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STEVEN S. SMITH, JASON ROBERTS, AND RYAN VANDER WIELEN
[DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE](#) and the
[WEIDENBAUM CENTER ON THE ECONOMY, GOVERNMENT, AND PUBLIC POLICY](#)
[WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS](#)

CHAPTER SIX

PARTIES AND LEADERS

After the 2002 elections, in which Democrats lost seats in both the House and Senate, the party's leaders moved to better communicate the party's message on their legislative program and on Republican President George W. Bush. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-California) and Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota) agreed to more closely coordinate their efforts. Democratic leadership staff began to meet almost daily to set a message for the day that could be emphasized by all party leaders. Senate Democrats set up several "message teams" to promote the party's image on major issues, and Daschle asked Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-New York) and Debbie Stabenow to take the lead in working with friendly interest groups and liberal radio talk show hosts, respectively. A *New York Times* reporter observed that "having lost the Senate and failing to win back the House, Democrats are no longer burdened by the need to pass legislation and keep either chamber running smoothly."¹

The Democrats' adjustments in tactics and organization are typical of congressional parties in recent decades. Changes in their competitive situations, in their majority or minority status, and in the relationship to the president often produce new leadership approaches and elaborations of party organization. In fact, in recent years the parties have become more important avenues of participation for members, and their leaders have been more active in shaping policy outcomes. This chapter considers the nature of congressional parties, outlines their organization, and describes the activities and resources of congressional party leaders and their organizations. It concludes with a discussion of the factors contributing to the intensified partisanship of recent years.

The Nature of Congressional Parties

Congressional parties exist to serve the interests of their members. The Constitution does not mention congressional parties. Just as candidates and their supporters created electoral parties outside of Congress to more effectively compete in elections, legislators created congressional parties to serve their ends. In recent years, the four congressional parties (House Democrats, House Republicans, Senate Democrats, and Senate Republicans) have met separately before each new Congress begins, and they meet with some frequency while Congress is in session. No formal joint organization of House and

Senate Democrats or House and Senate Republicans exists, although party leaders of the two houses often discuss matters of mutual concern.

Congressional party organizations are independent of the national and state political parties.² Members of Congress have chaired and served in other capacities on the parties' national committees, but the national committees have no formal relationship with the congressional parties. And although local parties endorse candidates for Congress and members of Congress are often prominent party members at home, the parties' official nominees on the general election ballot are determined by primaries in all states. Neither the national committees nor the congressional party organizations control who gets nominated and elected to Congress. Party organizations based in Washington may recruit candidates, contribute money, and offer campaign advice and expertise. They do not have the power to prevent someone from running in party primaries.

A reasonable characterization of congressional parties is that they are relatively stable but loose coalitions of members that exist to serve the common interests of their members. Both electoral and policy interests appear to motivate party activity.

Common Electoral Interests

Members of each congressional party share a party label—a political “brand name.” The party labels hold meaning for voters and influence their decisions at the polls, so members of the same party have an incentive to build and maintain a positive reputation for their party. This collective interest encourages party members to select party leaders who work to enhance the party's image.³ Leaders do so by choosing issues to emphasize, developing public relations strategies, and working with committee leaders to shape the content of legislation. They also work more directly to aid election campaigns by raising and contributing money, making appearances at fundraising and campaign events, disseminating information, and playing a role in recruiting candidates. In election years, top leaders spend several weeks traveling to support the electoral efforts of fellow partisans.

By building a favorable party reputation, leaders help their colleagues get reelected and help their party gain and maintain majority party status. A majority party controls committee and subcommittee chairmanships, which legislators covet, has more influence over the agenda, and, with more votes, is more likely to win legislative battles. Electoral failures have caused the defeat or led to the resignation of several party leaders (see box below).

Leaders are expected to promote their party's electoral interests, but tensions sometimes arise between leaders and rank-and-file members whose personal or political interests motivate them to vote differently than leaders and other party colleagues would like. Even congressional party leaders, whose job is to rally support for their party's policy positions, are sensitive to the personal political needs of deviant colleagues. After all, most party leaders would prefer to give a deviant party member some leeway to vote as he or she chooses rather than lose that member's seat to the other party. Imperfect support for party positions is the typical pattern for most members. These differences in

members' home constituencies are an important source of conflict over party strategy within all congressional parties.

Electoral Trouble for Leaders

Members of Congress expect their leaders to guide their parties to electoral success. Major failures, or even unexpected losses, can lead to the demise of a leader, as is evident in several episodes.

After his party suffered unexpected losses in the 1998 elections, Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Georgia) took the extraordinary step of resigning from the speakership and Congress. His party had lost five seats in the House of Representatives, narrowing the Republican advantage to 223, just five more than a majority of 218. Rarely does the party opposing the president lose seats in a midterm election. In fact, 1934 is the only midterm election of the 20th century in which the president's party won additional seats. Gingrich was blamed for failing to provide needed leadership. Gingrich had become a symbol of extreme conservatism but, in the view of many Republicans, had become too timid in shaping a party message and opposing the Democratic president.

In 2002, just after his party failed to win seats in the mid-term election, Democratic Minority Leader Dick Gephardt chose not to seek reelection as the party leader. Gephardt soon announced his intention to run for president, but many viewed his decision to retire from the post as a wise move. Gephardt had served as party leader since 1994, when House Democrats lost their majority for the first time since 1954, and yet he had not managed to lead the party back to majority status. A challenge to Gephardt seemed likely after the 2002 election results were in, although Gephardt announced his retirement from the position before any serious challenge was mounted. He continued to serve in the House.

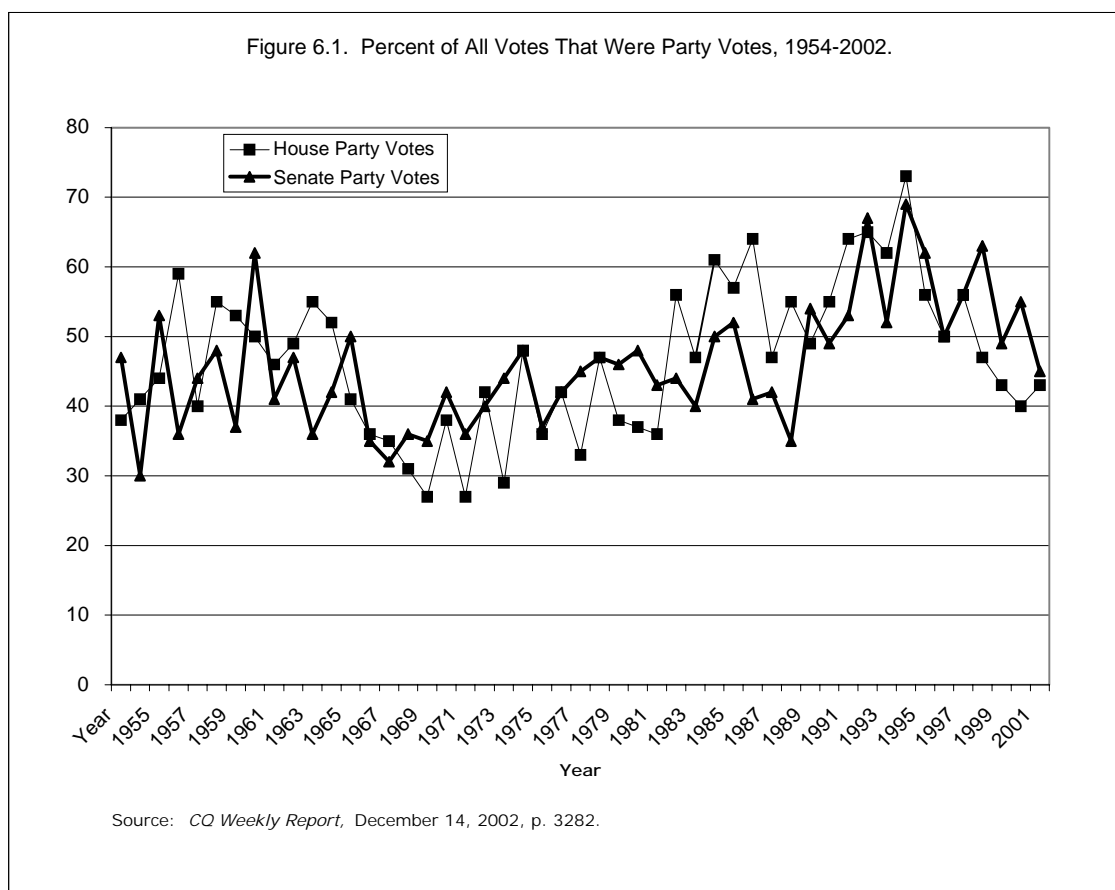
After his party regained a majority of Senate seats in the 2002 elections, Senate Republican Minority Leader Trent Lott (R-Mississippi) was expecting to become the majority leader as soon as the new Congress convened in January 2003. However, in December a video recording of Lott's comments at a birthday party for retiring Senator Strom Thurmond (R-South Carolina) was aired on television. The recording showed Lott saying that the country would have been better off if Thurmond had won the presidency when he ran in 1948. Thurmond was the pro-segregationist candidate of the Dixiecrats in 1948. It was soon learned that Lott had made similar comments two decades earlier. The public uproar caused by these disclosures led many of Lott's colleagues to conclude that he had to step down as party leader. He did (although he remained in the Senate).

Policy Preferences

Members of each party hold distinctive views on most important policy questions.⁴ The shared policy views among legislators of the same party are grounded in the

similarities in the views of their home constituencies. Democratic districts tend to produce more liberal members than do Republican districts. Shared policy views create an incentive for members to choose leaders and coordinate their strategies.

Majorities of the parties have taken opposing positions on roll-call votes about half of the time in most recent Congresses. Figure 6.1 indicates the percentage of roll-call votes that were party votes—those on which a majority of Democrats voted against a majority of Republicans. In the recent past, party voting has tended to be higher in odd-numbered years than in even-numbered years, particularly in the House. This may reflect political pressures associated with the two-year electoral cycle of the House. In the odd-numbered years immediately after congressional elections, the winning side may feel emboldened to push a highly partisan agenda. But as another election approaches, members and party leaders may avoid issues that polarize the parties and create problems at home for some members.



The percentage of party votes was relatively high in the late 1980s and 1990s. We consider this trend later in the chapter. But why aren't more votes in Congress aligned along party lines? The primary reason is that Congress addresses many programs and issues that do not involve partisan considerations, such as the merchant marine, veterans' health programs, and flood insurance. Congress considers a greater volume of

legislation—and more detailed legislation—than do most other national legislatures. Most of the legislation enacted into law each year is routine or concerns matters of little political interest. The parties are not motivated to play a role in shaping such legislation.

Even on votes that generate partisan divisions, the two parties are seldom perfectly cohesive. In most recent Congresses, an average of 70 to 80 percent of members have voted with a majority of their party on party votes—meaning that a 20 to 30 percent rate of defection is common even when party majorities oppose each other. Indeed, nothing in the way that members are elected or reelected guarantees that members of the same party will agree with one another on important issues or that Democrats and Republicans will take opposing views. To the contrary, variation in political views of members' constituencies promotes variation in the voting behavior of members of the same party. Factionalism often has made it difficult to use the party organizations to promote policy ideas and solicit support.

Factionalism Within Congressional Parties

Intra-party factionalism in Congress is reflected in the presence of named groups. In the Senate, owing to its smaller size, members appear to see less benefit and some cost in becoming associated with formally organized factions. Only the Steering Committee, the informal organization of Republican conservatives, has lasted for long.

