

Committees

17.251/252

Fall 2002

Wilson's Famous Quote

- Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, whilst Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work.



Organization

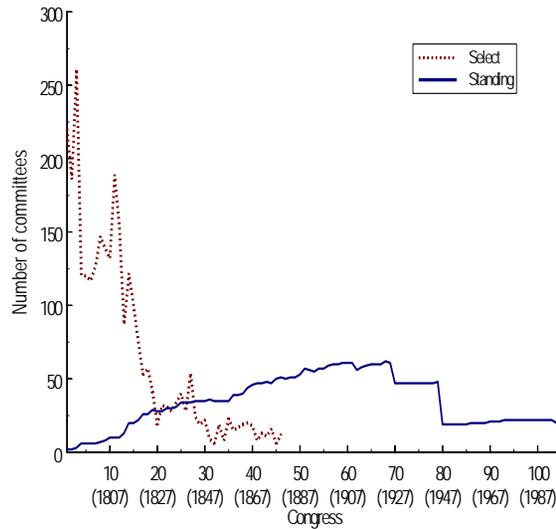
- Mechanics
- Theoretical perspectives on committees

What do Committees Do?

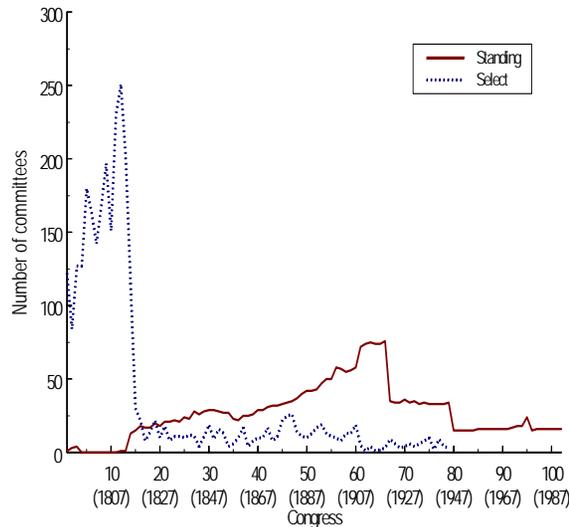
- Study issues and provide expertise
- Channel ambition
- Provide for representation of groups

Development of Committees

a. House



b. Senate



- House
 - Slow to develop (Hamilton)
 - Short leash
 - Gradual increase under Clay
- Senate
 - Even slower
 - 1819 boom

House/Senate comparisons

- House more reliant on committees than the Senate
 - House more specialized
 - First-mover advantage may give Ways and Means even great power

Types of committees

Type	Can originate legislation
Standing	✓ ✓
Select/special	✓
Joint	
Conference	

Committees in the 107th Congress

House

Standing

- Agriculture
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Budget
- Education and the Workforce
- Energy and Commerce
- *Financial Services
- Government Reform
- House Administration
- International Relations
- Judiciary
- Resources
- Rules
- Science
- Small Business
- Standards of Official Conduct
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Veterans Affairs
- Ways and Means

Select

- Permanent Intelligence
- [Homeland Security]

Joint

Joint Economic Committee
Library
Printing
Taxation

Senate

Standing

- Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
- Budget
- Commerce, Science, and *Transportation
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Environment and Public Works
- Finance
- Foreign Relations
- Governmental Affairs
- Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
- Judiciary
- Rules and Administration
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship
- Veterans Affairs

Select

- Indian Affairs
- Ethics
- Intelligence
- Aging

*Name changes

Membership

- Party ratios
 - Renegotiated every Congress
 - Sometimes a bone of contention with minority party
 - There is usually a bonus given to the majority party
 - Special bonus for certain committees
 - House right now: 1.3:1 for “important” committees, closer to 1.1:1 for others
 - House Ag: 27/25, Banking, 37/33; *Judi: 21/16, *Ed: 27/21, *HAC: 36/29, Rules: 9/4, *WAM: 34/27
 - Senate: Dems have a majority of 1

How Committee members are chosen

- Party committees make choices
 - House tends to rely on party committees
 - Senate tends to go by seniority
 - Republicans pure seniority
 - Democrats weight seniority highest
- Formal and informal constraints
 - Property rights in committee assignments arose around the turn of the last century
 - Allocation restrictions
 - Senate
 - “Johnson rule” most famous
 - All junior senators get one “good” assignment before a senior senator gets a second
 - Rules, create “A” and “B” committees
 - **A:** Agriculture, **Appropriations**, **Armed Services**, Banking, Commerce, Energy, Environment, **Finance**, **Foreign Relations**, Governmental Affairs, Judiciary, and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions [limit of 2]
 - **B:** Budget, Ethics, Indian Affairs, Rules and Administration, Select Aging, Select Intelligence, Small Business and Veterans’ Affairs [may serve on 1]
 - Senate Republicans create “super A” committees [bold, limit 1]
 - Kyle is trying to change this rule
 - House
 - Republicans: “Red” “White” “Blue”
 - Democrats: Exclusive, Semi-Exclusive, Non-exclusive

