

3.11 – Congressional outsiders

- Who?
 - President
 - Interest groups
 - Courts – sort of...
- What do they want?
 - Influence
- What do they have?
 - Resources

A question of influence

- Recall Mayhew quote (again): “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.”
- What does that mean?
- Answer: Influence or the ability to convince or persuade or force someone to do something they would not have ordinarily done
 - (Paraphrased from Lasswell & Dahl’s definitions of “power”)

Detecting influence

- Key component: “would not have ordinarily done”
- Why that?
 - It’s easy to convince someone to do something they want to do
- è difficult analytical question: how do you tell what someone *would have* done?
 - Encountered earlier with campaigns
 - Campaign consultants & selection bias
 - Now comes up in matter of legislative influence

How do you know?

- Projection based on other information
 - Example: polls in elections
 - Example: past election results + campaign spending + challenger quality in elections
- Projection based on past history
 - Big advantage of dealing with actions w/i legislature: lots of history
 - Lieberman example

Dissecting influence

- Three components
 - Who's trying to exercise influence
 - & their tools of persuasion
 - What they want
 - Obviously matters what sort of action they seek
 - Who they're trying to influence
 - Not everyone is lobbied
- Deal with these in reverse order
- But we'll start by returning to last week's lecture on parties & party leaders

Think about this in the context of last week's lecture on parties

- Age of the “czars” – 1890 to 1910
 - Who did they influence? = other members
 - But not all of them!
 - On what? = everything
 - Ability to shape what came to the floor
 - “Positive power”
 - Ability to block what they didn't like
 - “Negative power”
- How did they do this?
 - Appointed committees
 - Controlled Rules committee
 - “Placed an array of sanctions and rewards at (Speaker's) disposal” (Davidson & Oleszak)

Better understood as positive power or negative power?

Ans: Both, although the negative power was more absolute.

Could they do whatever they pleased?

Ans: Probably not. Because it's easier to block than pass legislation, Reed & Cannon were more certain to be successful in preventing what they didn't like rather than guaranteeing what they did.

When were they more likely to succeed in moving their agenda?

Ans: 1. When it was closer to what others favored. 2. When fewer votes were needed. 3. When other forces weren't arrayed against them.

How about today's leaders?

- Big difference between Senate & House
- Both leaders have huge say in committee assignments
 - Lieberman example
- But only House leaders can use r/Rules to limit access to the floor
 - Agenda control
- Key tool in both cases: near unanimity of their caucuses
 - Health care example
 - Mayhew is certainly somewhat right...
 - But probably not completely

On to outsiders... Who they're trying to influence

- Political friends
 - Party members
 - Clearly applies to pres, not always to groups
 - Shared point of view
 - Beliefs
 - Local ties
 - Obama states; group membership
 - Political supporters / allies
 - Financial ties
 - Other help
- Political enemies
 - The other side
 - Clearly applies to pres, not always to groups
 - Opposing views
 - Lack of local ties
 - Union example
 - Lack of political ties
 - Financial boomerang
 - Allies or enemies

What issues they try to influence

- Big issues (like health care)
- Importance
 - To individual legislator
 - To constituents
 - To other interests
- Bottom line: harder to persuade members when there is more competition
- Narrow issues (like earmarks)
- Lack of importance
 - Legislator and staff don't care
 - Constituents don't care (and wouldn't even if they knew about it)
 - Other friends don't care
- Bottom line: narrow policies easier to influence

So...

- Small, less important things much easier to accomplish than are big, more important things
 - Health care example
 - Tax reform
 - Lobbyist advantages
 - Businesses v. public interest
 - Many small victories v. one big one

Positive v. negative power

- Why is it easier to block legislation than pass legislation?
 - Basic legislative procedure
 - Gathering a majority (or supermajority) & holding it together
 - Through multiple steps in the process
 - » GOP slowdown tactics on health care
 - Through multiple temptations
 - » Danger of amendments
 - » House v. Senate
 - Legislation as collective action
 - Leaders use a variety of incentives beyond what's in the bill to keep everyone in line

Resources – Groups

- Donations
 - Lieberman & insurance companies
 - But Dodd and insurance companies, too...
- Influence over third parties
 - Voters / public opinion
 - Legislative friends
 - Other \$\$ contributors
- Information / expertise
 - From gathering information to drafting bills

Do interest groups convince legislators to do something they wouldn't ordinarily do?

Or, do interest groups support members who already support them?

Answer (much debated)

- Plenty of evidence of group influence conflates correlation & causation
 - Campaign finance examples
- Successful lobbies
 - NRA & guns
- More success on narrow matters
- But, remember that bill passage isn't all that Congress does
 - Members may promote issues, sponsor bills, lay groundwork for future success (i.e. position taking)
 - Intervene with bureaucracy (i.e. Fiorina)

Resources – President

- Political help
 - Campaigning for them (Obama in NJ)
 - Fundraising for them
- Influence over third parties
 - Voters / public opinion
 - Going public (the “bully pulpit”)
 - Obama’s health care speech
 - Legislative friends
 - Obama’s influence over other Dems è other promises
 - Other \$\$ contributors
- Information / expertise
 - Executive branch resources
 - Who is Peter Orzag?

Closing question

Who is more influential, interest groups or the president? Does it matter whether the president is popular or not, or the type of issue on which they are attempting to exercise influence? Why?