In the House, it is easy to be overlooked by party leaders, the media, and others without banding together with colleagues with shared interests. Over the years, factions representing liberals, moderates, and conservatives have formed and reformed in both parties. For example, the Conservative Opportunity Society, formed by Newt Gingrich and others, gained notoriety in the early 1980s for challenging the House Republican leadership to become more aggressive in its opposition to the then majority party Democrats. Its current version is the Republican Study Committee, comprised of activist conservatives. Republican moderates meet weekly as the Main Street Coalition.

On the Democratic side, the most venerable factional group is the Democratic Study Group, which was organized in the late 1950s to pursue liberal causes but expanded to provide such good informational and research services that most House Democrats eventually joined it. Of more recent vintage is the New Democratic Coalition, organized in 1998 by a group of about 65 self-proclaimed centrists. In fact, the group includes members of the Blue Dog Coalition, a group descended from the Conservative Democratic Forum, which was dominated by southern Democrats in the early 1980s. The most liberal Democrats form the Progressive Caucus. In addition, the Congressional Black Caucus and Hispanics Caucus represent Democrats who generally are liberal.

Party Identification

Most members, like most political activists in the United States, are psychologically attached to their party—they identify with it. This attachment reinforces a sense of group identification and enhances group cohesiveness. And these bonds lead members to turn to party colleagues for cues on how to vote and for other forms of assistance and advice. Party leaders further strengthen party bonds by emphasizing common loyalties, policy commitments, and personal ties in their rhetoric.

Furthermore, most members of Congress face another reality: They are elected by voters who, for the most part, share their partisan affiliation. Members who vote against their party's position on substantive issues or, even worse, actively work to undermine their party's institutional position may risk a loss of support at home. Few members are willing to take such a risk. In this way, the partisan connection between a member and his or her electoral base constrains members who might otherwise work to form inter-party coalitions within their chamber.

Most Common Coalitions

Although congressional parties are not perfectly cohesive, they have an important advantage over other groups that might seek to influence legislative outcomes: They are the most common basis for building majority coalitions. Because party-based coalitions are so common, members have an incentive to organize formal party organizations and identify leaders to work on behalf of their common interests. Enduring parties acquire important institutional advantages that make it difficult for other coalitions to establish formal organizations in Congress. By using their procedural and appointment powers, as well as by making a few concessions to dissident factions, majority party leaders have been able to defuse the few intra-party disputes that have threatened party control of their chambers.

Stable But Loose Coalitions

For all of these reasons, the House and Senate depend on party leaders to perform many basic organizational functions but do not give them too much independent power. Members of the *majority* party choose the presiding officers of both chambers (the Speaker and President Pro Tempore), select committee leaders, and assume responsibility for scheduling activity at all stages of the legislative process. The parties assign members to standing committees and subcommittees as well as to all select, joint, and conference committees. The majority party in each house reserves for itself the majority of seats on nearly all committees. And within the committees, most activity is organized by party—the questioning of witnesses at hearings, the hiring of staff, even the arrangement of seats in committee rooms. The seating on the House and Senate floors is also arranged by party: The Democrats are on the left and the Republicans are on the right when facing the front desk. All in all, partisan elements pervade the organization of the modern Congress and have done so since the first half of the nineteenth century.

Yet, American congressional parties are not as strong as parties in many other national legislatures. Congressional parties in the United States are not as cohesive on

questions of public policy as are parties in other systems. U.S. congressional party leaders have little power over who is elected under their party's label and few resources to compel loyalty from members once they are in office. And state and national party leaders have no formal authority over legislators sharing their party label.

Congressional party leaders sometimes struggle to balance the diverse policy and electoral interests of their party colleagues. In their efforts to do so, they may delay action on a bill until the timing is more convenient for a legislator or urge their colleagues to be tolerant of a legislator whose political circumstances necessitate a vote against the party position. Still, there are situations when leaders seek the vote of every party member. Such situations usually involve legislation that is a high priority of a president of the same party, whose success or failure will reflect on the party, and for which there are not enough supportive members of the opposition party to muster a majority. Leaders may seek to accommodate some members, by compromising provisions of the legislation or by promising certain actions on unrelated legislation. Explicit or implicit threats of retribution for disloyal behavior are sometimes issued, typically in the form of warnings about future committee chairmanship or appointment decisions made by party committees and leaders. These tradeoffs reflect both the loose organization and discipline of congressional parties and the long-term importance of party affiliations to members.

Party Organizations

Each of the four congressional parties (two in each house) has three major organizational features: a caucus (or conference) comprised of all party members in the chamber, party committees, and elected and appointed leaders. All four party caucuses meet in late November or early December after each election to organize for the new Congress, which begins in January. They elect their leaders, may adopt and revise their rules, and begin to make assignments to standing committees. In recent Congresses, all four caucuses have met weekly or biweekly while Congress is in session. These meetings usually serve as forums for the discussion of party strategies. To facilitate candid discussion and avoid media reports of party infighting, caucus meetings are generally not open to the public or the press.

Congressionally Speaking . . .

Only House Democrats call their organization a *caucus*. House Republicans, as well as Senate Democrats and Republicans, call their organizations *conferences*. The difference in labels dates to the 1910s, when the House Democrats used their caucus, the so-called King Caucus, to make policy decisions and required party members to support those positions. The Democrats' binding caucus was so distasteful to House Republicans that they chose an entirely different label for their organization. Senate parties followed suit.

Each party has a set of committees. The policy committees discuss (and, infrequently, endorse) policy positions; the campaign committees provide advice and money to party incumbents and candidates; the committees on committees assign party members to standing committees. For several decades, the policy committees of the House and Senate Republicans have sponsored weekly luncheons that serve as forums on matters important to the party. Senate Democrats adopted the practice of weekly luncheons in 1990.

Party staffs provide a wide range of services to members. Services include timely reports on floor activity, briefing papers on major issues, media advice and technical assistance, newspaper-clipping services, recorded messages on current floor activity, personnel services, and limited research assistance. The Senate parties operate closed-circuit television channels that provide senators and their staffs with informative details about floor action. They also provide radio and television studios that allow senators to appear live on home-state stations. Over the last two decades, most new party leaders have found additional services to promise and deliver to the membership. As a result, the party staffs have become large and expensive, with nearly all of the funding provided through appropriations.

Table 6.1. Party Committees, 108 th Congress (2003-2004)	
<i>House Democrats</i>	
Steering	Makes committee assignments; sometimes endorses policy positions; discusses party strategy
Policy	Discusses and recommends policy proposals
Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee	Provides money and other assistance to Democratic House candidates
Organization, Study, and Review	Recommends changes in party organization and rules
<i>House Republicans</i>	
Steering	Makes committee assignments
Policy	Discusses and recommends policy proposals
National Republican Congressional Committee	Provides money and other assistance to Republican House candidates
<i>Senate Democrats</i>	
Steering and Coordination	Makes committee assignments; formulates political strategy
Policy	Recommends policy priorities; provides a forum for conference discussion; staff provides research
Technology and Communications	Handles media and public relations; staffs television system
Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee	Provides money and other assistance to Democratic Senate candidates
<i>Senate Republicans</i>	
Committee on Committees	Makes committee assignments
Policy	Discusses and recommends policy proposals; staff provides research
National Republican Senatorial Campaign	Provides money and other assistance to Republican Senate candidates

Party Leaders

The Constitution provides for presiding officers in Congress but says nothing about parties or leaders. It provides that the members of the House “shall choose their Speaker,” makes the vice president of the United States the president of the Senate, and requires that the Senate select a president pro tempore (“president for the time being”) to preside over the Senate in the absence of the vice president. Although the Constitution does not require the Speaker or the president pro tempore to be members of Congress, all have been.

Only in the House is the duty of presiding officer, the Speaker, also the leader of the majority party. At the start of each Congress, the majority and minority parties nominate their top leaders for Speaker. The majority party leader is then elected on a party-line vote. In the Senate, presiding over daily sessions is normally a routine activity, so the vice president is seldom present. Since the 1940s, the majority party has named its most senior member president pro tempore. The president pro tempore is usually busy as a committee chair and assigns the duty of presiding over the Senate to junior senators of the same party.

Genuine leadership is exercised by leaders elected by the parties. All four parties choose a floor leader (known as a majority or minority leader), assistant floor leader (or whip), conference chair, and other leaders. The majority party in the House effectively chooses the Speaker, who is always elected in a contest between the two parties’ top leaders on a party-line vote at the start of each Congress.

In addition to the top leaders, shown in Table 6.2, congressional parties have created a large number of minor leadership positions, most appointed by elected leaders. For example, House Democrats have an Assistant to the Democratic Leader, who is supposed to assist the leader in developing policy and public relations strategies, and a Co-Chair and three Vice-Chairs of the Steering Committee, which makes committee assignments. Each of these positions gives top leaders opportunities to reward supporters and key party groups (women, minorities, conservatives) with a position. Holding one of these positions allows the legislator to advertise at home that he or she is a part of the senior leadership.

Major Responsibilities of Party Leaders

No specific statements about party leaders’ jobs can be found in chamber or party rules. Rather, leaders’ responsibilities have developed in response to their colleagues’ expectations that leaders must promote the common electoral and policy interests of their parties. These responsibilities are primarily assigned to the top leader in each party, although the burden is shared among the top three or four leaders in each party.⁵

Table 6.2. Top Party Leaders, 108th Congress (January 2003).

<i>House Republicans</i>	
Speaker	Dennis Hastert, Illinois
Majority Leader	Tom DeLay, Texas
Majority Whip	Roy Blunt, Missouri
Conference Chair	Deborah Pryce, Ohio
Conference Vice Chair	Jack Kingston, Georgia
Conference Secretary	John Doolittle, California
<i>House Democrats</i>	
Minority Leader	Nancy Pelosi, California
Minority Whip	Steny Hoyer, Maryland
Caucus Chair	Robert Menendez, New Jersey
Caucus Vice Chair	James Clyburn, South Carolina
<i>Senate Republicans</i>	
Majority Leader	Bill Frist, Tennessee
Assistant Floor Leader (Whip)	Mitch McConnell, Kentucky
Conference Chair	Rick Santorum, Pennsylvania
Conference Vice Chair	Kay Bailey Hutchinson, Texas
<i>Senate Democrats</i>	
Minority Leader and Conference Chair	Tom Daschle, South Dakota
Assistant Floor Leader (Whip)	Harry Reid, Nevada
Conference Secretary	Barbara Mikulski, Maryland

Building Coalitions on Legislation. Establishing a policy position on major issues, always in consultation with other party members, and building coalitions in support of party policy positions are a large part of the job of leaders. Because the majority party is often divided to some degree on controversial issues, such majorities do not automatically materialize. Rather, leaders carefully craft legislation and use various means of persuasion to try to unify their own party and attract votes from members of the opposition party to pass or block legislation on the chamber floor. Leaders also work to build majority coalitions in committees and conference committees from time to time, but they tend to be deferential to committee leaders at those stages. Party leaders are most active on the floor.

Extra-large majorities must often be mustered as well. In the Senate, sixty votes must be secured to invoke cloture on a filibuster, unless the matter concerns the Senate's standing rules, in which case a two-thirds vote (sixty-seven, if all senators vote) is required. And on a few other occasions in the Senate, such as to waive a budget restriction, a sixty-vote majority must be found. In both chambers, a two-thirds majority

of members present and voting is required to override a presidential veto. In such cases, support from at least a few minority members is usually required for the majority party leaders to win.

