

Congressmen in Exile: The Politics and Consequences of Involuntary Committee Removal

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We show how preferred committee assignments act as an electoral subsidy for members of Congress—empowering representatives’ legislative careers. When holding preferred assignments, legislators are free to focus on legislative activity in Washington, DC. But when the subsidy is removed, legislators are forced to direct attention to the district. To test our theory of legislative subsidy, we exploit committee exile—the involuntary removal of committee members after a party loses a sizable number of seats. Legislators are selected for exile using members’ rank on the committee, causing exiled and remaining legislators to appear strikingly similar. Using exile, we show that it has only limited electoral consequences, but this is partly due to compensatory efforts. Exiled legislators shift attention away from Washington and towards the district: they raise and spend more money for reelection, author less legislation, are absent for more days of voting, and vote with their party less often.

Congressional committees, as Fenno (1973) famously contends, have diverse purposes and allow members to pursue a variety of career goals. We show how congressional committees, across these varying types, act as an electoral subsidy thereby empowering legislators to pursue policy-focused careers in Washington, DC, in place of electorally focused careers in the district. With prestige or preferential committee assignments, legislators focus more of their attention on politics in Washington—both in their participation in the institution and their support for the party. In the absence of those committee assignments, legislators engage in a compensatory effort, returning their focus to the district and cultivating electoral support.

We demonstrate how committees subsidize policy work using new estimates of the effect of committees on legislative behavior. To construct the estimates, we exploit a regularly exercised—though rarely studied—Congressional institution: committee exile. When new majorities arrive in Washington, they reapportion seats on a committee to favor the new party. Because committee sizes are often fixed and losses are unevenly distributed across committees, this forces the minority to remove legislators from committees. We exploit committee exile to create a robust panel research design

to measure the effects of congressional committees that mitigates both measured and unmeasured confounding found in cross-sectional designs.¹

To explain why committee exile is a useful tool for estimating committee effects, we first study the incidence and characteristics of committee exile. We show that committee exile is a consequence of uneven losses across congressional committees and not due to strategic targeting by the new majority. Both congressional parties follow strict norms of seniority to determine who to exile from the committee, thus the lowest-ranked legislators are the most likely to be removed. The result is that exiled legislators have served less time in Congress than those who remain on the committees, but they are otherwise strikingly similar to the remaining legislators. After exile, representatives are sometimes deposited on lower prestige committees but more often are given no compensatory committee assignment.

Building a robust panel research design around exile, we show that committee exile has few electoral consequences but substantial legislative consequences. After exile, a legislator’s party receives the same level of support in the subsequent election, and the exiled legislator is no more likely to retire. But this lack of electoral consequences is due, in part, to legislators

¹Replication data is available at justingrimmer.org and eleanorneffpowell.com.

shifting their priorities away from legislative work in Congress and towards electoral considerations in the district. Exiled legislators have greater campaign expenditures for their reelection efforts and, in turn, raise more money to support those reelection efforts. Perhaps due to their increased fundraising activities, exiled representatives participate less in Congress. The exiled legislators author fewer pieces of legislation and miss more days when Congress is in session, and marginal legislators vote less often with their party. Further, the effects endure: they are felt both immediately and in the subsequent Congress.

We caution that preferential committee assignments' lack of an electoral effect *does not* imply that committees are not beneficial electorally. Rather, our results show how committee assignments allow strategic legislators to invest their effort across their diverse goals. With preferred assignments, legislators are free to invest time in cultivating a Washington career. But in the absence of those preferred assignments, legislators compensate with increased attention in the district. The result is that strategic legislators are able to maintain their electoral support—their primary goal—but at a cost to their broader goals of policy influence in Washington. While evidence of this compensatory effort to overcome electoral effects is new to the literature on committees, it is consistent with recent studies that have exploited institutionalized randomizations to study legislative committees (Broockman and Butler 2011; Kellermann and Shepsle 2009).

To demonstrate the subsidizing effect of committees, we introduce a new approach to studying the effects of committees—an approach that we show provides unusually good leverage on the value of committee assignments. Our approach removes concerns that limit inferences that can be made from cross-sectional studies of committee effects—in particular matching estimators. And the usefulness of exile as an identification strategy will only increase in the coming Congresses. With large-scale swings in House membership over the most recent congressional elections, committee exile is an increasingly common phenomenon. To that end, we provide guidance on how to use exile data, the trade-offs that are made in using this identification strategy, and useful specification strategies. Together, this methodological contribution provides a strategy to begin addressing long-standing questions on how committee memberships affect representation in Congress.

We begin with an explanation of why exile is such a useful tool for limiting confounding in the study of committee assignment effects.

Institutional Design: Committee Assignment Process

After a defeat in a congressional election, the outgoing majority party is forced to relinquish power in a variety of ways. One of the most frustrating for returning incumbents is the loss of a valued committee assignment, which can occur when electoral losses are spread unevenly across committees. In addition to losing its majority status, a party loses at least a proportional number of seats on every committee as committee ratios are adjusted to reflect the new majority's seat advantage. This causes some legislators to lose their committee seats—or to be exiled—because electoral losses are unevenly distributed across committees.

To better understand how legislators are exiled from committees, we first review how seats on committees are determined.² The committee assignment process for any new congress begins with the committee assignments and party ratios of the previous congress. Following the election, both new and returning members submit committee (and transfer) requests. Before any assignments can be made, however, the majority and minority party leaders must negotiate the committee sizes and party ratios for each committee.³ Once the committee sizes and ratios are set, the assignment process by each party's Steering Committee takes place, and finally the slates are approved by the party caucus and eventually the full House. (We summarize the process and provide additional details in the online supplemental information).

While technically each party's committee assignment slates are subject to votes at both the caucus and chamber level, they are almost always upheld. Therefore, the decisions party leaders face in the committee-assignment process are of the greatest interest to us here. Both congressional parties employ a deference or seniority system approach to committee assignments. Once a member has received an assignment on a committee, it is assumed that she will have the option to continue serving on it.⁴ There is, however, an important and greatly understudied

²The committee assignment process itself has been the subject of considerable academic study; see Frisch and Kelly (2006) for an overview of the literature. See the supplemental information for further discussion.

³The House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct is the lone exception: House Rules guarantee both parties an equal number of seats.

⁴This is a strong norm in both parties but not a rule formalized in the Republican Party Conference Rules in the 112th Congress (Conference 2010).

exception to that rule: when there are an insufficient number of slots to accommodate the returning members.⁵ We call this process—the removal of a committee assignment due to electoral losses—exile.⁶

Once electoral losses have occurred and the need for exile arises, the party must select whom to exile from the committees. In deciding whom to exile, both parties employ a seniority system removing the least senior committee members (those with the fewest terms served on the committee). Contrary to other areas of institutional and party politics where seniority norms have eroded, this strict seniority system continues today.⁷ While this aberration in the trend toward a weakened seniority system is worthy of study in its own right, we can take advantage of this application of a seniority rule in the process of committee exile to gain causal leverage on how committees affect representation.

