 and 5.2 are adapted from Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin, eds., *Vital Statistics on Congress, 2001-2002* (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 2002), pp. 126, 129.

<sup>15</sup> John Pontius, “House of Representatives’ Staff (Personal, Committee, and Others), Selected Years, 1945-1991,” CRS Report, Congressional Research Service, September 18, 1992.

<sup>16</sup> On staff allocation since 1960, see Steven H. Schiff and Steven S. Smith, “Generational Change and the Allocation of Staff in the U.S. Congress,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 8 (August 1983), pp. 457-467, and Norman J. Ornstein, Thomas E. Mann, and Michael J. Malbin, *Vital Statistics on Congress, 1989-1990* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1990), pp. 134-135. On the development of specialized roles within House personal offices, see Linda K. Kowalcky, “Congressional Staff Organization and Re-Election Strategies in the U.S. House of Representatives,” paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, Atlanta, October 5-7, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> For discussions about members’ travel and activities in the district, see Fenno, *Home Style*, and Glenn R. Parker, *Homeward Bound: Exploring Changes in Congressional Behavior* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986). Until the mid-1970s, House members were funded for a specific number of trips home. Today, both representatives and senators finance trips home out of their official expense accounts.

<sup>18</sup> From Neil MacNeil, *Forge of Democracy: The House of Representatives* (New York: D. McKay, 1963, p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> The estimate is former Senator Charles Mathias’s. See *Congressional Record*, daily ed., 97th Cong., 2d sess., December 20, 1982, pp. S15806-S15808.

<sup>20</sup> Anne Haskell, “Live from Capitol Hill,” *Washington Journalism Review*, 4 (1982), pp. 48-50. Also see Stephen Hess, *Live from Capitol Hill!* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution), pp. 33-61.

<sup>21</sup> For a summary of developments in the interest group community, see Robert H. Salisbury, “The Paradox of Interest Groups in Washington—More Groups, Less Clout,” in Anthony King (Ed.), *The New American Political System*, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1990), pp. 203-229.

<sup>22</sup> The Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) was created in 1972 to evaluate the technological feasibility of policy options and the consequences of technological developments for public policy. OTA was eliminated after the Republicans gained majority control of both houses after the 1994 elections.

<sup>23</sup> Adapted from Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), pp. 1-30.

<sup>24</sup> Jack L. Walker, “The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America,” *American Political Science Review* (June 1983), pp. 390-406.

<sup>25</sup> Robert H. Salisbury, “Interest Representation and the Dominance of Institutions,” *American Political Science Review* (March 1984), pp. 64-77.

<sup>26</sup> David Yoffie, “Interest Groups v. Individual Action: An Analysis of Corporate Political Strategies,” Harvard Business School, Working Paper, 1985.

<sup>27</sup> Salisbury, “The Paradox of Interest Groups in Washington,” pp. 203-229.

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.congressonlineproject.org/080702.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Malbin, *Unelected Representatives*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> John W. Kingdon, *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), pp. 17-23.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>33</sup> Adapted from *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*, 2nd ed., by John W. Kingdon. Reprinted by permission.

<sup>34</sup> For further discussion of the role and influence of staff, see Harrison W. Fox, Jr., and Susan W. Hammond, *Congressional Staffs: The Invisible Force in American Lawmaking* (New York: Free Press, 1977).

<sup>35</sup> Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, pp. 111-125.

<sup>36</sup> Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *The Emergence of a Senate Leader: Pete Domenici and the Reagan Budget* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1991), p. 134.

<sup>37</sup> A report on the Senate aides' responses can be found in Steven S. Smith, "Informal Leadership in the Senate," in John Kornacki (Ed.), *Leading Congress* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1990), pp. 71-83. Most respondents were members' legislative directors or administrative assistants.

<sup>38</sup> Press release, "U.S. Senator Dan Quayle: Effective Leadership for Indiana," November 3, 1986.