

Legislator Financial Interests and Distributive Committees

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Abstract

I use a new dataset of American state legislators' outside financial interests to assess the distributive theory of committees. Significant numbers of committees regulating agriculture, banking, education, health care, and insurance over-represent legislators with financial interests in the committee's jurisdiction, supporting the distributive model. Further, the breadth of a committee's jurisdiction is related to its representativeness in a manner consistent with the distributive model. I also find that committee representativeness as measured by legislator interests is uncorrelated with committee representativeness measured using NOMINATE scores.

NOTE:

This is the version I took to MPSA and that got dinged by AJPS. My presentation will incorporate some of the reviewers' comments and take a different tack from what's here.

Since its introduction, the distributive theory of committees as formalized by Weingast and Marshall (1988) (also Shepsle and Weingast 1987) has been controversial and has sparked long-running disputes within political science. Much of the empirical side of this debate has been over whether or not committees are uniform high-demanders of the goods the committee can provide. Many researchers (Weingast and Marshall 1988, Krehbiel 1990, Cox and McCubbins 1993, Groseclose 1994, Adler and Lapinski 1997) have conducted empirical tests of the distributive model in the U.S. House. Other researchers have tested theories of committees in state legislatures. (Overby and Kazee 2000, Overby, Kazee, and Prince 2004, Battista 2004, Prince and Overby 2005) Using state legislatures to test theories devised for Congress has long been held up as a useful way to assess the generalizability of those theories. (Squire and Hamm 2005, Jewell 1981) However, it has been difficult to directly assess the predictive power of the distributive model in state legislatures because measures of preferences relevant to the distributive model are difficult to obtain. Nearly all of the articles that examine committee representativeness in state legislatures estimate legislator preferences with either NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal 1997) scores or National Federation of Independent Businesses voting scores. Neither of these preference estimates tap into the essential concept of the high-demanding outlier because they are not jurisdiction-specific. Rather, both are probably highly correlated with ideology. These preference measures mean that while current articles can say something about the informativeness of state legislative committees – a committee that is too liberal or too conservative would be a bad informational agent if there is uncertainty along an ideological dimension – they cannot say anything about the extent to which state legislative committees are distributive.

In this paper, I use data on state legislators' financial interests to better address the question of whether state legislative committees are consistent with the distributive model, thereby testing the generalizability of that model. If legislators with a financial interest in an industry can be expected to be biased towards that industry, this affords us a direct test of the distributive model. Using these new data, I find substantially more support for the distributive model than had previously been found in state legislatures. However, even this more supportive evidence is still mixed and does not offer unequivocal or definitive support for the distributive model.

The distributive model and state legislatures

While they did not originate the idea that distributive politics are important in Congress or that congressional committees are important tools for distribution, the particular formalization of the distributive model that is probably best known was put forward by Weingast and Marshall (1988). They argued that committee systems represent an institutionalized vote-trade, a petrified logroll. Legislators might wish to trade votes over policies that different constituencies demand, but trading votes is difficult for two reasons. First, legislators have a direct incentive not to go through with their end of the trade in order to reduce the tax burden to their own district. (Weingast and Marshall 1988, 140) Second, other legislators might attempt to eliminate subsidy programs that have already passed or even taken effect, again to reduce the tax burden to their own constituents. (Weingast and Marshall 1988, 139–140) These incentives mean that a rational legislator would find it difficult to trust his or her colleagues to go through with their end of the vote trade, and to refrain from repealing the relevant benefit in the near future. A committee system characterized by gatekeeping and self-selection can deal with these problems. If committees can prevent bills from coming to the floor, a committee can quietly veto any bill that would reduce subsidy levels. Likewise, a committee system in which legislators choose their committee assignments helps reduce the complex string of vote trades to a single, one-time exchange of power ratified by the vote accepting committee slates for the session. (Weingast and Marshall 1988, 144) Empirically, the distributive model predicts that legislators should seek membership on the committees most valuable to them. Iterated across legislators and committees, this process should create outlying committees that have a stronger taste for providing committee benefits than does the chamber as a whole. That is, in a distributive world the agriculture committee should be dominated by members from farming districts who have a greater preference for farm subsidies than does the chamber. This leads to a legislature that whose total policy output is strongly biased towards providing an inefficiently large amount of all types of subsidies and other particularized benefits.