Managing the Floor. Managing floor activity is primarily the responsibility of the majority party leadership. This responsibility includes scheduling sessions of the houses and arranging for the consideration of individual pieces of legislation. The stark differences between House and Senate floor scheduling practices are noted in Chapter 3. In the Senate, minority members' power to obstruct proceedings requires that the majority leader work closely with the minority leader. In fact, nearly continuous consultation between the two leaders and their staffs is typical in the Senate in mid-session. A much more distant relationship between the majority and minority party leaders is found in the House. As a result, the Senate majority leader has more difficulty gaining a tactical edge by careful scheduling than does the House Speaker.

Serving as Intermediary with the President. Serving as intermediaries between the congressional party and the president has been a regular duty of party leaders since the 1930s. Leaders of the president's party normally meet with the president once a week while Congress is in session, and they often report on those meetings at party luncheons or caucuses. On matters central to the president's legislative agenda, the leaders work closely with executive branch officials to build majority support in Congress.

Congressional leaders of the president's party often have divided loyalties. Their most immediate obligation is to their congressional colleagues, but also feel an obligation to support the president. In 1990, for example, House Minority Leader Robert Michel had to choose between supporting the tax hikes endorsed by President Bush and voting with a majority of his Republican colleagues, led by Newt Gingrich, who opposed the package. Michel chose to go with the president, much to the consternation of his colleagues. The choices are seldom so stark, but tensions frequently arise as congressional leaders seek to balance the competing demands of the president and colleagues.

Leaders of the out-party—the party that does not control the presidency—meet sporadically with the president, usually to be briefed on foreign policy matters. The relationship between a president and out-party leaders is not often one of genuine consultation, for obvious reasons. Occasionally, political circumstances or personal friendship may strengthen the bond. Senate Republican leader Everett Dirksen, for example, was a confidant of Democratic president Lyndon Johnson during the 1960s, and Dirksen's support for Johnson's civil rights and Vietnam War policies was crucial to the president's legislative success.

Enhancing the Party's Public Reputation. Publicizing party views has become a central leadership responsibility in recent decades. Skillfully managing media relations is now considered an essential element of a good legislative strategy. The objective is to enable party colleagues to explain their support for party positions at home. When members then anticipate that their constituents will find their explanations credible, they are more likely to comply with their leaders' wishes. In this way, leaders reduce the

number of members who must choose between their party and their constituencies, and at the same time they enhance their party's prospects for maintaining or gaining majority control.

Serving as a party spokesperson has not always been a major duty of top party leaders. Robert Peabody's 1976 examination of leadership contests, *Leadership in Congress*, makes plain that media skills were seldom a major consideration in leadership selection in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s.⁶ Service to colleagues, mastery of the mechanics of the legislative game, and position among party factions were given greater weight. Perhaps because of their weak institutional position and lack of national media coverage, only House Republicans made media skills much of an issue in leadership contests. In general, party leaders took a back seat to committee leaders as opinion leaders on matters of policy. In fact, the leading studies on party leadership of the 1960s did not catalog service as party spokesperson or anything similar among the major functions or techniques of leaders.⁷

Expectations have changed, however. Leaders are now expected to be effective party spokespersons. The increasing importance of television as a medium of political communication, presidents' domination of television news, and the larger number of news programs seem to have intensified demand for telegenic leaders. Since the mid-1960s, out-party congressional leaders have sought and been granted time on the television networks to respond to presidential addresses. By the early 1980s, the role of party spokesperson had become so prominent as to warrant listing it among leaders' primary responsibilities.⁸

Not surprisingly, viability as a public spokesperson has been an issue in most recent contests for leadership posts. For example, the Senate majority leadership contest in 1988 seemed to turn in part on the perception that George Mitchell would be a better spokesperson for his party than would his competitors, J. Bennett Johnston (D-Louisiana) and Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii).⁹ Senator Joseph Biden noted that "the Democrats have realized the need, in the presence of the Republican administration, to have a person who can not only make the Senate function well, but who can be a party spokesman."¹⁰

Congressional party leaders realize that to compete with the president, television pundits, interest group leaders, radio talk show hosts, and other opinion leaders, all of whom actively court public opinion in an effort to generate pressure on legislators, they need media strategies of their own. All top leaders have daily contact with print, radio, and television reporters. The House Speaker and Senate leaders usually have brief press conferences before their chambers' daily sessions. They employ experienced press secretaries and speechwriters. They sometimes commission their own public opinion polls to gauge how well their party's message is being received. On a few major issues, they even create special party task forces charged with carrying out a media strategy.

Campaigning. Providing campaign support to colleagues is a regular part of leaders' activity. In 1992, for example, then Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole visited twenty-nine states to speak on behalf of colleagues and other Republican candidates in the last

two and a half months of the campaign.¹¹ Such an extensive effort is now the norm for top party leaders. Their efforts are not altruistic, of course. After all, party leaders want to see party colleagues reelected, to maintain or gain majority party status, and they hope that their kindness will be repaid in loyalty.

Leaders' support takes many forms. All leaders, and most aspirants for leadership posts, form political action committees so that they can receive contributions that can, in turn, be contributed to the campaigns of their colleagues. Candidates for leadership posts make contributions as a means of demonstrating their commitment to meeting colleagues' needs. Some of the leadership PAC operations are large with professional fundraisers and other experienced people staffing the operation. Leaders also make frequent appearances at fundraising dinners and receptions, often travel to speak at events held in members' home states and districts, offer endorsements, and sometimes solicit campaign contributions from individuals and groups on behalf of their colleagues.

Organizing the party and chamber is an important duty of party leaders. Obvious political aspects of this job include making committee assignments and appointments to various party positions. More administrative in character are the selection and supervision of chamber officers and other employees. For example, the majority party leaders in the two houses nominate the chief clerks and sergeants at arms, who then must be approved by the houses, and they share responsibility for choosing a director for the Congressional Budget Office.

Switching Parties

In late May 2001, Senator Jim Jeffords (I-Vermont) announced that he was leaving the Republican Conference, becoming an independent, and joining with the Democrats for the purpose of organizing the Senate. Since the 1880s, there have been 25 instances of party switching in the Senate, but Jeffords' move was the first time that such a switch caused a party to lose majority status in either chamber. The Senate had been divided 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans; the Republican Vice President Dick Cheney allowed the Republicans to be considered the majority party, for the Republican floor leader to be recognized by the presiding officer as the majority leader, and for the Republicans to control the committee chairmanships. Republicans attempted to keep Jeffords in the party by offering more money for education, his favorite cause, giving him a seat in the leadership circle, and granting him an exemption to the party conference rule limiting the number of terms he could serve as chair of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. The new Democratic majority gave Jeffords a committee chairmanship. In the 2002 elections the Republicans gained additional seats and reassumed majority status. Jeffords lost his chairmanship. There have been 81 instances of party switching in the House since the 1880s.

Selection of Leaders

The party caucuses elect all top leaders. The leaders are not chosen on the basis of seniority, although most recent leaders have been experienced members (perhaps the most important exception is Senate Republican leader Bill Frist of Tennessee, who was elected the top leader of his party after serving only eight years in Congress). A candidate's place among factions and regional groups within the party, record of service to colleagues, personal friendships, intelligence and policy expertise, and other factors play a role in leadership contests. As noted, skill in managing relations with the media has become increasingly important. Members who have been serving in lower party posts may be advantaged because they have been in a position to do favors for colleagues.¹²

Only in the ascension to House Speaker is there much routine in leadership selection. Since the early 1900s, and until just recently, the retirement or death of a Speaker has led to the unchallenged promotion of the majority leader to the speakership. Most recently, Speaker James Wright's resignation in June 1989 led to Thomas Foley's unanimous selection by House Democrats as the new Speaker. Foley was unanimously reelected to the post by his party colleagues in December 1990 and again in December 1992, both times just before the start of a new Congress. Newt Gingrich had been the minority whip before becoming Speaker in 1995 and was not challenged for the post by any member of his party. He became Speaker just after the retirement of his party's leader, Minority Leader Bob Michel, and just after his party gained a majority in the House in the 1994 elections.

The election of Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Illinois) in early 1999 was a special case. After Speaker Gingrich announced his resignation shortly after the 1998 elections, in which the Republicans did unexpectedly poorly, the immediate favorite to replace Gingrich was Rep. Bob Livingston (R-Louisiana). But, after the media disclosed that Livingston had an extra-marital affair years earlier, Livingston chose to resign from the House. Somewhat anxious to find a new leader, House Republicans asked Hastert, who had held only low appointive positions in the party and was not well known.

Contests for the speakership, then, have not occurred since the 1800s. For other party offices, hotly contested races are common, pitting fellow partisans against each other. The races are often filled with intrigue. They involve intense personal campaigns as the candidates go one-on-one with colleagues to solicit support. Wild speculation, personal grudges, and conspiracy are the standard fare. Leadership contests are decided in secret-ballot elections and conducted in meetings closed to reporters and the public. The behind-closed-doors campaigning and secret voting always generate a great deal of speculation and second-guessing among Washington insiders. A potentially close outcome heightens the suspense. In late 1994, for example, just after the Democrats lost their Senate majority, Tom Daschle edged out Christopher Dodd (D-Connecticut), by one vote, for minority leader.

Challenges to incumbent leaders occur only occasionally. Most incumbent leaders do the kind of job their party colleagues expect. Challenges to an incumbent tend to be particularly divisive, and even disgruntled members usually try to avoid a fight within the

party family. And, of course, taking on an incumbent may be risky. Leadership contests are expensive in terms of time and effort. Running and losing may undermine future leadership hopes, to say nothing of incurring the wrath of the winner.

House Republicans are the exception to the rule. In the mid-1960s, Gerald Ford (R-Michigan) successfully challenged incumbent House minority leader Charles Halleck (R-Indiana), but not until 1998 was another top party leader challenged. In 1998, Speaker Newt Gingrich was challenged by Bob Livingston and became the first speaker to retire under threat of a challenge from within his own party. Livingston was then elected speaker. Challenges to incumbents of second-tier party posts occur more often than to the top leaders, as when Trent Lott beat the incumbent Senate Republican whip, Alan Simpson (R-Wyoming), in 1994.

House Party Leaders

Today's House party leaders are much more visible and active than were their predecessors of the 1960s and 1970s.¹³ Personality is one reason, but more important are the demands of rank-and-file party members for aggressive, media-oriented leadership. Partly for those reasons, somewhat younger and more assertive members have been promoted to top leadership spots in recent years. And greater party cohesiveness has liberated leaders to be more pugnacious and partisan without alienating major factions within the party.

Term Limits for Leaders

House Republicans led the way among congressional parties to set limits on the number of terms a legislator could serve in a particular leadership post. Soon after they gained a majority in the 1994 elections, the House Republicans limited all party leaders to six-year terms in any given office, with the exception of the speakership for which an eight-year limit was established. They eliminated the limit on the Speaker in 2003.

Senate Republicans followed their House counterparts by setting a six-year limit for holding any leadership position with the exceptions of floor leader and President Pro Tempore for which no limit was set.

House Democrats limit their caucus chair, caucus vice chair, and elected regional whips to two consecutive terms, but do not set term limits for other party leaders.

Senate Democrats have not imposed term limits of any kind of party or committee leadership posts.