Chairs

- Seniority system: the practice of reserving the chairs of committees for the most senior member (on that committee)
 - Result of revolt against Cannon
 - Senate: pretty inviolate, with bidding (note saga of Jesse Helms, p. 296, Table 8-6)
 - House
 - Democrats in 1970s put chairs up to confirmatory vote
 - Republicans
 - 1970s put ranking members up to confirmatory vote
 - 1994: term limits (6 years) plus vote of caucus
 - » 2000: Affected virtually every chair (ideology + \$\$ mattered)
 - » 2002: Affects only Gov't Reform (Dan Burton)

The Race for Burton's Seat

- Dan Burton, IN, Chairman (**Term Limited**)
- Benjamin A. Gilman, NY (**Killed by redistricting**)
- Constance A. Morella, MD (**Defeated for reelection**)
- Christopher Shays, CT (**Heir apparent; Too liberal?**)
- Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, FL (**Chairs subcomm on Int'l Operations**)
- John M. McHugh, NY (**Chairs subcomm on Mil. Personnel**)
- Stephen Horn, CA (**Retired**)
- John L. Mica, FL (**Chairs subcommittee on Aviation**)
- Thomas M. Davis III, VA (**Chaired RCCC; Chairs DC subcommittee!!; Raised tons of \$\$**)
- Mark E. Souder, IN

Christopher Cox (on leave from committee, may want the job)

Subcommittees and Their Role

- Subcommittees sometimes just smaller versions of committees
- The congressional receptor for the “Iron Triangle”
- Increasing importance of subcommittees
- “Subcommittee bill of rights” in 1973 (House Dems)
 - Written jurisdictions
 - Members given rights to pick memberships and bid for chairmanships

Staff and Resources

- Varies by committees
 - Number
 - Who controls



Moving To and Fro

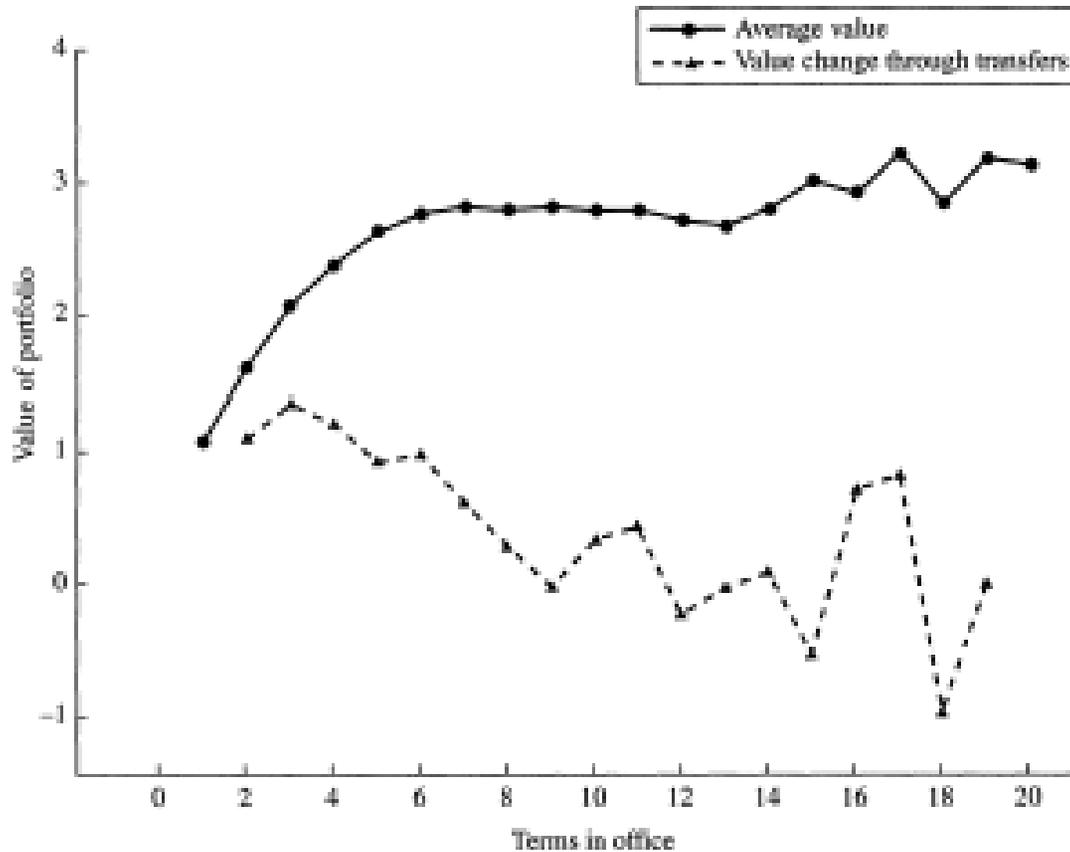
- If there are property rights in committee seats, then a transfer reveals a preference for Committee_{new} over Committee_{old}
- This gives rise to independent measures of committee value (see table 8-7)