In their original article, Weingast and Marshall (1988) found that several U.S. House committees had mean interest-group scores that were higher than the mean of the chamber. Adler and Lapinski

(1997) found similar results using district characteristics to estimate Representatives' preferences. Other researchers (Krehbiel 1990, Cox and McCubbins 1993) have disagreed, and have used a variety of preference estimates and comparison techniques to argue that committees are not unrepresentative outliers. Groseclose (1994) argued that the picture is mixed, but favors the preference outlier hypothesis. Parker, Parker, Copa, and Lawhorn (2005) examined patterns of division and consensus on committees and found support for the distributive model. Hurwitz, Moiles, and Rohde (2001) found both distributive and partisan dimensions to agriculture decisions in the 104th U.S. House. Many other researchers have addressed this question for the U.S. House, and have found a range of findings.

State legislatures as a testbed for committee theories

There has also been a recent stream of articles looking to state legislatures to examine theories of committees. Overby, Kazee, and Prince (2004) and Prince and Overby (2005) both used interest-group scores from the National Federation of Independent Businesses or the Chamber of Commerce to estimate preferences in nearly all lower and upper chambers respectively. They found that outlying committees were rare; three percent of lower-chamber committees (Overby, Kazee, and Prince 2004, 87) and eleven percent of upper-chamber committees (Prince and Overby 2005, 78) differed from their parent chambers at a significance level of 0.05 or better. Battista (2004) used unidimensional NOMINATE scores as preference estimators in a study of eleven state legislative chambers, and likewise found outliers to be rare (4.5% outlying at a 0.05 level).

However, the preference estimators in these works should be seen as something close to general measures of ideology. This is most obvious for NOMINATE, where under many commonplace voting records the recovered dimension is liberal/conservative. But we should also view scores issued by a general business-oriented interest group as approximately ideological; a dimension dividing pro-business from anti-business legislators can be expected to be correlated with a liberal/conservative dimension. But this means that none of these studies can directly assess the distributive model, because all of them lack the jurisdiction-specific measures that testing the distributive theory requires.

That is, to assess the distributive theory we must know how pro-farmer the agriculture committee of a given chamber is, not how liberal or conservative or generally pro-business it is, and data of this sort is largely unavailable for comparative state research. While there are an increasing number of interest group scores available for state legislators, the groups offering the scores often vary from state to state, introducing additional uncertainty into the measures. At the same time, more scores are available for professionalized, full-time legislatures than for citizen, part-time legislatures, making it difficult to secure representative samples of states. While it might be tempting to assume that a committee that is unrepresentative ideologically is a distributive committee, it need not be. We would not expect it to be also a distributive high-demander unless the relevant jurisdiction-specific measure were highly correlated with ideology. Because of this, the most that can be said of the outliers identified by Overby, Kazee, and Prince, or Prince and Overby, or Battista, is that they would be bad suppliers of information if there is substantial uncertainty about the connection between policy and outcome concentrated on a liberal-conservative axis.