The Speaker of the House

The Speaker of the House possesses more formal authority than does any other member of Congress. House rules and precedents grant the Speaker important prerogatives concerning floor scheduling and procedures, bill referrals, and appointments to select and conference committees and various commissions. One of the Speaker's newest prerogatives is the power to remove a member from a conference committee delegation and replace him or her without the approval of the House, a power that is intended to make majority party members of a conference delegation accountable to their party's top leader.¹⁴ Republican party rules grant the Speaker control over the party's Rules Committee appointments; give him extra votes (five) in the Republican Steering Committee, where Republican committee assignments are made; and give him or her power to make appointments to party committees. A Democratic Speaker would have similar powers.

The Speaker's most important source of power is his or her control of the flow of business on the House floor. By precedent, the Speaker has the power to recognize members on the House floor. That means that the Speaker may choose to ignore members who seek recognition to call up legislation that the Speaker prefers to consider later or to block.¹⁵ Scheduling prerogatives give the Speaker control over the timing of floor action, which may affect the legislative outcomes and political impact of House votes. Among other things, the Speaker can keep from the floor legislation he or she opposes or wishes to delay. And the Speaker may use scheduling to reward friends and punish enemies.

As presiding officer and the majority party's top leader, the Speaker must exercise great discretion in making public appearances and statements. For example, Speakers make floor speeches on only a few occasions each year, for important issues and close votes. On the momentous occasions when a Speaker does speak on the floor, nearly all members are in attendance and the galleries are packed. Speakers are granted the privilege of speaking last.

Recent Speakers Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill (1977-1986), James Wright (1987-1989), Thomas Foley (1989-1994), Newt Gingrich (1995-1998), and Dennis Hastert (1999-present) have been more active in using their formal powers than were the Speakers of the middle decades of the twentieth century. The speakership gained particularly high visibility after the 1980 elections, in which Republican Ronald Reagan was elected to the White House and the Republicans gained a majority in the Senate. O'Neill, as the highest elected Democrat, became the chief strategist and spokesperson for his party. When after Reagan's initial year of great legislative success the Democrats united in opposition to the president's conservative agenda, O'Neill took the lead in challenging Reagan's program and presenting Democratic alternatives. In doing so, O'Neill was responding to the demands for leadership from the frustrated liberal rank-and-file members of his party.

O'Neill's activism paled in comparison with the boldness of his successor, James Wright, however. Upon gaining the speakership, Wright bullied committees to act quickly on a range of domestic legislation, leading Republicans to complain about a new House dictatorship. In the foreign policy arena, Wright broke through unwritten limits on

congressional involvement by negotiating directly with representatives of the contending governments and factions in Central America.

Wright resigned from the House in 1989 after the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct charged him with several violations of House ethics rules.¹⁶ Thomas Foley, who succeeded Wright, had been caucus chair, whip, and majority leader. Compared with Wright, he was less assertive, more deferential to committees, and less inclined to make partisan attacks on Republican leaders. Like O'Neill, he was unlikely to take the lead on controversial issues unless a consensus had already crystallized within his party.

Gingrich became the most proactive Speaker since the first decade of the twentieth century after he was elected to the post in January 1995. A well-developed agenda, called the Contract With America, provided an unusually concise ten-point policy platform for Gingrich. Gingrich was given much of the credit for these developments—he had championed aggressive Republican strategies in the House, coauthored the Contract With America, raised money, and recruited candidates to challenge the incumbent Democratic majority. Gingrich, backed by his House Republican colleagues, became the leading spokesman for his party, dominated the selection of committee leaders and other committee appointments, directed the actions of committees, set the floor agenda, and pushed legislation associated with the Contract With America through the House in the first one hundred days of the 104th Congress (1995-1996).¹⁷

Gingrich's speakership ended in political tragedy. It began with his 1995 strategy to hold hostage debt ceiling increases and funding for executive departments in order to get President Bill Clinton's approval of the Republican's budget plan. Clinton refused to budge and eventually the Republican Congress accepted Clinton's compromise legislation. The episode produced sharply weaker approval ratings for Gingrich in public opinion polls and much stronger ratings for Clinton. After that point, Gingrich became far less aggressive, setting aside his confrontational strategies. Following Clinton's reelection in 1996, Gingrich maintained a low public profile and appeared to be somewhat less heavy-handed in directing the work of the House, an approach which has received mixed reviews from his colleagues. In the summer of 1997 there was serious discussion among senior Republicans of replacing him. Gingrich continued to be subject to criticism for ineffective leadership, and he eventually resigned his post when challenged by Bob Livingston in the aftermath of the 1998 elections.

In 1995, the Republicans instituted a new House rule limiting the number of consecutive terms that a member may serve as Speaker. In December 1994, newly elected Republicans proposed a three-term limit for the Speaker, just as they proposed for committee chairs. At Gingrich's insistence, they approved a four-term limit instead, which was incorporated into the House rules in January 1995. Gingrich, of course, didn't survive long enough for the rule to apply.

Hastert's style contrasts sharply with Gingrich's, at least at first. Hastert consulted more frequently with his fellow partisans and granted more independence to committee

chairs. He successfully healed some of the rifts among Republicans left from the Gingrich years, and, for awhile, he held regular meetings with the Democratic leader. He campaigned endlessly for his colleagues, earning their respect and indebtedness, and, in the view of some observers, used this support to gain the upper hand with other party and committee leaders.

However welcome Hastert's more accommodating style was initially, he soon faced criticism from fellow partisans for trying too hard to work with Democrats and allowing committee chairs too much leeway in devising legislation and setting legislative strategies. By late 2002, Hastert became more aggressive in his enforcement of party loyalty. He denied committee chairmanships and choice committee assignments to several Republicans who had opposed the leadership position on campaign finance reform, patients' bill of rights, and other issues. He endorsed Majority Leader Tom Delay's (R-Texas) proclamation that a Republican member of the party's organization who voted against the party on any procedural matter would be excused from service. In 2003, the Republicans' package of House rules changes dropped the eight-year term limit for a Speaker.

The Legacy of 9-11 for House Rules

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led members of Congress to worry about how the institution would function if an attack on the Capitol complex killed a large number of legislators. In 2002, the resolution providing for the adjournment of the 107th Congress provided that representatives and senators designated by the Speaker and Senate majority leader be allowed to call Congress into session in the event that those two leaders were killed or incapacitated. Without the provision, only the president could have called the Congress into special session, as the Constitution provides, but legislators believed that Congress should be prepared to act as an independent branch of government. In January 2003, the House adopted three rules to address such a possibility. One rule requires the Speaker to establish a list of members who, in order, could serve as Speaker Pro Tem if the Speaker died or was incapacitated. This would allow the House to convene to elect a new Speaker. A second rule allows the Speaker to recess the House if there is an imminent threat to members' safety. Previously, the Speaker was not allowed to recess the House if business was pending. A third rule allows the Speaker to lower the number of members counted for the purposes of a quorum when a member dies, resigns, or is expelled. Without the change, a majority of the 435 possible members would have to be present for the House to conduct business. The new rule allows the total possible to be reduced to the number of seats that have (live) incumbents.

House Floor Leaders

Both House parties elect a floor leader—that is, a majority leader or a minority leader—at the start of each Congress. As the label suggests, floor leaders are the chief spokespersons for their parties on the House floor. The majority leader is considered the second-ranking leader of the party, just behind the Speaker. The minority leader is the minority party's top leader and is always that party's (losing) nominee for Speaker at the beginning of each Congress.

For the Republicans, the majority leader is an *ex officio* member of the party's Committee on Committees. But beyond that there is no formal job description. Recent Speakers have relied on the floor leader to receive and screen requests to schedule legislation for floor consideration. The majority leader consults with the Speaker (normally several times a day), works with the Speaker and others to promote party unity, and increasingly serves as a party spokesperson. Recent majority leaders have been loyal to the Speaker and have seldom publicly disagreed with him. As the person who is next in line to become Speaker, and an individual with a voice in scheduling and all other leadership decisions, the majority leader is considered very powerful.

The minority leader generally is the minority party's chief spokesperson and strategist. The minority leader sometimes consults with the majority leader about the schedule, although more often he or she is merely informed of the majority leadership's scheduling decisions. Keeping the minority party united and attracting majority party votes are the central tasks of the minority leader's job. The job is made easier when the minority leader's party controls the White House and the president's resources can be drawn upon. The minority party can do little to obstruct a cohesive majority in the House, so the minority floor leader's job tends to be quite frustrating. The minority leader, as well as the Speaker, are *ex officio* members of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

House Whips and Whip Organizations

The third-ranking majority party leader and second-ranking minority party leader in the House are the whips. Both whips are now elected, although the Democratic whip was appointed by the majority leader until late 1986. Both whips head large whip organizations, whose purpose is to collect information for the leadership and persuade colleagues to support party positions. To facilitate the communication process, the whip offices maintain systems of recorded messages about floor actions, issue whip notices about the upcoming schedule, and use automated telephone and paging systems to reach members about pending votes. Whips also try to keep track of the whereabouts of members, particularly on days when important, close floor votes are expected.

Congressionally Speaking . . .

The term whip originated in the British House of Commons. It is derived from the term whipper-in—the fellow who keeps the dogs in line during an English foxhunt. In the American Congress, the use of the term reflected the responsibility of the whip to get party members to the floor on time. Today the term is often used as a verb—as in “the undecided members were whipped”—to refer to the process of persuasion and arm-twisting.

The Democratic whip organization is very large. In recent congresses, the House Democrats had as many as six chief deputy whips, twelve deputy whips, and 70 at-large whips, all appointed by the Speaker. In addition, there have been twenty-four regional whips elected by groups of Democrats from specific regions and one ex officio whip (the ranking Democrat on the Rules Committee), for a total of eighty-eight whips. The whip system has grown rapidly as the top leaders have responded to demands for whip appointments from party factions and individual members.

The Democratic leaders often appoint task forces to collect information and generate support on specific issues. This approach has been called a “strategy of inclusion,” because it gives a large number of members an opportunity to work closely with the leadership. By working hand in hand with the party rank and file, party leaders are able to persuade some members who otherwise might oppose the leadership to join the team. Task forces are now quite institutionalized—the Democratic caucus officially recognized 18 task forces and working groups in 2002.

Evolving Party Organizations

Congressional party organizations have become much more elaborate in the past generation, a result of competitive pressures and the desire to include more members in party activities. A good example is the elaboration of the House Democratic whip organization following the 2002 elections. The Democrats were impressed with the effectiveness of the House Republican whip organization in maintaining communication with committees and key groups of members and in winning close floor votes. The new Democratic Whip, Steny Hoyer (D-Maryland), created a new position, senior chief deputy whip, so that he had a top deputy and appointed John Lewis (D-Georgia), who was a prominent member of the Congressional Black Caucus, to the post. He divided most whips into two groups—one of nearly 40 “senior whips” and about 30 “assistant whips.” The senior whips are more senior members from committees and important party factions, while the assistant whips are assigned sets of five or six members with whom they are expected to maintain constant contact. Hoyer also expanded the whip office staff.

The House Republicans have a more modest whip system, although it also has expanded in recent years. In recent years, the Republican whip system consisted of a chief deputy whip and about 17 deputy whips—all appointed—and nearly 50 assistant whips elected by groups for regions of the country. The Republican whips meet irregularly. The smaller size of the Republican whip system may reflect the much larger number of positions that Republicans have created elsewhere within their party organization. These include the dozens of positions on the subcommittees of Republican Policy Committee.