Groswart Scores for the House

Ways and Means	∞
Appropriations	5.08
Rules	4.47
Energy & Commerce	2.00
Armed Services	1.96
Foreign Affairs	1.72
Budget	1.56
House Administration	1.08
Internal Security	0.97
Natural Resources	0.93
Agriculture	0.84
Judiciary	0.81

DC	0.59
Banking	0.56
Merchant Marine	0.56
Public Works	0.55
Science	0.35
Post Office	0.31
Education & Labor	0.28
Standards of Official Conduct	0.28
Government Operations	0.26
Veterans Affairs	0.15
Small Business	-0.25

Figure 1. Average Value of Committee Assignments Held by House Members, 1947–91, as a Function of Terms in Office



Source: Groseclose and Stewart (1998)

Hearings

- Civics book perspective on hearings is incomplete
 - Information-gathering (substantive and political)
 - Build the public record
 - Symbolism
 - Establish jurisdiction
- Put together by staff
- Rarely change minds

The Markup

Summary: The Chairman's Mark Creating a Homeland Security Department - Netscape

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Location: <http://hsc.house.gov/legislation/mark.asp>

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select committee on **HOMELAND SECURITY**
hsc.house.gov U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Home > News > Homeland Security > Documents > Chairman's Mark

Related Links

Summary: What's New in H.R. 5710

Bill Text: HR 5710 (822k, PDF Format)

House Leaders Urge Senate Return to Homeland Security After Iraq Vote

HR 5005 as Passed by the House (568k, PDF format)

Summary: H.R. 5005 As Reported

Transforming Government for the 21st Century
Summary of the Chairman's Mark for a Bill Establishing a Department of Homeland Security
July 18, 2002

The standing committees of the House of Representatives have recommended improvements to the President's proposal. The Chairman's mark incorporates many of these improvements while preserving the essential functions outlined in the President's plan. It will serve as a basis for Friday's mark up.

Protecting Our Borders

The first step in defending America from the enemies of freedom is to ensure that our borders are secure. That is why this draft ensures the border function remains strong within the new Department.

- **Coast Guard Moves to DHS**
Because the longest borders in our country are our coasts, the Coast Guard will play an essential role within the new Department. *This draft essentially accepts the Government Reform Committee's recommendation.*
- **Customs Service Moves to DHS**
The U.S. Customs Service describes itself as the primary enforcement agency protecting the Nation's borders and will move to the new Department. Some revenue collection agents, however, will be subject to guidance from the Treasury Department. *This draft essentially accepts the recommendation of the Ways and Means Committee.*
- **Border Functions at APHIS Move to DHS**
Those inspectors at the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) who currently protect our borders will move into the new Department. All other functions of this agency will remain with the Agriculture Department. *This draft closely reflects the recommendations of the Agriculture Committee.*
- **INS Enforcement Functions Move to DHS**
Enforcement and border protection functions at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) will move to the new Department. Immigrant service functions will remain at the Department of Justice. *This draft essentially accepts the recommendation of the Judiciary Committee.*
- **DHS Provides Rules for Entry into the Country** The State Department and consular officials will continue to issue visas, but they will do so under rules established by the Department. *This draft essentially accepts the recommendation of the Judiciary and International Relations Committees.*

Community Involvement

Document: Done

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Committees to Know About

- House
 - Rules
 - Appropriations
 - NYTimes article about the “cardinals”
 - Ways and Means
 - Budget
- Senate
 - Finance
 - Appropriations
 - Budget
 - Judiciary
 - Foreign Relations