State legislative researchers have used different techniques to try to circumvent this data problem. Martorano (2006) looked at the formal rules of legislatures in order to assess the institutional underpinnings of the distributive model. She asked whether the sets of rules in each of 24 lower chambers from 1955–1995 were consistent with the autonomous, powerful committees that the distributive model hypothesizes. The distributive theory would assert that strong property rights in committee assignments should be linked to stronger, more autonomous committees, but Martorano found the reverse – stronger property rights are associated with less autonomous committees, so arguing against the distributive model. Battista (2006) examined internal committee behavior in the California Legislature, in part to more directly address the distributive model. He found that most committees' internal voting records displayed some characteristics of preference divergence between the chamber and the committee, such as the committee voting unanimously to report a bill on which the floor vote was deeply divided. (Battista 2006, 162–163) But at the same time, committees also displayed other characteristics that better fit with the informational (Krehbiel 1991), partisan (Cox and McCubbins 1993), or conditional (Maltzman 1997) models. (Battista 2006, 166–167) These papers illustrate that imaginative use of available data can counteract the lack of interest

group scores in state legislatures.

In this paper, I take another approach, estimating preferences using information on legislators' financial interests, as well as those of their immediate families, taken from financial disclosure statements required by law. The basic assumption is that a legislator with a direct or familial financial connection to agriculture should have a stronger preference for providing agricultural subsidies or other laws that benefit farmers than would a legislator with no such financial interest. To the extent that this assumption holds, a committee with a preponderance of legislators with financial interests in the committee's jurisdiction should be a high-demanding outlier. Hamm (1986) used a similar method to examine subgovernments in the Colorado legislature. Using original data on the occupations, association memberships, government experience, and district characteristics of members, he found that there were an abundance of "interested" legislators on the agriculture, education, and transportation committees of the Colorado House and Senate.

Data

To assess the degree to which committees are dominated by interested legislators, I examine five classes of committee and interest: agriculture, banking, education, health care, and insurance. A primary reason for restricting my analysis to these committee/interest pairs is that these are the committees whose jurisdictions line up most neatly to legislators' interests as identified in the data. These jurisdictions are also important subjects of state-level regulation, service provision, and administration. Apart from agriculture, these jurisdictions do involve one substantial break with the Weingast-Marshall model as originally published. The Weingast-Marshall model assumes that reelection is the primary motive force behind vote-trading politics and the committee system, and that legislators are choosing committee assignments to provide benefits to their districts, writing that "Electoral competition induces congressmen, at least in part, to represent the interests of their constituents." But it seems unlikely that there are significant numbers of districts with concentrations of education workers or health care workers that are so high that their legislators work in the interests of education or health care because their biased district demands it, in the way we might

think of an agriculture committee serving district needs. However, it is reasonable to think that they should nonetheless fit into a Weingast-Marshall system of committees as logroll agents.

To see this, note that the Weingast-Marshall model has two phases. In the first, legislators acquire preferences from their district's economic interests. In the second, legislators trade influence across interests and form a committee system to cement their vote trade. Re-election only enters their model as a means to assign preferences to legislators – if legislators have at least some exogenous preferences that do not spring from their districts' economic interests, then they can act upon these preferences in the second stage, trading influence and votes just as they would with preferences induced by re-election. Further, it is reasonable to think that legislators might have active preferences that are not induced by electoral concerns in addition to preferences induced by the district, though we would not expect legislators to commonly hold preferences that run counter to the economic interests of the district. In his seminal discussion of Congressmen in committees, Fenno (1973) noted that while some committees provide electoral benefit to the Representative, others (such as the foreign relations committees) do not seem tightly connected to re-election or to constituency interests. But if we take the vote-trading core of the Weingast-Marshall model seriously, Representatives should be self-selecting onto these policy committees out of self-interest and their own preferences and priorities, so that the foreign relations committees are composed disproportionately of MCs with strong preferences about foreign relations. That is, if the distributive model is a strong model, legislators should be trading influence across all of the dimensions of their preferences and not only across those that are closely tied to their constituents' economic interests. At the same time, however, we should expect any distributive tendencies to be strongest for committees regulating agriculture as agriculture combines the possibility for exogenous interest in a policy area with the re-election motivations that Weingast and Marshall emphasize.