Our strategy for leveraging exile relies heavily on this seniority rule. Given our reliance upon it, it is natural to ask if the seniority rule reflects some other process that might undermine the usefulness of committee exile—such as compensation with other committee assignments or consideration of pet legislation. But a more benign logic explains the persistence of the seniority norm (at least for our purposes): maintenance of comity within the partisan caucus. For example, after one of the largest exile waves following the 1994 Republican Revolution, Carney summarized the problem facing Democratic leaders: “Whatever they decide, incoming Democratic leaders will be hard-pressed not to alienate fellow Democrats fighting over the shrinking committee pie . . . Any attempt to consider factors other than seniority on Appropriations could prove particularly explosive. ‘It would be very, very ugly,’ a Democratic House aide said. ‘It would be a real bloodbath

to start throwing people off the committee who are more senior in favor of people who are more junior” (1994, 2916). In an interview we detail in the supplemental information, Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)—co-chair of the Democratic committee that determines committee assignments—stated that the seniority rule helped Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) explain the loss of seats and reassure exiles. DeLauro said that “Pelosi could hold out is that we have precedent. She could say ‘look this is what we did in the past, people came off in order of seniority’.” Thus for the minority, the persistence of the seniority rule may largely be about preserving comity within the party during a particularly challenging period for party leaders.

We identified all instances of involuntary committee reassignment from the 80th Congress to the present, which resulted in 230 cases. We identified cases of exile by beginning with Nelson (2011) and Stewart and Woon’s (2011) databases of congressional committee assignments. We first identified every case in which a member left a previously held committee assignment. We then examined each of these cases individually to determine whether the member left due to a shortage of party seats created by electoral losses. The exiles are exclusively the result of reduced committee sizes or surplus members of a party sitting on a committee after substantial electoral losses, potentially compounded by a reduction in committee size.⁸

The observed pattern of committee exile aligns with the stated rule. If we rank copartisan legislators on a committee from 0 (the most senior) to 1 (the most junior), we find that exiled legislators have substantially less tenure on the committee (0.24 units higher), a difference extremely unlikely under the null of randomly selecting legislators for exile (p -value ≈ 0). Given the strong evidence of selection, it also is not surprising that exiled legislators have a much shorter tenure in the institution (3.7 fewer years, 95% confidence interval $[-5.04, -2.36]$). In the supplementary information, we provide detailed examples of how exile operates in practice.

Patterns of Exile

To better characterize the aggregate patterns of exile, in this section we examine more systematically when

⁵As Stewart explains, “Thus, over the past century, a type of property right in committee assignments has emerged in both chambers—members are allowed to hold onto their committee seats from one Congress to the next and may not be removed *unless* the party ratios change so dramatically between Congresses that junior members of the minority party find their seats abolished altogether” (2001, 299–300). While the term “property right” is frequently used, exceptions and violations including exile suggest that it is more of a behavioral regularity.

⁶While there are a handful of rare cases in which a member may lose his or her seat due to, say, a felony conviction, we confine our attention here to those following an exogenous (most likely electoral) induced change in committee ratios and when there is a surplus of return legislators to a particular committee.

⁷It is worth noting that in our data the seniority exile norms are never violated for what have traditionally been viewed as the two most powerful and desirable congressional committees: Appropriations, and Ways and Means.

⁸Inevitably, this process required making some assumptions, which probably are most strongly supported for exclusive and prestige committees that members never voluntarily leave. Any misclassified cases (voluntary departures) bias our results against our findings.

and how exile occurs in congressional committees. Committee exile occurs under both Democratic- and Republican-controlled congresses and, as we expect given the electoral circumstances that lead to exile, members of the minority party make up the vast majority of cases. While Democrats controlled the chamber, 79% of exile cases were Republicans, and while Republicans controlled the chamber, all exiles were Democrats.

The temporal patterns in committee exile further demonstrates that majority parties rarely exile their own members. Figure 1 below shows the partisan-exile breakdown over time beginning with the 81st Congress at the far left and moving forward toward the 112th Congress at the far right, omitting Congresses where no exile occurred. The bulk of exile cases occur after a major wave election that changed control of the chamber—such as the 104th, 110th, and 112th Congresses. The few cases of majority parties exiling their own members occurs during the long period of Democrat dominance in the House: during the 90th, 97th, and 99th Congresses.⁹ The exile of majority-party legislators from committees has ceased: the most recent of these majority exile cases occurred in the 99th Congress immediately following the 1984 Congressional elections.

Committee exiles, therefore, are primarily concentrated among the new minority and create variation in who belongs to committees. But to use exile as a strategy to identify the effect of committees, we need to demonstrate that leaders of the new majority are not strategically targeting committees to remove minority members. The possibility for manipulation arises if the new majority manipulates the party ratios or committee size to force minority members to be removed. Evidence against this strategic manipulation would be party ratios that remain relatively fixed from Congress to Congress. But if there is strategic manipulation, then we would expect large biases in favor of the new majority.

Figure 2 presents the majority-party bias on each committee from the 80th to the 112th Congress. A majority bias of zero (along the solid horizontal line) indicates that the partisan balance of the committee exactly reflected the partisan balance of the chamber, while a positive majority bias indicates a majority-party cushion above the chamber balance, and a negative bias indicates a rare minority-party cushion. The dashed

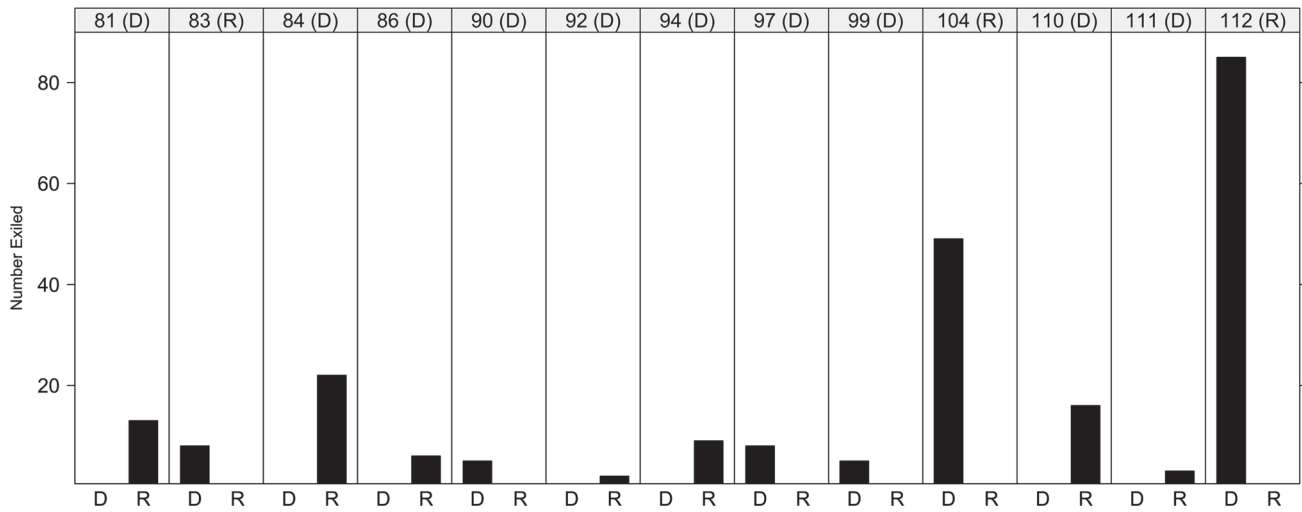
vertical lines indicate a party takeover year, in which there was a change in control of the chamber. The bottom row of graphs represent the prestige committees, which are those that have been traditionally considered by scholars to be the most desirable committee assignments. Consistent with the committee literature, we can see that committees that are essential to the majority's control of the chamber, such as the Rules Committee, maintain a large positive majority-party bias over time, while others, such as the Science, Space and Technology Committee are consistently more faithful to the partisan balance in the chamber.