Changes Made by House Republicans after 1994

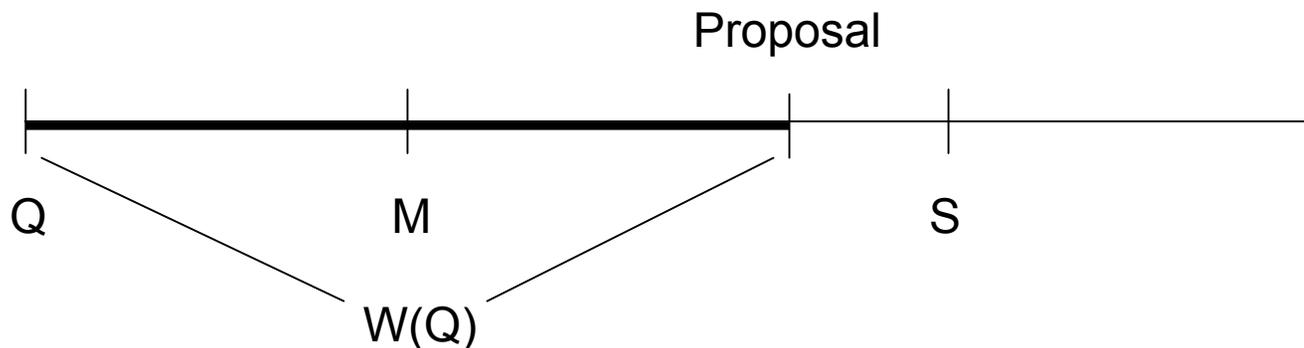
- Committees eliminated
 - DC
 - Merchant Marine & Fisheries
 - Post Office & Civil Service
- Staff cut by 1/3
- Subcommittee limits (generally 5)
- Subcommittee staff controlled by *committee* chair
- Assignment limits
- Proxy voting banned
- Committees must publish roll call votes on all bills and amendments
- Rolling quorums banned
- Meetings may be closed to the public rarely
- All committees open to broadcast coverage & still photography
- Multiple referrals eliminated
 - Speaker may still serially refer bills

Theoretical perspectives on committees

- “Distributive” theories
 - Agenda setting (the setter model)
 - Gate-keeping
 - Structure-induced equilibrium view
 - “Stacking”
- Information theories

The “Setter Model” Reprised

- Romer and Rosenthal
 - An agenda-setter has power to offer a “take it or leave it” motion.
 - If the agenda-setter is “high demand” and the reversion point is well below the median’s ideal point, the agenda-setter makes out like a bandit

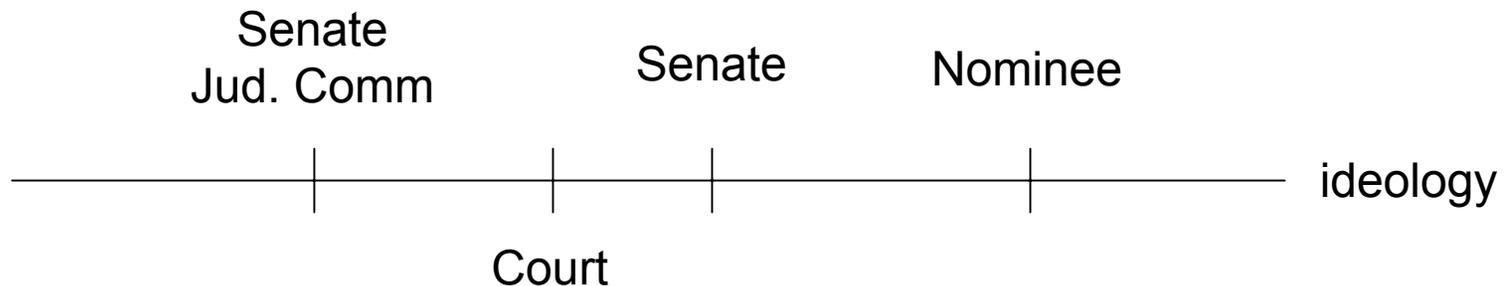


Application of Setter Model to Committees

- Easy to think of committees as providing “take it or leave it” propositions and being composed of “high demanders”
 - “deference” to committees
 - Supposed “self-selection” on committees
- Problems with this view
 - “high demand committees” hard to sustain in a majoritarian institution
 - Empirical evidence mixed
 - Amendment opportunities galore
 - Status quo rarely so Draconian

Gatekeeping

- Gatekeeping is the right of a committee to decide to keep an item off the floor if it doesn't want action.
- Usually thought of in a majoritarian setting