Appointment or election as a whip, policy subcommittee, or task force member gives a member some prestige, an additional office to add to his or her letterhead, and access to informative weekly whip meetings. For some members, service in these party posts provides an opportunity to prove their leadership abilities to their colleagues, which can be important to a member who aspires to the top leadership posts. For all members, these posts provide an opportunity to learn more about the politics of key issues and of their party. Nearly all members advertise their assumption of these “leadership” positions at home.

Senate Party Leaders

Traditionally, the Senate’s smaller party organizations have had fewer formal leadership posts, committees, and staff than have their House counterparts, although Senate party organizations have become more elaborate in recent years. The Senate’s chief leaders are the majority leader and minority leader. These two leaders have historically been prominent politicians, frequently mentioned in the newspapers and seen on television.

Senate Floor Leaders

The majority leader is the principal leader of the Senate. The majority leader sets the Senate’s schedule and plans the order of business for the Senate floor. Critical to that function is a procedural advantage granted to the majority leader by precedent: the right of first recognition. The presiding officer recognizes the majority leader to speak or to offer a motion before recognizing any other senator, a practice that dates back to the 1930s.

Like House Speakers, Senate majority leaders vary in their assertiveness. Lyndon Johnson (D-Texas), who served as Democratic leader from 1955 to 1960, set the modern standard for aggressive leadership. Recent majority leaders of both parties have pushed committees to bring legislation to the floor and have taken a leading role in managing controversial legislation on the floor.

A majority leader’s ability to successfully set the floor agenda depends on the cooperation of his or her Senate colleagues. To call up a measure for consideration on the floor, the majority leader normally must gain approval of a “motion to proceed.” Although the motion requires only a simple majority for approval, it also may be debated and so may be subject to a filibuster. Thus, on a controversial measure, the majority

leader may require sixty votes to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed and get a measure to the floor for debate and amendment. And once the motion to proceed is adopted, the measure itself or any amendment to it may be filibustered. Consequently, the Senate's schedule is often quite unpredictable.

The majority leader usually seeks to limit debate and often seeks to limit amendments without going as far as invoking cloture. But to do so the leader must receive unanimous consent—that is, the leader's request will be rejected if one senator objects. Objections are common from senators who want to protect their right to speak, do not want to give up opportunities to offer amendments, or simply do not want to be inconvenienced. And leaders of both parties entertain requests from colleagues not to allow certain measures to be called up. Such requests are known as holds, a name that reflects their potential effect on Senate action on the affected legislation. When senators place holds on measures, they sometimes merely want advance warning of floor action, but at other times they seek to change or even prevent action. Working to remove holds is time-consuming and involves bargaining with contending factions. As a result, scheduling in the Senate is much less routine and more a process of negotiation than it is in the House. Even seemingly routine procedures such as bringing a roll-call vote to a conclusion is sometimes difficult.

An Indulgent Leader Announces That He Will Be Less Accommodating

On February 3, 1993, then Majority Leader George Mitchell made the following announcement:

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. President, following consultation with the Republican leader and with a large number of senators individually, I want to announce to senators now that during this Congress all Senate votes will conclude after a maximum of 20 minutes. The roll-call votes are 15 minutes. Allowances will be made for up to 5 minutes thereafter to accommodate senators. But only under the most extraordinary of circumstances will any vote be held beyond a total of 20 minutes. Extraordinary circumstances will not include that a senator is on the way, that a senator is at the airport, at Union Station, on the subway, coming up the steps, or in the hallway.

I have tried very hard to be accommodating to all senators over the last 4 years. And what we found is that accommodation has encouraged tardiness. And, as a result, votes were held for as many as 30 and 40 minutes while senators were engaged in other business. And no individual, no party, no group was abusive more than others. It is something that we all shared. The result, though, was the Senate itself and large numbers of senators were greatly inconvenienced on many, many occasions. . . .

MR. DOLE [Republican leader]: Mr. President, I do not have any quarrel with that decision. I guess it is pretty hard to define what the unusual circumstances may be but I am certain somebody will come up with one.

Source: *Congressional Record*, February 3, 1993, p. S1096.

The minority leader works closely with the majority leader on scheduling matters. The minority leader protects the parliamentary prerogatives of party members when the majority leader seeks unanimous consent to call up measures, schedule floor action, or limit debate and amendments. Like majority leaders, minority leaders differ in their aggressiveness, and their success depends on the size and cohesiveness of their parties. Unlike the House Speaker and floor leaders, the Senate floor leaders may retain committee assignments. Both Senate leaders are *ex officio* members of the Select Committee on Intelligence. Floor leaders do not hold full committee leadership positions, however.

In late 1996, Senate Republicans set a three-Congress term limit for party leadership positions except for the floor leader and President Pro Tempore. The term limit forced several leaders to give up their positions for the first time at the end of 2002. Senate Democrats are alone among the four congressional parties in not placing term limits on any leadership positions.

Senate Whips and Whip Organizations

Both Senate parties call their whips assistant floor leaders to reflect their chief responsibility: standing in for the floor leader in his or her absence. The Senate whips conduct few head counts. One reason is that bill managers—committee leaders or others who take the lead in the floor debate—often do their own head counting, owing to the Senate’s smaller size. Senate whips’ specific duties depend on the needs of individual floor leaders.

Senate Democrats reinvigorated their whip organization in the late 1980s. Under floor leader Robert Byrd, who was a self-reliant leader, Democratic whip Alan Cranston (D-California) did very little. He conducted whip polls at his own discretion and did floor duty only sporadically. The deputy whips were junior members who liked the title and could be called on to take turns watching the floor. But under Majority Leader George Mitchell, Cranston and his successor, Wendell Ford (D-Kentucky), conducted more head counts for the party and began holding regular meetings of the elected chief deputy whip and eight regionally elected deputy whips (two for each of four regions). But the whip organization was reduced to just four deputy whips after the Democrats lost majority control of the Senate in 1994. In addition, Minority Leader Tom Daschle created a new post, assistant floor leader, to assist him and the whip in managing floor activity.

During the period of Republican control of the Senate in the 1980s (1981-1986), Senate Republicans did not have assistant whips. Before that period, the Republicans did have assistant whips, but their only function was to take turns covering the floor to protect the interests of the party when the top Republican leaders could not be there. After they lost majority status in 1986, the Republicans again appointed deputy whips, and they retained them after regaining a Senate majority in 1994. In 1998, the Senate Republicans had a chief deputy whip and eleven deputy whips. In 1995, the Senate Republicans adopted a party rule that limits to six years the time that a senator can hold a leadership post, except for the majority leader and president pro tempore. Majority

Leader Trent Lott has elaborated the Senate Republican organization by appointing more task forces to assist him in developing party priorities on key issues.

Party Leaders' Resources

The influence of the top congressional party leaders flows from their use of several important resources: (1) their parties' voting strength, (2) the procedural powers granted them by the formal rules of their chamber and party, (3) the tangible rewards that they can grant to members, (4) information, (5) their access to the media, and (6) their staffs. Generally, the combination of party strength and formal powers accorded him makes the House Speaker the most powerful member of Congress, followed in descending order by the Senate majority leader, the Senate minority leader, and the House minority leader.

Party Strength

Obviously, the relative size of the parties' delegations in Congress determines their majority or minority status and thus which party will enjoy the procedural advantages conferred to the majority. Figures 6.2 and 6.3 show the size of the two major parties in each house since 1900. But party strength involves more than size alone. A majority party must also be fairly cohesive, or at least benefit from a fractured opposition, for its potential strength to be realized. Seldom are majority parties so large that they can afford to lose many votes from their own ranks and still win on the floor. Votes that require supermajorities, such as the two-thirds majority required to override presidential vetoes or the three-fifths majority required to overcome a Senate filibuster, are particularly troublesome for majority parties. As a general rule, there is uncertainty about a majority party's prospects of prevailing on important issue. Hard work is required to build winning coalitions on most important legislation. Not all party colleagues can be trusted to support their leadership, and ways of attracting support from members of the minority party often must be found.

Formal Rules

The standing rules of the House and Senate, as well as the written rules of the congressional parties, grant party leaders certain procedural advantages over other members. Of the four top leaders, the Speaker of the House is, by far, the most advantaged by standing rules and precedents. The Speaker enjoys powers that far exceed those of the Senate majority leader. The Senate majority leader, by virtue of the right of first recognition and a few other privileges, comes in second behind the Speaker in terms of formal powers, but the Senate minority leader is not far behind. The Senate's cloture rule and its reliance on unanimous consent agreements to organize its business require the Senate majority leader to consult and gain the consent of the minority leader on most scheduling matters. No such consultation is necessary in the House, making the House minority leader the weakest of the top congressional leaders.

Figure 6.2. Number of Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives, 1901-2003.

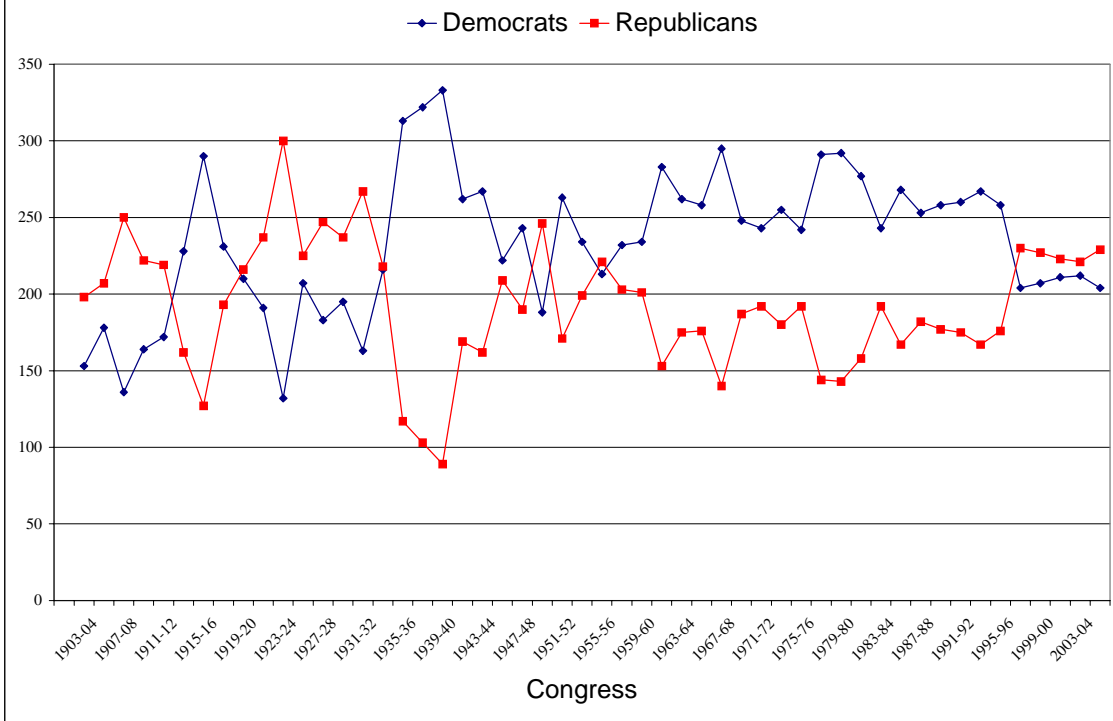
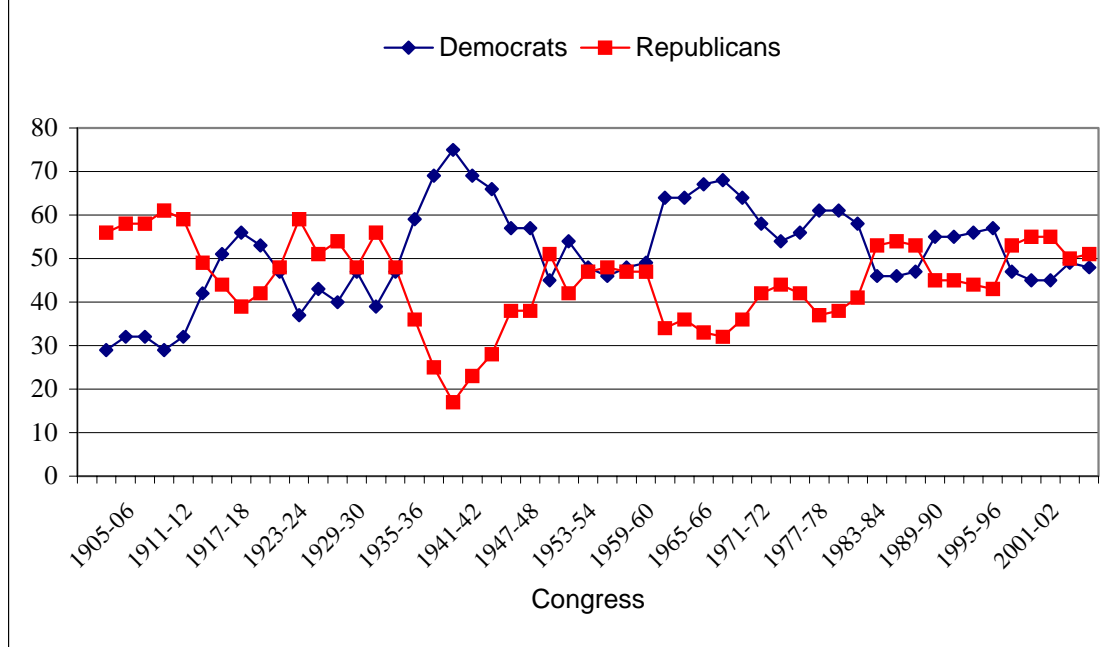