Most relevant for our understanding of committee exile is the stability of the majority-party bias during the wave election years (alternations in control of the chamber), which generate most of our exile cases. If we look at the majority-party bias around the party takeover years (dashed vertical lines), we see that the majority-party bias is quite stable before and after takeover. This stability is reassuring for the purposes of research design: the majority party is not engaging in deliberate manipulations of committees to target individual members. Rather, the stability of the majority bias shows that, contingent on the election results, committee exile is largely exogenously determined by past party shares on committees.

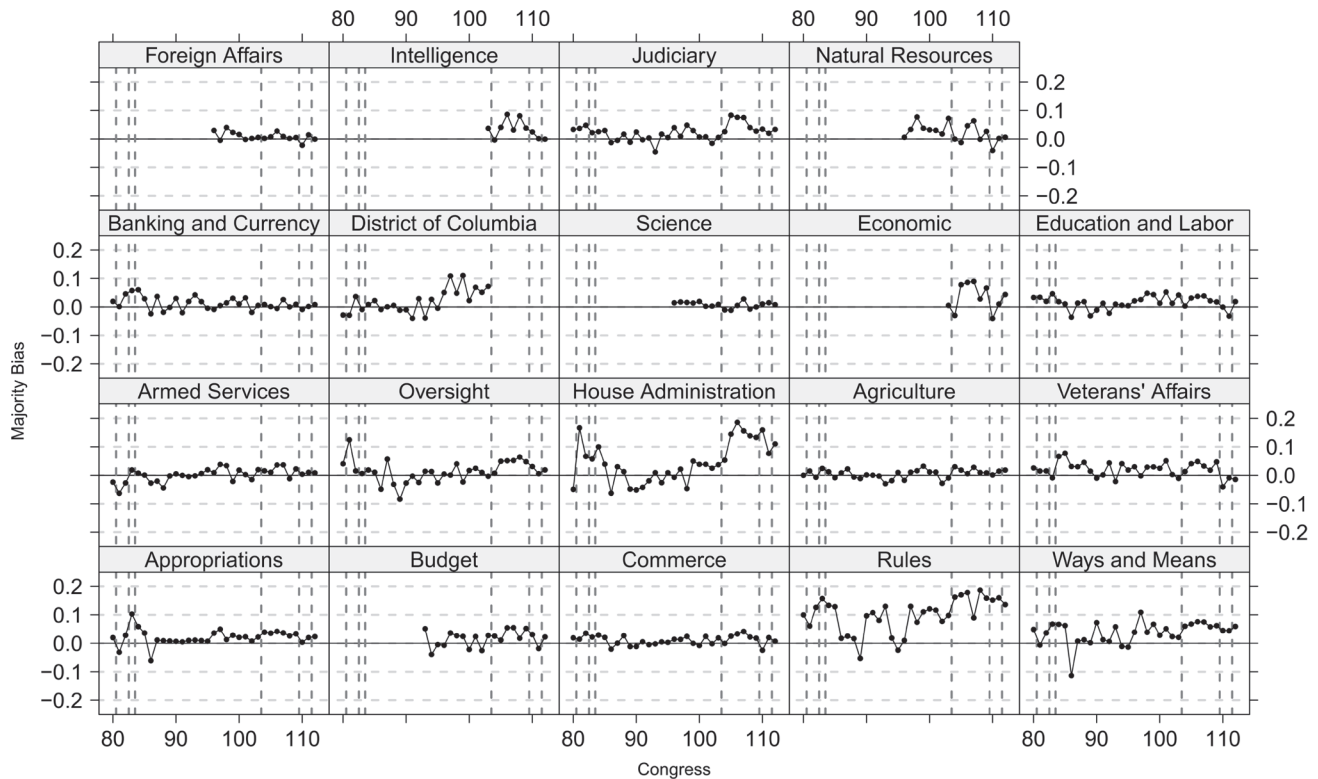
While minority-party members do not appear to be strategically targeted for exile, another possibility that could limit the usefulness of committee exile is that exiled legislators could receive compensatory committee assignments from the new minority. Figure 3 shows there is little compensation offered: most exiled legislators receive few additional, new committee assignments. To demonstrate this, we present in the bottom left-hand figure the exile patterns—where the exiles from a committee (rows) are sent (columns). For example, the shaded box in the lower right-hand corner of the figure represents exiled members of the Agriculture Committee who received no compensating assignment. The darker the cell, the larger the share of exiles. To help in the interpretation of this distribution of committee assignments, the bottom right-hand plot shows the total number of exiles from each committee, while the top-most plot sums over committees and shows that the modal outcome is no compensation.

Across committee assignments, the bottom left-hand plot in Figure 3 shows that legislators receive only marginal compensation after leaving a committee. This is even true for the most prestigious committee assignments. For example, the modal

