

Discussion questions for Mayhew's *Congress: The Electoral Connection*

1. Do you believe Mayhew's assumption that members of Congress are "single-minded seekers of reelection?" If so, how would you explain challengers' decisions to run for office?
2. What structural features of Congress are especially useful to members pursuing reelection? Which make reelection more difficult? Why?
3. Why can't committees and parties both be strong (or weak) at once?
4. In the Preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Mayhew (p. xvii) writes:  
(L)et me admit that if I were writing *The Electoral Connection* today I would back off from claiming that "no theoretical treatment of the U.S. Congress that posits parties as analytic units will go very far." From the perspective of 2004 it is easy to see that the congressional parties bottomed out in importance around 1970 and that they have grown considerably more important in various ways since that time... Still, I have not seen any evidence that today's congressional party leaders "whip" or "pressure" their members more frequently or effectively than did their predecessors thirty years ago.

If parties are "considerably more important" today than when Mayhew first wrote, does that disprove his theory of congressional organization? Why or why not? What would disprove it?

5. Why does Mayhew argue that most of the variation in congressional elections is due to local and not national conditions?
6. How does Mayhew's account of the various activities that legislators engage in to win reelection fit with the different theories of incumbency advantage?
7. Why is this book considered a classic?