Figure 6.3. Number of Democrats and Republicans in the Senate, 1901-2003.



In 1974, the formal power of the House Speaker was bolstered under House rules by granting the Speaker the ability to refer legislation to multiple committees or to propose the creation of an ad hoc or temporary committee. Previously, the Speaker was required to refer each measure to the single committee that had predominant jurisdiction over it. The Speaker now may send legislation to committees jointly or sequentially and can split legislation into parts to send to different committees. In the case of joint and sequential referral, the Speaker may set time limits on committee action (see Chapter 3). This flexible referral rule has substantially enhanced the Speaker's ability to control the flow of legislation in the House—even to direct legislation toward friendly committees and away from unfriendly committees. On only one occasion, for a large multifaceted energy bill in 1977, whose content spanned the jurisdiction of many committees, has an ad hoc committee been used successfully.

The powers granted to the Speaker created the prospect of a more centralized, Speaker-driven policy-making process in the House. That possibility certainly was not realized in the 1970s. Speakers Albert and O'Neill continued to defer to committees and did not attempt to manipulate committees by using their referral powers. To the contrary, the 1970s were a period of remarkably fragmented, decentralized policy making. This was the product of simultaneous reforms that diffused power from full committee chairs to subcommittee chairs (see Chapter 7). And it reflected the expectations of rank-and-file Democrats. Only in the last year or two of the 1970s did Speaker O'Neill begin to use his new referral powers with some vigor.

The power of the Speaker was enhanced in 1993 when the House, over the objections of minority party Republicans, adopted a rule that allows the Speaker to remove members and appoint additional members to select and conference committees after initial appointments have been made. The new rule, which covers minority party appointees as well as majority party appointees, is aimed at majority party conferees who pursue positions that will obstruct outcomes favored by the leadership. Such conferees cannot be confident that their place on a prominent select committee or important conference committee will be protected once they have been appointed. Instead, the Speaker is free to correct errors in judgment made at the time of the initial appointments. In practice, the Speaker is likely to continue to defer to the minority leader on the appointment of minority party members to select and conference committees. The Republicans retained the rule after they became the majority party after the 1994 elections.¹⁸

With respect to intra-party rules and practices, the story is mixed. Overall, the House Republican's leader, currently the Speaker, is the most advantaged, and his power was reinforced by the Republican's winning a majority in 1994. As his party's leader, Gingrich asked for and received conference committee approval of rules changes that allowed him to appoint the Republican members of the Oversight Committee and to appoint the chair of the House Republican campaign committee, a post that had been elective. In addition, the House Republican leader, like his Democratic counterpart, names the party's members to the Rules Committee. Through the Rules Committee, the Speaker controls the flow of major legislation to the floor.

Tangible Rewards

Party leaders have a few resources at their disposal that provide direct political benefits to their colleagues and can be used to reward friends and punish enemies. The power to influence committee assignments is the most prominent of these resources. An assignment to a committee with jurisdiction over legislation important to a member's home constituency or to well-financed special interests may be important to the member's electoral prospects. House party leaders play a major role in their parties' committees on committees, where committee assignments are made. Tangible rewards come in many other forms as well. The expanded use of task forces by the congressional parties has increased the number of opportunities for leaders to bestow special status on party colleagues. Leaders can appoint members to special commissions and approve international travel plans.

Leaders can also be supportive of their colleagues' campaign efforts. They can influence the allocation of funds from the party campaign committees. In recent decades, party leaders have created political action committees of their own and contributed to colleagues' campaigns. Their contributions have played a role in contests for leadership posts.¹⁹ And in recent years, leaders have become very active in attending the fund-raising events of their colleagues, sometimes even choosing not to attend an event to make clear their dissatisfaction with a member's behavior. In a few cases, leaders have intervened to discourage primary challenges to an incumbent colleague.²⁰

Information

Information is critical to legislative success. Devising effective legislative strategies requires information about the specific policy issues and alternatives that will arise during the Congress, the distribution of policy preferences among the members, the administration, and other key players, and how others plan to act. Advantages from chamber or party rules, or even party strength, remain only potential sources of leadership power if they are not matched by useful and timely information.

The top leaders navigate in a sea of information. With the help of their staff, leaders collect and absorb information about committee actions, floor scheduling, presidential requests, members' political circumstances, and interest group activity. The top leaders do not have a monopoly over most kinds of information, of course, but they are uniquely placed to assimilate information from many different sources. Requests are made of them on such matters as scheduling, committee assignments, and campaign assistance, and leaders can sometimes pry information from members, lobbyists, and others who want something from them. The whip systems and party task forces are often activated to gather and disseminate information. And the time they spend on or near their chamber floor gives leaders and their staffs opportunities for casual conversations and informal exchanges of information.

Because information flows to the top leaders so readily, few other members can compete with party leaders as coalition builders. To be sure, committee leaders and bill sponsors master information relevant to their own legislation. But from time to time even committee leaders turn to party leaders for assistance in gathering information. By

exercising care in granting access to their information, party leaders can affect the strategies of other important players.

Leaders' informational advantage is stronger in the House than in the Senate, owing to the House's larger size. In the House, the seemingly simple task of counting members planning to vote for or against something is onerous. For the majority party, this means reaching more than two hundred members, many of whom might be away from Washington when the information is needed. Consequently, House bill managers often must rely on the services of the party leadership—whip offices and task forces—for timely information. In contrast, Senate bill managers are more self-reliant, because they need to count fewer heads. Thus, Senate whip organizations are not critical to the collection and dissemination of information on most important matters.

The overall trend in recent decades has been toward a diffusion of information across Capitol Hill. Junior members have benefited from the expansion of committee, personal, and support agency staffs; the growth of the interest group community and informal members' caucuses; and diversification in print and electronic media outlets. Party leaders now have more competition in the market for information than they did just three decades ago.

Access to the Media

Although top party leaders cannot compete with the president for media attention, they enjoy far better access to the media than do most other members.²¹ The media often turn to top leaders for their reactions to events or to presidential decisions or statements. This is natural: Leaders are presumed to represent their parties and to be in a position to act on their views. Even when there is no breaking story, leaders' routine press conferences attract reporters on the chance that the leaders will say something newsworthy. Few other members can count on such attention. Thus, leaders gain media attention because they are powerful, and, at least in part, they are powerful because they gain media attention.

Party leaders' media access serves as an important resource in the legislative game. Leaders can share their access with colleagues: They can mention a colleague's legislation, invite a colleague to join in a press conference, or refer reporters and television producers to a colleague. They can selectively divulge information about the plans of friendly and unfriendly factions. And they can increase the ease or difficulty of reaching compromises by intensifying or softening the rhetoric of claiming credit and avoiding blame.

Until recently, Senate leaders generally had an advantage over House leaders in their access to the media. The greater public prestige of the Senate and greater public interest in senators than in representatives encouraged the national media to pay more attention to Senate leaders than to House leaders. The advent of televised floor sessions in the House in 1979, about seven years before the Senate permitted television coverage of its sessions, seemed to make little difference.²²

Recent House Speakers have been as visible as the top Senate leaders on network news programs. In the 1950s through the mid-1970s, Senate leaders were far more visible on television news programs than were House leaders. The Speaker of the House has gained prominence since the 1970s; Speakers O'Neill and Wright were about as visible as their Senate counterparts. At least initially, Speaker Gingrich was second only to the president in media visibility. The House minority leader generally lags far behind other top leaders in media visibility, reflecting the relatively weak formal powers and informal influence of most House minority leaders. In contrast, the power of the Senate minority to obstruct bills, coupled with the Senate's prestige, gives the Senate minority leader a big advantage over his or her House counterpart in attracting media attention.

Recent party leaders in both houses have made a concerted effort to shape the message communicated through the media to the general public. They have expanded their press office operations, hired new media specialists, consulted pollsters, created party committees or task forces to shape party messages, and sought new ways to communicate to the public. All recent top leaders have sought to fashion coherent policy programs and to advertise them. And all top leaders have attempted to develop a common argument or theme for the parties on major issues.

Leadership Staffs

Top leaders' staffs have expanded as leaders have sought to meet colleagues' expectations and expand their own influence. These staffs now include policy specialists, public relations personnel, and even experts in parliamentary procedures, as well as people who assist the leaders with daily chores. With the help of their expanded staffs, leaders can follow committee deliberations more carefully, more rapidly respond to political events, and more frequently take a leading role in the negotiation of legislative details.

Organizational arrangements for the staff of the four top party leaders vary, reflecting both differences in the leaders' positions and historical accident. The House Speaker's leadership staff is spread between the Speaker's office and the Steering and Policy Committee. Similarly, the Senate Democratic leader's staff is located primarily in the Policy Committee. The House and Senate Republican leaders' staffs are housed within their leadership offices. Both Senate leaders manage the activity of the party secretaries, who are staff members, and the secretaries' assistants.

An Era of Reinvigorated Parties

The role of parties and their leaders in Congress is not written in stone. Indeed, most of the modern functions of congressional parties and leaders were not anticipated by the members of the early Congresses. Change has occurred in response to the changing needs and demands of members, who elect the top party leaders and are free to write and rewrite the rules of their chambers and party caucuses. New issues, turnover in the membership, new presidents, new political cleavages, and changing rules sometimes alter members' calculations about the kind of party leadership that will best serve their interests.