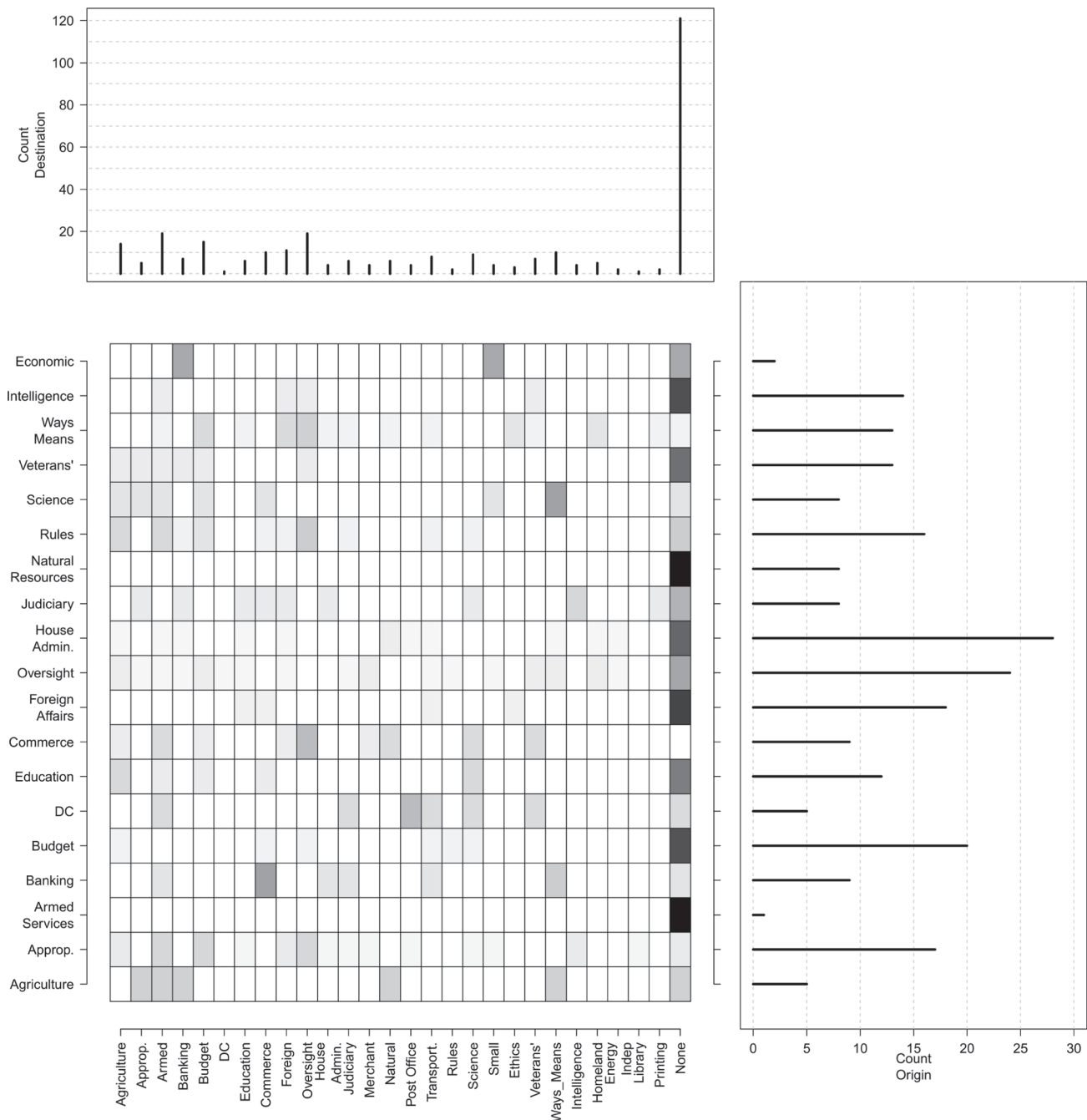
⁹These elections involved majority party (Democratic) losses of 48, 33, and 15 seats.

FIGURE 1 Exile Is Most Prevalent after a Wave Election

Note: This figure shows the number and the party of exiled legislators, and the Congress number of the legislators that were exiled. Members of the new minority are the most likely to be exiled.

FIGURE 2 Exile Is Not the Result of Strategic Committee Manipulation

Note: This figure shows that parties rarely manipulate party ratios on committees to induce committee exiles. Each cell in the figure shows the proportion of majority party members on a committee, less the proportion of majority party members in the House. Positive numbers are indicative of a promajority bias, negative numbers are evidence of an antimajority bias, and zero indicates no bias. On the whole, there is not a deviation in the majority party's share on a committee—there is little evidence new majorities are intentionally creating exiles.

FIGURE 3 Exiles Receive Little Compensation after They Are Removed

Note: This figure shows where representatives go after their exile from committees. The right-hand figure is a histogram that counts the number of exiles from committees—it shows that with a handful of exceptions, exile is roughly evenly distributed across committees. The bottom left-hand figure shows where a committee's exiles (rows) are sent (columns). The darker the cell, the more legislators sent there. Notice, most exiles from most committees receive no compensation. The top-most plot sums over committees and shows that the modal outcome is no compensation. On the whole, this shows that exiled legislators receive little, and often times no, compensation.

post-exile committee assignment for a representative from Ways & Means was a seat on Oversight. Similar compensation patterns in which members receive what might be perceived as a less desirable committee assignment can be seen on most of the

remaining committees. In the supplemental information, we directly measure the lack of compensation. We use measures of committee transfers from Stewart (2012), based on the method introduced in Groseclose and Stewart (1998), to show

that exiled legislators are transferred to lower prestige committees.¹⁰ The top plot in Figure 3 aggregates across committees to show the dramatic lack of compensation: more often than not, exiles fail to receive a new committee assignment.

Not only do members receive relatively little to compensate them for their exile, but the exile endures. Only about 11% of members ever return to serve on a committee from which they were exiled. In the online supplemental information, we show that there is higher rate of return on prestige committees such as Appropriations (9 out of 17 return) and Ways and Means (5 out of 13). But, using two case studies, we show in the supplemental information that there is substantial uncertainty about whether an exiled legislator will be able to return to a committee, even among those best placed to return. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), who was exiled from Appropriations in the 104th Congress and returned in the 105th Congress, told us in an interview that even with the assurances of the leadership, as an exiled member “you don’t know” if you’ll be able to return to the committee assignment.

Exiles’ uncertainty is about *if* and *when* they will return to their original committee. Exiles are unsure if current (and future) party leaders will honor promises of return based on seniority. Even if legislators trust party leaders about the order of return, exiles are still uncertain about when a vacancy on the committee will occur. With prestige and preferred committees populated with well-entrenched copartisan incumbents, it is hard for exiles to forecast when a vacancy will occur.

Committees as Electoral Subsidy

Instrumental legislators have diverse and multifaceted goals when deciding what to do when in Washington. While the primary goal of legislators is reelection (Mayhew 1974), legislators are also interested in secondary goals of developing good policy, advancing their careers, and even developing a reputation of policy effectiveness (Fenno 1973). Committee assignments can simultaneously help members accomplish both these primary and secondary goals, effectively serving as an electoral subsidy for campaign activity.

Scholars of congressional politics have often looked to the ability of members to use their congressional

committee assignments to their electoral advantage. Committee work provides this boost in electoral prospects by providing legislators the opportunity to deliver policy and particularistic goods to their district. When legislators work on committees, they develop expertise in the area (Clapp 1963), which is a credible and valuable signal to constituents that their representative exerts influence on policy (Fenno 1973; Katz and Sala 1996). Some committee assignments such as Agriculture or Armed Services allow members to signal expertise and take public positions on issues of great salience to their constituents. While other committee assignments, such as Ways and Means provide representatives with the capacity to develop nonpartisan bases of support through the delivery of particularistic goods to the district.

We argue that these electoral effects of congressional committees effectively serve as an electoral subsidy for campaign activity. When members reap electoral benefits from congressional committee assignments, those benefits free members to spend less time campaigning and instead more time legislating. In addition to the time and energy members save from campaigning, which can be spent legislatively on member’s secondary goals, committees further facilitate the accomplishment of legislative goals by serving as the primary venue for policymaking activity. Much, if not most, of that legislative action happens in congressional committees. Committees, then, are a natural venue where instrumental legislators will use their institutional positions to pursue their diverse goals.