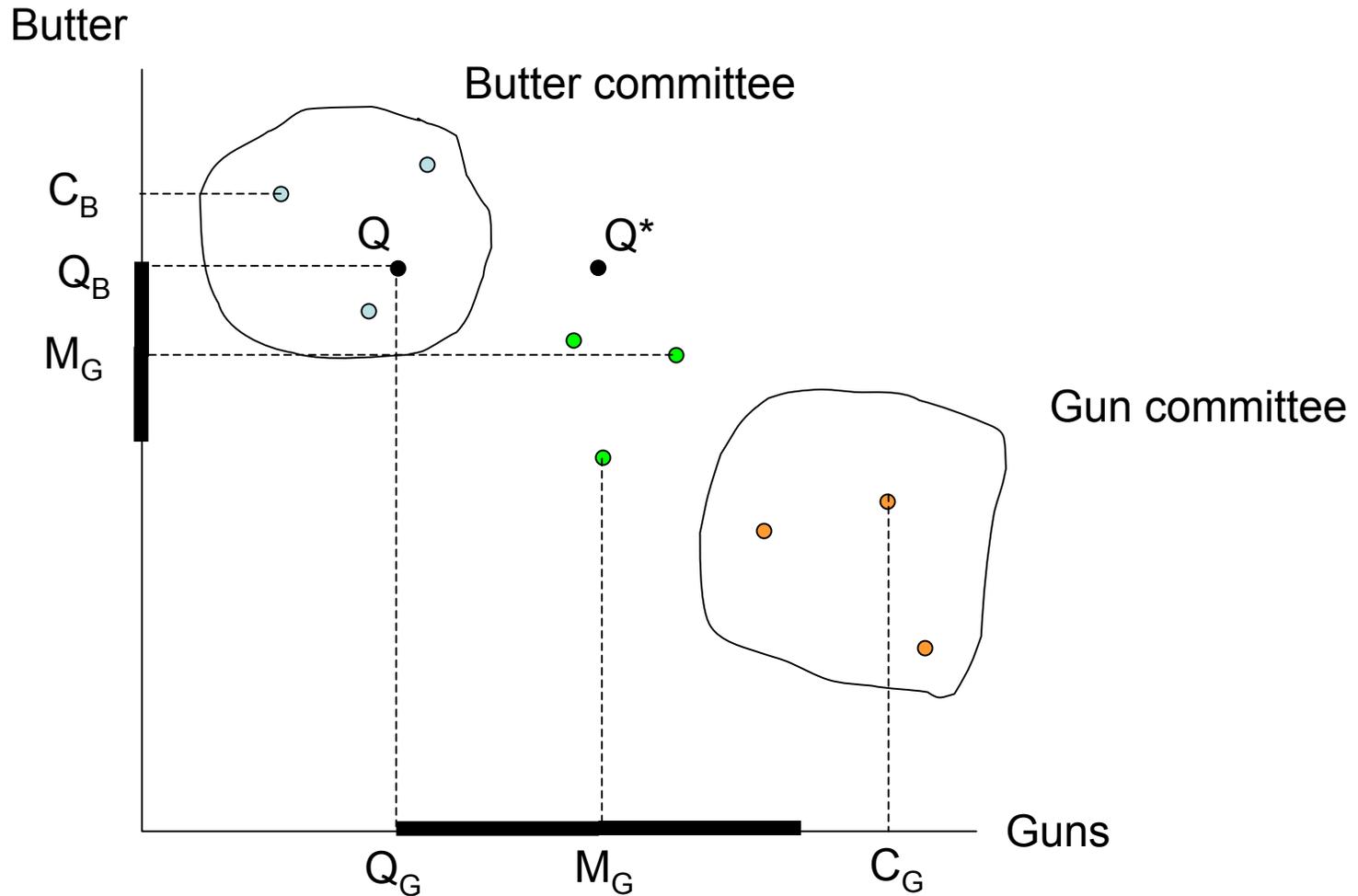
Applicability of the View

- Corresponds to practical application of rules (esp. in House)
- Problems with view
 - Majoritarian objection (again)
 - The Senate, especially, has ways around committees
 - Other ways around gatekeeping
 - Discharge
 - “speaker discharge”
 - Note that this is definitely a negative power

Structure-Induced Equilibrium View

- Combines gate-keeping with a certain view of jurisdictions
 - “Explains” (or at least illustrates) two stylized facts
 - Stability
 - “capture”

SIE: The Picture



Some Comments About This View

- Why it's called the "gains from trade" view
- Majoritarian objection very clear from the "out of the Pareto set" result in the example
- Nonetheless, if the majoritarian objection doesn't hold, this is an attractive descriptive view of much of policymaking + an explanation for why "everyone" can be dissatisfied with the current state of policy

Informational View

- Fundamentally different from other modern views
- While “rational choice,” more in consonance with more traditional views

Informational View: The Picture

Sum-up points