In recent Congresses, stronger parties and leaders have emerged. This development would have surprised most observers of the mid-1970s. At that time, the House and Senate caucuses of the majority party Democrats were inactive; today, all four congressional party caucuses (or conferences) are active. In the mid-1970s, the top Democratic leaders were highly deferential to committee and subcommittee chairs; today, party leaders frequently name party task forces, composed of members both on and off the standing committees of jurisdiction, to devise policy and strategy on major issues. In the mid-1970s, party leaders assumed that committee leaders would speak for the party on policy matters; in the early 1990s, party leaders themselves are clearly expected to assume a prominent role in the media on nearly all important matters. In the 1970s, extreme individualism was the most common description of Congress; by the late 1980s, unrestrained partisanship had become the dominant theme.

These developments appear to be the products of change in the several basic elements of the legislative game—what the issues are, who the players are and what they want, and the rules.²³ Each of these elements deserves brief consideration.

The Issues

Large federal deficits in the 1980s and early 1990s dominated the policy agenda of Congress and exacerbated long-standing differences between the parties over the appropriate size and function of the federal government. Such matters as tax hikes and cuts, the allocation of money between defense and domestic programs, and government commitments to entitlement programs for the elderly, the sick, and the poor stimulated pitched battles between the parties. Few issues were perceived to have as direct a connection to electoral fortunes as aggregate spending and tax choices, so the incentives for the parties to seek credit and avoid blame were high. The partisan electoral consequences of fiscal politics produced demands on the top leaders to be more assertive in public relations and to work harder to bolster their parties' public images.

In this environment, party leaders were expected to be aggressive and outspoken. Some leaders, like Democratic Speaker O'Neill and Senate Democratic leader Robert Byrd, were not especially comfortable or capable in that role, although they both tried to be more visible and vocal. Only after Jim Wright assumed the speakership in 1987 did House Democrats have a Speaker who relished a prominent place in the media. And when George Mitchell took over after Byrd relinquished his leadership post, Senate Democrats had a leader who saw being a party spokesperson as a high-priority responsibility. The leaders of both parties aggressively promoted their party's views.

Contributing to partisanship is the use of omnibus legislation for the federal budget. As a consequence of procedures authorized by the 1974 Budget Act, budget policy was wrapped into two major pieces of legislation each year—a budget resolution and a reconciliation bill. The stakes are particularly high for reconciliation bills, which typically package the proposals for spending cuts of more than a dozen committees. These high-stakes bills force party leaders into all negotiations and encourage members and outside observers to judge outcomes in terms of party winners and losers.²⁴

To make matters worse, this high-stakes contest, between a Congress controlled by one party and a president of the other party, tended toward stalemate.²⁵ Blaming the other party—and the other institution—for the lack of action became the chief political strategy. Only top party leaders and the president could overcome the gridlock, but that only increased the stakes and enhanced the perceived partisan consequences of the outcome.

The emergence of a balanced federal budget in the last few years of the twentieth century may change the character of partisan pressures. It is too early to determine whether new issues with lesser partisan implications will surface to soften partisanship in Congress and reduce the central role of party leaders in setting policy and strategic direction for their colleagues.

Members' Demands

Former Senate parliamentarian Floyd Riddick once observed that “the position of the floor leader is not that of an army general over a multitude of soldiers. Unlike army officers, the floor leaders must maintain continued support. They are subject to periodic reelection by the same persons they have been leading.”²⁶ That is, party leaders are appropriately viewed as agents of their party colleagues, and their success depends largely on the cooperation of those colleagues. Consequently, leaders’ goals and strategies are shaped by the demands and expectations of their party colleagues, whose own political goals and needs change over time.

Many observers have commented on the individualism that has characterized members of Congress in recent decades.²⁷ This “new breed” of lawmaker, as it is often called, is a product of the 1960s. New-breed members are antiestablishment, intolerant of traditional norms and authority, and more national, or even worldly, in their orientation. They are more independent, outward-looking, issue-oriented, media-oriented, and entrepreneurial. Their individualism is encouraged by expanded opportunities outside Congress—a swelling interest group community, broader single-issue constituencies facilitated by new forms of electronic communication and greater ease in cross-continental and intercontinental travel, and the growth of computerized mass mailings and telephone solicitation techniques. And individualism is required of members who must separately raise large sums of money to gain reelection.

In the late 1960s, the Senate’s new breed began to produce presidential candidates. In the 1970s, new-breed members contributed to a redistribution of power within House committees from full committee chairs to subcommittee chairs (see Chapter 7), the distribution of more resources to rank-and-file members in both chambers, and a surge in floor amending activity. They also contributed to the demise of such waning norms as deference to committee recommendations and serving a quiet apprenticeship period to learn the ropes before actively seeking to influence policy choices.

Unrestrained individualism created several problems for party leaders.²⁸ Surveying, coordinating, and scheduling chamber activities became more complicated. No longer could majority party leaders rely on consultations with a few senior committee leaders. Individualism meant that leaders were less certain about who wanted to participate and

who expected to be consulted, that committee leaders could expect more challenges to committee bills, and that floor sessions would be longer and less predictable. Of course, many bill managers faced difficulties because of their inexperience. In the House, individualism also meant less restrained tactics on the part of minority party members.

As members struggled to adapt to the new conditions, many majority party members turned to their party leaders for assistance. More and more frequently, majority party leaders were called on to resolve intraparty conflicts that had once been negotiated or squelched by committee chairs. Even before legislation was ready for floor action, conflicts between committees and between committee members and nonmembers led some members to ask top leaders to intervene. And majority party frustration with minority party tactics—calls for votes, redundant amendments, and so on—resulted in calls for a crackdown on the minority by the majority party leadership. The Speaker responded with some rules changes and more creative use of special rules to limit floor amendments. Ironically, then, the chaos of unrestrained individualism led to demands for stronger central leadership.

Leadership in Another Era

Sam Rayburn (D-Texas) was the most beloved twentieth-century Speaker of the House. He served as Speaker from 1940 to 1961, with the exception of four years when Republicans controlled the House. Rayburn listened well and was always kind to his colleagues, and because he was sheepish about his bald head, he shied away from cameras. He exercised his power quietly. A Rayburn biographer reported an incident on the floor of the House that was typical of the way he ruled:

[W]hen a bill providing for a cooling-off period to stave off labor strikes came to the House floor, Rayburn wanted it debated fully. Experience and instinct told him that with feelings running high an attempt might be made to shut off debate and go directly to a vote. This proved correct when Jennings Randolph of West Virginia, a member of the Labor Committee, won recognition and started to make a motion to do this.

While he was still talking, Rayburn walked down from the dais and headed toward him. With each approaching step Randolph's voice grew weaker. Finally he stopped talking when Rayburn reached him and put a hand on his shoulder. For a short time, with his face set sternly, Rayburn spoke in a low, gruff tone to Randolph, whom he liked. Then still talking, he removed his hand, plunged it into his jacket pocket, and his body rocked back and forth from his heels to his toes. Then he turned suddenly and walked back to the rostrum.

Laughter swept the chamber as embarrassment crossed Randolph's face. When silence came, Randolph announced he was withdrawing his motion, and he added, "As a legislative son I am always willing to follow the advice of my legislative elders."

Rayburn was special, to be sure, but no recent Speaker, in an age of televised floor sessions and independent-minded members, would have dared embarrass a colleague in that way.

Source: Sam Steinberg, *Sam Rayburn: A Biography* (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1975), pp. 189-190.

Policy Alignments

At the same time that policy making was becoming further complicated by individualism, members' positions on major policy questions became more partisan. Electoral forces and changes in Congress's policy agenda contributed to greater partisanship in voting during the 1980s.

The budget-oriented agenda produced intensified conflict among legislators. Large deficits increased the difficulty of finding funds for new or expanded programs, and old programs became targets for budget cutters. Consequently, legislation that in the past had seemed to produce far more winners than losers, such as student aid and environmental protection measures, was evaluated less on its own merit and more on the basis of its impact on the deficit during the next few years. Attention shifted from individual programs, which often attract support across party lines, to the overall spending and taxation patterns of the federal government—just the kind of issue that taps deeply held ideological beliefs and most differentiates the two parties.

Electoral forces also contributed to party polarization. The largest changes appeared in the South, where the expansion of the African American voting base for Democrats and the suburban, white base for Republicans altered the electoral coalitions for the two parties.²⁹ Southern Democrats became more moderate and sometimes quite liberal, making the Democratic contingents in the House and Senate more homogeneous. Southern Republicans, a scarce breed before the 1970s, fit the traditional conservative Republican mold, so they reinforced the homogeneity of the Republican party in Congress. Southern Republicans now hold most of their party's top leadership posts.

A change from less to more polarized parties has characterized developments in the House and Senate since the late 1970s. Increasing intraparty cohesiveness, reinforced by increasing interparty conflict, has altered the demands placed on party leaders. That partisanship has led members to insist that their leaders actively pursue party interests, and at the same time it has reduced resistance to strong central leaders from the remaining but shrinking minority factions within the parties.

Rules of the Game

Since the early 1970s, as this chapter has noted, the House Speaker's formal powers have been extended in important ways. The House party leaders appoint the members of the Rules Committee, which, in the case of the majority party, gives the Speaker effective control over the content of special rules governing the consideration of major legislation on the floor. Furthermore, the Speaker now has the power to refer legislation to multiple committees and set deadlines for committee action. In the House, therefore, the majority party leader can exercise a good deal of control over the process by which legislation is brought to the floor, debated, and subject to amendment.

In many, if not most, cases, the House Speaker's new powers have been exercised in routine ways. The Speaker does not seek to influence most committee assignments, for example, because many committees have little relevance to partisan concerns or few

members are competing for the available seats. For more routine legislation going through the Rules Committee, the committee relies on past experience to guide the design of rules, without consulting with the Speaker. And the parliamentarian makes recommendations on multiple referral based on established precedent and inter-committee agreements. The Speaker seldom gets personally involved. The development of such standard operating practices is a natural product of the gradual accumulation of precedents under new rules and the desire of members and their staff to lend predictability to the process.

The new powers become a political tool only when the Speaker deliberately calls them into play. In the 1970s, Speakers Albert and O'Neill generally let their procedural tools sit idle. But in the 1980s and 1990s, the nature of the policy agenda and members' demands led Speakers O'Neill, Wright, Foley, and Gingrich to employ their powers more often and aggressively. In fact, the Speaker's bill referral and special rules prerogatives are a regular part of strategic calculations by most members on important, controversial legislation. As a result, the Speaker frequently is brought into discussions about strategy by other members at early stages in their planning, so that the Speaker has regular opportunities to influence the policy directions taken by House committees and subcommittees.

Strategies of Adaptation

Party organizations and leaders are much more important to congressional policy making now than they were three decades ago. Six aspects of party responses to the changing conditions deserve summary.³⁰

Expanded Services. First, party organizations and leaders have expanded the services they provide their members. Leaders and party committee staffs now provide quite varied services: publications on the chamber schedules, legislation, policy problems, and political matters; electronic mail communications; clearinghouses for job applicants; analyses of floor voting records; assistance in the production of newsletters and graphics material; and facilities and staff assistance for the production of radio and television messages and programs. In the Senate, the parties maintain in-house cable television systems to provide senators' offices with up-to-the-minute information on floor developments and satellite up-link equipment so that senators can make live appearances on local stations or at meetings away from Washington. On a personal basis, leaders work harder to meet the scheduling demands of party colleagues and to assist colleagues in fundraising, campaigning, and attracting media attention.