Other committee assignments allow legislators to exercise substantial policy influence—even if it is difficult to use positions on the committees to bolster electoral support. While Appropriations, Agriculture, and Armed Services are helpful in a member’s quest for reelection, other committees might be more useful for members seeking influence within the chamber or a lobbying career after they retire. For example, Fenno argues that, “[t]he opportunity to achieve the three goals [reelection, influence within the House, and good public policy] varies widely among committees. House members, therefore, match their individual patterns of aspiration to the diverse patterns of opportunity presented by House committees” (1973, 1). For this reason, we might expect that once members lose the opportunities provided by a given committee assignment they will alter their behavior.

When legislators sit on committees that are either prestigious or desired, it allows them to invest in their career in Washington. As former Rep. Tom Delay (R-TX) observed, Congress is filled with two types of legislators: policy-focused legislators—members of

¹⁰A notable exception is on the Science, Space and Technology Committee in which members receive surprisingly desirable compensating committee assignments, though the small number of exiles from the Space, Science and Technology Committee limits the finding.

Congress who focus on their work in the institution—and district legislators—those legislators who focus on reelection and the concerns of the district (Draper 2012). While legislators sit on prestigious committees, they are able to pursue careers as policy legislators. But when legislators lose their committee assignments, they lose the opportunity to pursue their career through their committee assignment. They also lose clout—the exiled legislators are no longer able to exercise direct influence over the content of bills before they reach the floor. The result is that the legislators shift towards a district and reelection focus.

Part of this district focus will manifest in how legislators campaign. If more focused on reelection, we expect that legislators will raise and spend more money on their reelection effort. The district focus will also limit their work in Washington. So, exiled legislators should author fewer pieces of legislation and miss more days when Congress is in session. A final implication is that committee exile will affect how legislators vote in Washington. If exiled legislators adopt a greater focus on the district, they should defer less to their party when casting roll-call votes. This is particularly true when the district and party preferences clash, implying marginal representatives should be less likely to vote with their party.

An implication of a greater district focus after exile is that involuntary committee removal will have a limited effect on legislators' electoral support. When legislators adopt a greater focus on their district after exile, they compensate for losing their seat on the committee. The result is that exiled legislators will maintain levels of support to those legislators who remain on the prestigious committees. But it is worth emphasizing that we expect that this sustained electoral support comes at the cost of legislators shifting their career goals.

Deterministic Assignment Based on Observables

We test our expectations by building a research design around committee exile. The goal of our inference is to measure the effect of a committee assignment for the legislators who are assigned to the committee: the average treatment effect on the treated or ATT. Adopting the now familiar potential outcome notation (Holland 1986), for each legislator i , treatment status T_i , and outcome Y_i , we will suppose that a legislator has a response under treatment, $Y_i(T_i = 1)$ —assigned to the committee—and control, $Y_i(T_i = 0)$ —not assigned

to the committee. Our effect of interest is the average treatment effect among those who receive a committee assignment, $E[Y(1) - Y(0)|T = 1]$.

The primary challenge in estimating this effect is that it is impossible to measure all the characteristics that affect committee assignments. Some characteristics are easy to identify—legislators more senior, more loyal to the party, and those with greater fundraising prowess are more likely to obtain seats on preferred committees (Cox and McCubbins 1993; Currinder 2008). But obtaining desired committee assignments also depends on political skill, the persuasion of party leaders, and the demonstration of legislative capacity in a particular area (Shepsle 1978). These characteristics are difficult to measure in observational studies. This is a particular problem for matching estimators: as the balance improves between the *treatment* group—legislators who obtain desirable committee assignments—and the *control* group—legislators who fail to obtain the desirable assignments—the unobservable characteristics are likely to remain and confound estimates of the treatment effects.

Committee exile provides a deterministic assignment mechanism for determining who remains on particular committees. This deterministic selection on observables is useful because it mitigates the unmeasured confounding. This mitigation occurs, in part, because all legislators—both those who are exiled and those that remain on committees—had sufficient political acumen to obtain a seat on the prestige committee. The hope is that legislators who remain on the committee and those that are removed from the committee are similar on unmeasured characteristics, limiting their potential influence on the estimation of the effect of committee assignments on legislative behavior.

We build our modeling strategy around exile, comparing the change in exiles' behavior before and after committee removal to the change in behavior of copartisan members of the same committee over the same time period. That is, we make our design more robust by comparing exiled legislators' behavior to exiled legislators' copartisans who remain on the committee in the new Congress. We use only copartisans to avoid party-specific swings in support that can occur after a new majority arrives in Congress.¹¹ And we restrict our sample to those who remain on

¹¹By limiting analysis to copartisans and comparing, for example, Republicans exiled from a given committee to returning Republicans from that Committee, party-specific swings should impact both groups (treated and untreated) and thus not affect our results.

committees to ensure that we are comparing legislators with similar political skills and interests—those with sufficient political acumen to obtain a seat on the committee—limiting potential confounding from difficult-to-measure characteristics. To further mitigate biases, all of our models include lagged measures of exiled and nonexiled legislators' behavior. This ensures that we are examining how exile *changes* legislators. We further mitigate this bias with additional covariates and fixed effects for committee and year.

Demonstrating that any research design provides balance on unmeasured characteristics is, by definition, impossible. But an implication of balance on unmeasured variables is that exiled and remaining legislators are similar on measured characteristics. Figure 4 shows that this is the case—presenting the standardized differences between exiled legislators and nonexiled legislators of the same party as the exiled legislators (on the horizontal axis) across several *pre-exile* characteristics. For characteristics not explicitly used to select legislators for involuntary removal, both exiled and nonexiled legislators are quite similar—this includes prior campaign spending, nominate scores, and support for the same party presidential candidate in the district. The

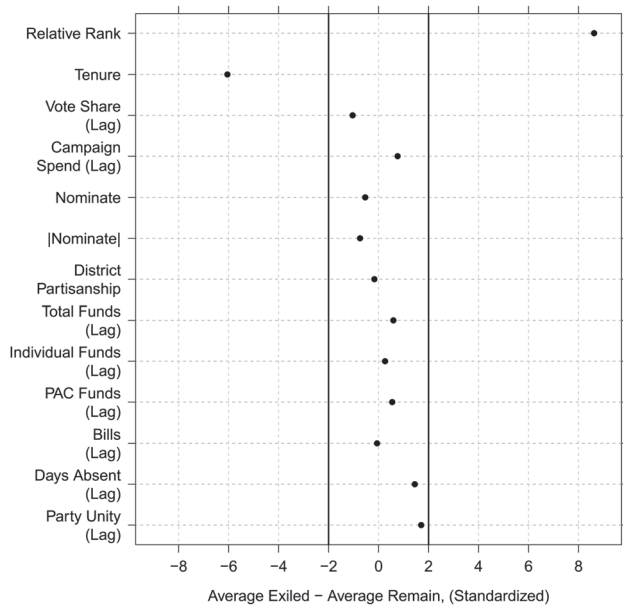
similarity also extends to the pre-exile values of dependent variables that we will use in our analysis—exiled and nonexiled legislators had similar levels of prior vote share, days missed in Washington, number of bills sponsored, money raised, and party-unity score.

But exiled and remaining legislators are quite different on characteristics that determine who is selected for exile. Consistent with the rules used to determine exile, Figure 4 shows that legislators who have a lower rank are much more likely to be exiled. This closely covaries with tenure in the institution, so not surprisingly, exiled legislators have spent fewer years in Congress. This demonstrates the trade-offs that must be made when using exile to study the effects of committees. Because we include both tenure and relative rank on committees in our analyses, we are able to mitigate the bias that this induces.

Committee exile is useful, therefore, because it provides a clear mechanism to identify who is allowed to remain on committees. Exile provides a deterministic assignment mechanism, but Figure 4 shows that some differences remain across exiled and nonexiled legislators. To address this remaining imbalance, we use lagged values of our dependent variable of interest, covariates that are potential confounders, and fixed effects for committee and years. Specifically, for each legislator i , we model her response after exile $Y_{i,1}$ as,

$$Y_{i,1} = \beta_0 + \tau \text{Exile}_i + \gamma Y_{i,0} + \beta' X_i + \sum_{j=1}^C \alpha_j \text{Comm}_{ij} + \sum_{t=1}^T \eta_t \text{Year}_{it} + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

FIGURE 4 Exiled Legislators Are Similar to the Copartisans Who Remain on Committee



Note: This figure shows the standardized difference in means across the pre-exile covariates used in this study. For most covariates, the exiled legislators are strikingly similar to the legislators who remain on the committees. But this is not true for the variables used to select the exiles: tenure and relative rank.

where $Y_{i,0}$ is the lagged dependent variable, X_i is a vector of covariates, Comm_{ij} is an indicator of whether legislator i serves (or was exiled from) committee j , Year_{it} is an indicator of the year the legislator was included, and ϵ_i is an error term. To reiterate, we apply equation (1) only to exiled legislators' copartisans who served on the same committee in the prior Congress. Further, we include baseline characteristics $Y_{i,0}$ to limit confounding due to potential differences in legislators' baseline rates of performing particular activities. We also include in X_i a set of covariates that are potential confounders—such as the same-party presidential candidate's vote share in the district (*District Partisanship*) and spending in the prior election (*Prev. Campaign Exp.*). We also include variables directly related to the selection of exiled legislators—including a legislator's relative rank on the committee (*Rel. Rank*) and the number of years in the institution (*Tenure*). Note that this specification strategy makes use of all legislators who remain on the committee. In the supplemental

information, we show that a matched sample that uses only the exiled and nonexiled legislators most similar on tenure and relative rank provides the same findings.

Using this robust research design and the specification in equation (1), we will use our estimate of τ as the effect of exile on the behavior of legislators—the effect of *losing* a committee assignment. To summarize, our design has three steps to mitigate potential biases: (1) we use legislators removed due to exile, providing a clear and deterministic assignment based on observables; (2) we restrict our sample to copartisan members of the same committee prior to exile, who remain on the committee, ensuring both treatment and control group experience the same national partisan swings; and (3) we include lagged values of all our dependent variables to examine how exiled legislators' behavior changes relative to change in nonexiled legislators' behavior and regression to include additional covariates.¹²

Committee Exile and Increased District Focus

Using the research design described in the previous section, we examine the far-reaching effects of committee exile on how members of Congress approach their job. First, we consider the electoral effects of committee exile for the minority party. The left-hand panel of Figure 5 demonstrates the average effect of involuntary removal on the exiled legislator's party's electoral support in the district. To measure this effect, we use equation (1) with the percentage point support for legislators in the election after switching to the minority as the dependent variable. The bottom line shows the average effect of exile across all committees, while the remaining lines show the committee-specific effect, estimated using a multilevel model, as detailed in Gelman and Hill (2007). In this plot and the subsequent plots, the points in each plot

represent the average effect of committee exile, while the thick and thin bars are 80% and 95% confidence intervals, respectively.

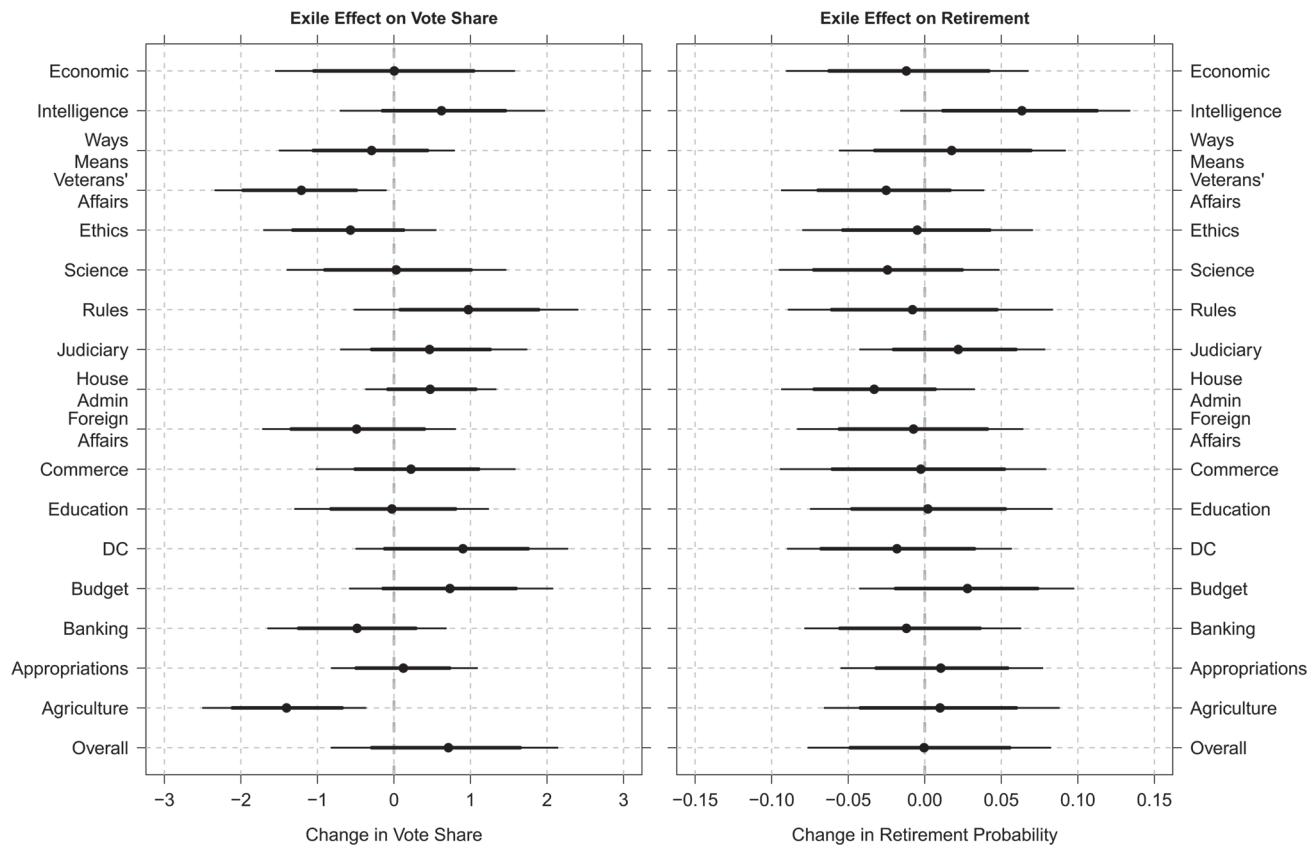
The bottom line in the left-hand plot of Figure 5 shows that committee exile has no real electoral effect. For districts with a representative exiled from a committee, the minority party experiences a minute decrease in vote share of about 0.55 percentage points, and this confidence interval overlaps substantially with zero (95% confidence interval, [-1.46, 2.54]).¹³ The remaining lines show the committee-specific effects of exile—these too exhibit substantively small and statistically insignificant differences from zero. Perhaps the most notable exception is the Agriculture committee—which is traditionally viewed as a reelection committee that farming district representatives use to build support with constituents (Fenno 1973).