To a degree, the expansion of services represents an effort on the part of top party leaders to incur the gratitude of party colleagues whose support they need on controversial legislation. In some cases, however, the top leaders seem to have met these demands only grudgingly and slowly. The full story includes secondary leaders—whips; chairs of the campaign, policy, and research committees; and conference secretaries—who, in their effort to demonstrate their fitness for even higher positions, have led the way by diversifying services. As members compete for votes among party colleagues to get elected to party posts, they solicit ideas for new services and move to expand services

once elected. While doing so, secondary leaders expand party staffs that they control and extend their own reach to a broader range of issues. In this way, secondary leaders have been vital to the more lasting elaboration of party organizations in Congress.

Strategy of Inclusion. Second, all leaders pursue an explicit strategy of inclusion. All four party caucuses (or conferences) and many of the party committees meet regularly. Whip organizations have grown and task forces have multiplied to give more members an opportunity to participate in policy making beyond the confines of their assigned standing committees. And all top leaders more frequently call together informal groups of members to solicit their views and encourage their participation through party channels. These developments contribute to leaders' efforts to gather information, promote a party spirit, solicit support, and build majority coalitions.

Procedural Strategies. Third, leaders have expanded their repertoire of procedural strategies. The standard committee-to-floor-to-conference process remains, but variations on that process are now more common. Discussions in party councils are more likely to occur before action is taken in standing committees. Leaders more frequently engage in negotiations with committee and faction leaders after committees have reported legislation but before floor action. Party task forces have added a layer of party members who influence both the content of legislation and coalition-building strategy. At times, task forces even initiate legislation, and their proposals are taken directly to the floor by party leaders. Flexibility, not rigidity, characterizes the legislative process in recent Congresses.

Structuring the Agenda. Fourth, leaders work harder to structure the agenda. Gingrich's 1994 push to enact the provisions of the Contract with America illustrates this best, but even the House Republican leadership hasn't maintained that degree of control over the agenda since that time. Still, leaders are now more active in setting the agenda than were the leaders of the 1960s and 1970s. This happens at two levels. On the first level, leaders more actively seek to set detailed policy agendas for their chamber, including a general schedule for action on major legislation. Speakers Wright and Gingrich went so far as to set deadlines for committee action on their list of issues. On the second level, leaders work harder to control the specific alternatives that are considered on the floor once legislation gets there. In the House, this is done through special rules written by the Rules Committee. Controlling alternatives is more difficult in the Senate, where unanimous consent must be obtained to structure the consideration of alternatives, a requirement that severely limits the ability of the majority leader to manipulate the floor agenda. Nevertheless, pressure to lend some structure to the process comes from members of both parties, all of whom have busy schedules and an interest in avoiding embarrassing or repetitious votes. At times, negotiating unanimous consent agreements becomes a full-time job for the majority leader.

Public Relations. Fifth, leaders work harder to influence the image of their party that is communicated through the mass media. Such efforts are aimed at creating a climate of public opinion favorable to the party, which makes it easier for party members to support their leaders and explain their votes at home. If successful, leaders' media strategies

produce support for party positions from independent-minded members who are not readily pressured.

Assertive Leadership. And finally, leaders have simply become more assertive, particularly in the House. I say particularly in the House because Senate leaders have been more assertive than House leaders throughout most of the past four or five decades. Political scientist Barbara Sinclair has counted the number of issues on which the Speaker has taken a leading role by using his procedural powers, soliciting votes, developing strategy, or shaping the content of legislation. She shows that Speaker McCormack was actively involved in only 28 percent of major bills in the 91st Congress (1969-1970), and Speaker Albert was involved in 40 percent of major bills in the 94th Congress (1975-1976). But in the 100th Congress (1987-1988), Speaker Wright was actively involved in 60 percent of major bills, and in the 101st Congress (1989-1990), Speakers Wright and Foley were actively involved in 54 percent of major bills.³¹

Conclusion

As consequential as some recent developments have been, they have not made congressional parties capable of expeditious, centrally directed legislative action for an extended period of time. Congressional parties still lack the integrating capacity of parties in many other national legislatures. To be sure, the parties structure the leadership of Congress, organize the standing committees, and structure floor and conference action. Moreover, congressional parties' internal organizations and staffs have become more elaborate. And in the last two decades, leaders have been prime movers in the legislative process on major issues. Still, diverse constituency interests across a large, heterogeneous country, the weakness of the parties in candidate selection, the fragmentation of party organizations across several levels of government, and the difficulty of coordinating House and Senate activities stand in the way of party-directed policy making over the long term.

NOTES

¹ David Firestone, “Democrats Pulling Together United Front Against G.O.P.,” *New York Times*, March 3, 2003.

² The national Democratic party reserves seats at its presidential nominating conventions for most of the Democratic members of Congress, but they represent a small minority of all the delegates at the conventions.

³ See Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 107-135, and D. Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Appropriations Process* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Both books give too little emphasis to shared policy views and too much to the electoral motive, but they make a convincing case that shared concern for party reputation creates incentives for party organization.

⁴ See Helmet Norpoth, “Explaining Party Cohesion in Congress: The Case of Shared Policy Attitudes,” *American Political Science Review* (December 1976), pp. 1156-1170.

⁵ Randall B. Ripley, *Party Leaders in the House of Representatives* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1967), Chapter 1.

⁶ Robert L. Peabody, *Leadership in Congress* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976).

⁷ Ripley, *Party Leaders in the House of Representatives*, Chapters 3 and 5; Randall B. Ripley, *Majority Party Leadership in Congress* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), pp. 45-46; and Randall B. Ripley, *Power in the Senate* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1969), p. 24.

⁸ On leadership and the media, see Cokie Roberts, “Leadership and the Media in the 101st Congress,” in John J. Kornacki (Ed.), *Leading Congress: New Styles, New Strategies* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1990), pp. 85-96; Joe S. Foote, *Television Access and Political Power: The Networks, the Presidency, and the “Loyal Opposition”* (New York: Praeger, 1990); and Roger H. Davidson, “Senate Leaders: Janitors for an Untidy Chamber?” in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Congress Reconsidered*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1985), p. 236. Stephen Hess notes that top party leaders always have been among the most visible senators and continue to be so. See Stephen Hess, *The Ultimate Insiders: U.S. Senators in the National Media* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1986).

⁹ Richard E. Cohen, “A Consensus Builder to Lead the Senate,” *National Journal*, December 3, 1988, p. 3079.

¹⁰ Jennifer Spevacek, “Mitchell Wins Leadership Post,” *Washington Times*, November 30, 1988, p. A8.

¹¹ “HOH: Dole Leads Campaign Derby, Visiting 29 States Since August; Gramm, 25; Rockefeller, 14,” *Roll Call*, November 2, 1992, p. 43.

¹² See Lynne P. Browne and Robert L. Peabody, “Patterns of Succession in House Democratic Leadership: Foley, Gephardt, and Gray, 1989,” in Robert L. Peabody and

Nelson W. Polsby (Eds.), *New Perspectives on the House of Representatives*, 4th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 319-372.

¹³ For more extensive treatment of House party leaders' jobs, see Barbara Sinclair, *Majority Leadership in the U.S. House* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), pp. 31-53, and Barbara Sinclair, *Legislators, Leaders, and Lawmaking* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 61-80.

¹⁴ First adopted in January 1993.

¹⁵ Calendar Wednesday was created to give committees access to the floor even when they face an obstructionist Speaker. This procedure allows committees, in alphabetical order, to call up legislation for floor debate. But action on a particular bill can be blocked by having committees that are called to first use up all available time. The procedure is impractical and seldom used.

¹⁶ The initial charges against Wright were brought by Newt Gingrich (R- Georgia), who later was elected Republican whip and then became Speaker himself after the Republicans gained a majority in the 1994 elections. At issue were House rules that limit members' outside income and gifts. Sales of Wright's book—from which he received larger-than-usual royalties—to groups and organizations appeared to be an effort to circumvent limits on speaking fees. And arrangements for use of a car and an apartment, along with a salary for his wife from a business partner, may have violated House rules on gifts. Wright resigned before the committee and the full House formally ruled on the charges. Wright protested his innocence but argued that the House and his party could not afford a protracted fight over the charges.

¹⁷ John B. Bader, "The Contract with America: Origins and Assessment," in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Congress Reconsidered* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997), pp. 347-369.

¹⁸ House Rule X, Section 6.

¹⁹ Jonathan Salant, "Leadership PACs: A Matter of Give-and Take," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, May 25, 1996, pp. 1442-1443.

²⁰ Damon Chappie, "GOP Leaders Try to Quash Primary Challenge to Kelly," *Roll Call*, July 1, 1996, p. 7.

²¹ See Hess, *The Ultimate Insiders*.

²² Susan H. Miller, "News Coverage of Congress: The Search for the Ultimate Spokesman," *Journalism Quarterly* (Autumn 1977), pp. 461-462; Michael J. Robinson and Kevin R. Appel, "Network News Coverage of Congress," *Political Science Quarterly* (Fall 1979), pp. 410-411; and Timothy E. Cook, "House Members as Newsmakers: The Effects of Televising Congress," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (May 1986), pp. 203-226.

²³ See Barbara Sinclair, *Unorthodox Legislating: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997).

²⁴ James A. Thurber, "Centralization, Devolution, and Turf Protection," in Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Eds.), *Congress Reconsidered* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997), pp. 325-346.

²⁵ John Gilmour, "Summits and Stalemates: Bipartisan Negotiations in the Postreform Era," in Roger H. Davidson (Ed.), *The Postreform Congress* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 233-256.

²⁶ *Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate*. U.S. Senate No. 91-20 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969), P. 13.

²⁷ Richard E. Cohen, "Strains Appear as 'New Breed' Democrats Move to Control Party in the House," *National Journal*, June 25, 1983, p. 1328, and James L. Sundquist, *The Decline and Resurgence of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1981), p. 371. Also see Dan Cortz, "The Senate Revolution," *Wall Street Journal*, August 6, 1965; Tom Wicker, "Winds of Change in the Senate," *New York Times Magazine*, September 12, 1965; and Robert C. Albright, "Senate Youngsters Asserting Selves as Never Before," *Washington Post*, January 15, 1968. On the 1980s, see Irwin B. Arief, "A More Independent-Minded Institution: House, Senate Chiefs Attempt to Lead a Changed Congress," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, September 13, 1980, pp. 2695-2700; and Alan Ehrenhalt, "Every Man Is an Island: In the Senate of the 1980s, Team Spirit Has Given Way to the Rule of Individuals," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, September 4, 1982, pp. 2175-2182.

²⁸ Burdette A. Loomis, "The 'Me Decade' and the Changing Context of House Leadership," in Frank H. Mackaman (Ed.), *Understanding Congressional Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1981); and Barbara Sinclair, *Majority Leadership in the U.S. House*, pp. 3-22.

²⁹ David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), and "Electoral Forces, Political Agendas, and Partisanship in the House and Senate," in Davidson (Ed.), *The Postreform Congress*, pp. 27-47.

³⁰ Sinclair, *Majority Leadership in the U.S. House*, pp. 238-244.

³¹ Barbara Sinclair, "The Emergence of Strong Leadership in the 1980s House of Representatives," *Journal of Politics* 54 (1992), p. 658.