The right-hand plot in Figure 5 shows the effect of committee exile on retirement rates overall and for each of the committees. To compute these effects, we use equation (1) with an indicator of whether a legislator leaves the House as the dependent variable and estimate the overall effect with probit regression and the committee-specific effects with a multilevel probit regression. Similar to vote share, there is little effect of exile on retirement. Exiled representatives are only 0.1 percentage points more likely to retire, with a 95% confidence interval nearly centered on zero ([-0.08, 0.08]). The committee-specific effects show that there is a nearly uniform null effect across committees. And exile does little to affect when legislators decide to leave Congress. Exiled legislators tend to leave only slightly earlier (hazard ratio, 1.14) and the 95% confidence intervals imply we cannot reject the null that exile has no effect on when legislators leave Congress ([0.76, 1.72]).

Committee membership not only affects legislators support among voters, it also enables legislators to pursue legislative careers that may advance their nonelectoral goals. The implication is that exile has limited electoral consequences because it changes how legislators invest their time in Washington. After exile, legislators become more focused on the district and therefore have less time available to participate in the policymaking process in Washington. One implication of legislators focusing more on the district and reelection is that they should become more prolific fundraisers and, in turn, spend more on reelection. Figure 6 shows that this is the case. The topline in this figure shows the effect of exile on the amount

¹²As this article was written before the 2012 congressional elections, we drop all exiles from the 112th Congress. As an alternative design strategy, we could use legislators who arrive on committees, but this will induce severe biases. Legislators who are striving to obtain a committee assignment are altering their behavior to obtain the assignment. Our case studies show that there is substantial uncertainty in who will return, therefore we do not expect that this will pollute our results. For all analyses that measure the effect of exile after the first Congress, we remove all legislators who return to the committee. As with all such designs, we are making a trade-off in favor of internal validity by restricting the population of legislators for whom our inferences apply (Sekhon and Titiunik 2012).

¹³Tables that summarize the models used to produce the figures in this section are found in the supplemental information.

FIGURE 5 The Minimal Electoral Consequences of Committee Exile

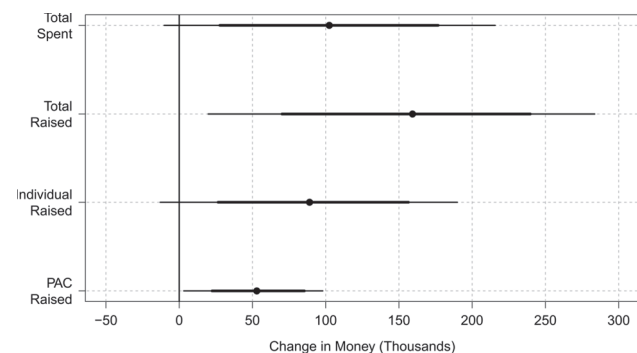
Note: This figure shows the effect of exile on the minority party's vote share in the subsequent election (left-hand plot) and retirement (right-hand plot). Exile has largely a minimal effect on vote share or retirement.

nonretiring legislators spend on reelection. We use equation (1) with the total dollar amount spent on the election as the dependent variable. On the horizontal axis is the effect of exile on the amount spent (measured in thousands of dollars).

The top line of Figure 6 shows that exiled and nonretiring legislators spend about \$111,750 more on their reelection effort (95% confidence interval [-8433, 221309]). This is a meaningful increase in expenditures: the average candidate spent about \$945,000 on their campaign. After exile, legislators substantially increase the money spent to win their elections.

To support this increased campaign spending, legislators increase the amount of money they fundraise—drawing on both individuals and political action committees (PACs) to bolster their campaign funds. We measure the effect of exile on fundraising using equation (1) with the dollar amount raised as the dependent variable and estimate the model with least squares. The second line from the top of Figure 6 shows that exiled legislators substantially increase

the amount of money they raise. Exile causes legislators to raise \$153,822 more for their reelection efforts (95% confidence interval [\$27360, \$293803]).

FIGURE 6 The Campaign Financing Consequences of Committee Exile for Nonretiring Legislators

Note: This figure shows that after exile legislators spend much more money (top line) and raise much more money to be spent in total (second line) from both individual (third line) and PAC (bottom line) donors.

The next two lines in Figure 6 show that the increase in fundraising comes from donations from both individuals and political action committees (PACs). This effect endures beyond the first Congress after a legislator is exiled. In the second Congress after being removed from the committee, exiled legislators raise an additional \$110,790 in total (95% confidence interval $[-27782, 249362]$), \$47,000 from individuals (95% confidence interval $[-34580, 128744]$), and \$53,640 from PACs (95% confidence interval $[6424, 100850]$).

Not only are legislators raising and spending more money, they are participating less in Washington politics. One manifestation of the decreased participation is that exiled legislators author fewer pieces of legislation. To assess the effect of exile on bill introduction, we use equation (1), with the number of bills introduced in the Congress after exile as the dependent variable. To calculate the number of bills introduced, we use the collection of bill introductions from the Congressional Bills Project (Adler and Wilkerson 2012). We estimate equation (1) with a poisson regression.

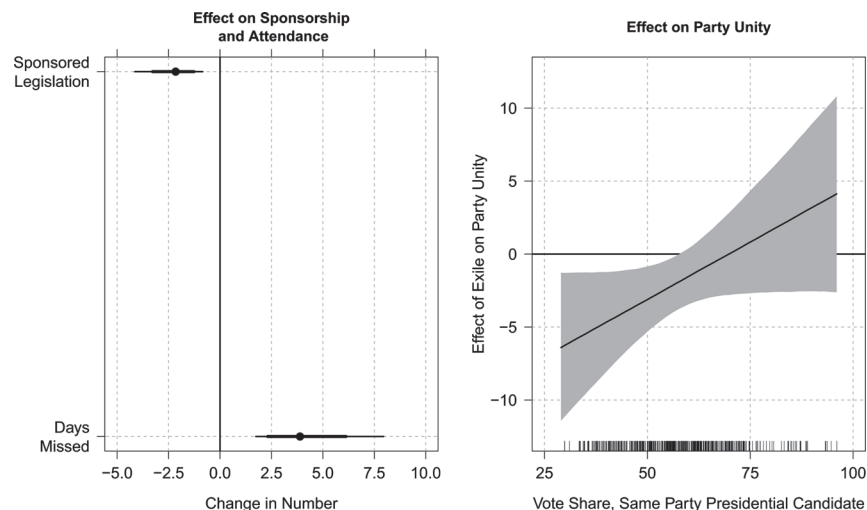
The top line in the left-hand plot of Figure 7 shows that exile reduces the number of bills that legislators produce. After exile, legislators author 2.3 fewer pieces of legislation (95% confidence interval $[-4.15, -1.05]$). This reduction of two bills authored is large, relative to the authorship rates in our sample, where legislators average 9.7 bill introductions each session. The immediate drop in the number of bills authored may occur as legislators adjust to their new committee

assignments. But the decrease in sponsorship continues in the second Congress after exile. There, exiled legislators author 1.4 fewer pieces of legislation (95% confidence interval $[-2.78, -0.01]$).

Exiled legislators are also absent from Congress during more days when it is in session. To show that exiled legislators are absent more often, we use the roll-call voting record to measure absence from Washington. Specifically, using the roll-call voting data from www.voteview.com (Poole and Rosenthal 1997), we calculate the number of days a legislator is absent. If a legislator misses all roll-call votes on a day, we record her as absent. For each legislator we then calculated the total number of days that she missed. We estimate the effect of exile on the total number of days missed using equation (1), which we estimate with a poisson regression.

The bottom line in the left-hand plot of Figure 7 shows that exiled legislators spend less time in Washington. After exile, legislators are absent an additional 3.3 days of voting (95% confidence interval $[1.42, 7.03]$). As with the number of bills introduced, this seemingly small difference is actually quite large when compared to baseline rates of absence. On average, legislators only miss about 10 days of Congress in a given session—so a three-day shift constitutes a large increase in the amount of absences. And as with the number of bills introduced, this is an enduring effect on legislators' behavior in Washington. In the second Congress after exile, exiled legislators miss an additional 1.8 days (95% confidence interval $[0.13, 4.37]$). The combination of a decline in the

FIGURE 7 The Participation and Voting Consequences of Exile



Note: This figure shows that legislators author fewer pieces of legislation, are absent for more days of voting, and vote less often with their party.

number of bills sponsored and the number of days absent provides strong evidence that exiled legislators turn their attention to the district. After all, the decline in the number of bills sponsored could be a consequence of the lost policy influence from losing a committee assignment. But the increase in number of days absent shows that legislators are spending less time in Washington (or at least less time casting roll-call votes).

Exiled legislators also change their voting behavior to be more in line with the district. If committees act as an electoral subsidy, then legislators who are exiled have increased incentive to align themselves with their constituent views—no longer able to cultivate leeway through their policy influence in Washington. Not all legislators have equal incentive to deviate from the party once pressure from their party leaders is removed. Those representatives from marginal districts—those composed of a large share of the other party's partisans—should have much greater incentive to deviate than representatives from more aligned districts. To assess whether this is true, we use measures of party unity posted on the www.voteview.com website. Because we expect that effect of exile on party unity scores will depend upon a legislator's constituency, we modify equation (1) to include a term that interacts exile with the partisan composition of a legislator's district.

The right-hand plot in Figure 7 demonstrates that exiled legislators from marginal districts deviate substantially away from the party. The horizontal axis in Figure 7 presents the vote share for the same party presidential candidate as the representative in the district (our measure of the district's partisanship), and the small bars along the horizontal axis is a rug plot that demonstrates where the observed district partisanship occurs. The vertical axis presents the effect of exile on a legislator's party-unity score. The black line is the average effect of exile, conditional on the partisan composition of a legislators district, and the gray area is a 95% confidence envelope.

This plot demonstrates that the legislators who deviate from their party the most after exile are those legislators who reside in the most marginal districts. For example, exile causes legislators in relatively marginal districts (40% of the vote for the same party presidential candidate, 10th percentile of districts in our sample) to decrease their party-unity scores 4.7 percentage points (95% confidence interval, [-8.15, -1.38]). And in the second Congress after being removed, exiled legislators maintain their decreased party unity, -2.8 percentage points (95% confidence interval, [-6.69, 0.97]). But for legislators from well-aligned districts, exile has little effect on their party unity score. For

example, legislators who represent districts where 68% of voters voted for the same party presidential candidate (80th percentile of districts in our sample) decrease their party-unity score only 0.3 percentage points—a decrease that is neither statistically nor substantively significant (95% confidence interval [-2.70, 1.94]).¹⁴

Conclusion

Together, our results show the wide-reaching effects of congressional committees as electoral subsidy. Leveraging a new strategy for estimating the effect of congressional committees, we find that committees empower legislators to maintain high levels of support while focusing less on the district. Once the electoral subsidy of the preferred committee assignment is removed, legislators are forced to turn their attention to the district. The result is that we find committee exile has only a conditional effect on a party's vote share.

Legislators' shift in attention from policymaking in Washington to campaigning back home manifests itself across a variety of activities. After losing a committee assignment, exiled legislators spend more money on their reelection effort. To support this spending, they also raise substantially more money. There is also a clear shift away from policy work in Washington. Exiled legislators author fewer pieces of legislation and miss more days when Congress is in session. Exiled legislators also align more closely with their district preferences when casting roll-call votes. Legislators who represent districts composed of legislators from the other party vote with their party less often, while legislators from districts composed of copartisans change their voting behavior little or vote with their party more often.

Our research contributes a new view of the effect of committees on legislative behavior and a new research design to identify these effects (e.g., Broockman and Butler 2011; Kellermann and Shepsle 2009). This research shows that legislators are able to compensate for the loss of a preferred committee assignment. The result is that there appears to be few electoral benefits to obtaining a committee assignment, but this is only because legislators are able to compensate for their lack of a preferred assignment. This compensation, though,

¹⁴An alternative explanation is that exiles pursue higher office. In the supplemental information, we show this is unlikely: our results are inconsistent with running for higher office, and exiled legislators are no more likely to run for Senate than comparable legislators.

restricts the amount of policy work legislators can perform in Washington. Committee exile, therefore, can substantially alter who is contributing new policy proposals to Congress and who is evaluating those proposals.

Our research design is quite general: committee exile can be useful in tackling other substantively interesting congressional questions that are usually confounded by selection and identification problems. This future agenda will expand upon what we have demonstrated here: that the involuntary loss of committee assignments has far-reaching consequences—both for the policy creation process in Washington and the representational process in congressional districts.

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