A small number of committees appear in the data more than once. This happens when the same committee deals with more than one of the interests, such as a committee on banking and insurance or a health, education, and welfare committee. In these cases, the committee is considered first from one perspective and then another. A banking and insurance committee is assessed first for an overabundance of legislators with ties to banking, and then for ties to the insurance industry. A

fuller discussion of the role of jurisdiction breadth appears after the initial presentation of findings.

The preference estimator I use is based on data on state legislators' financial interests. These data were collected by the Center for Public Integrity, "a nonprofit organization dedicated to producing original, responsible investigative journalism on issues of public concern." (Center for Public Integrity 2006) The Center collected all of the financial-disclosure filings submitted by state legislators in 1999 and coded legislator financial ties to several industries and sub-industries as well as legislator committee assignments. In this paper, I use data for lower state legislative chambers, counting all financial ties except for accounts with and loans from financial institutions and simple investments. The remaining financial ties include direct income from an industry, pension income from an industry, income from clients in an industry, business or farm profit, ownership of real property, officer or director positions, and so on. I exclude simple stock ownership because it should be less likely to reflect a substantial connection with or interest in an industry, and should be more likely to be simply part of a diversified investment portfolio geared towards retirement or other long-term goals. A legislator with pension income from Humana, implying long employment in Humana and immersion in the health care industry, should be more likely to favor health care interests than a legislator who merely owns some shares of Humana stock as part of their retirement planning.

The requirements for financial-disclosure filings vary from state to state. Four states (Idaho, Michigan, Utah, and Vermont) do not require their legislators to file disclosure forms. Among the rest, the Center examined the laws surrounding financial disclosure forms and assigned each state a stringency score between zero and 100 inclusive, with higher values denoting states where more financial relationships must be disclosed. The Center interprets these stringency scores much like academic grades, denoting states with scores greater than 60 as having a passing grade. (Center for Public Integrity 1999) Most of the results here will be presented for all chambers that require reporting, and again for the 26 states with passing scores (≥ 60) and for the 19 states earning what we might think of as a "gentleman's C" (≥ 75) or better.

There are some problems with the financial interest data, but they are not serious. First, they do not include any measure of magnitude. This means that a legislator who happened to have a school district as a business client and a career K-12 teacher who is serving as a legislator are both

considered as simply having an interest in education. It would obviously be preferable to have a finer-grained measure of interests. However, there is sufficient variation on the simple binary level to reveal interesting results, even if more precise measures might lead to even more interesting results. Second, the filings in at least some states include the financial interests of legislators' spouses or dependents. I include all such interests, though many dependents' interests are dropped because they are accounts with mutual funds or other simple investments. One reason for this decision is that I am trying to capture a legislator's orientation towards different interest groups, with the idea that legislators will be more strongly oriented towards interest groups in which they have a financial tie. But we would also expect legislators to be more strongly oriented towards interest groups to which their family has a financial tie, so this information is relevant. On a more pragmatic level, many of the filings the Center coded do not themselves indicate whether the relevant financial interest is the filer's, spouse's, or dependents', so fully distinguishing between these classes of interest is impossible without dropping large numbers of observations.

Methods

I use simulations to compare committees to their parent chambers. For each committee/interest combination in each chamber, I draw 10,000 random samples of the appropriate size and note the number of legislators with ties to the relevant industry. Because no legislator can be on a given committee more than once, each of the 10,000 random samples is taken without replacement. Each committee then receives a score equal to the proportion of simulated committees with at least as many interested legislators as the actual committee, making each score a one-tailed p-value. Comparing with simulations avoids violating assumptions in a simple binomial test – the probability of drawing an interested legislator for any given committee slot depends in part on who has been selected to fill the prior slots. While it is almost certainly possible to extract an exact probability value from the combinatorics for each committee/interest pairing in each state, the simulation method required only simple modifications of already-existing *R* code and should be an extremely close approximation to those exact probabilities. In practice, the simulated p-values are very close

(correlation = 0.999, with most differences between 0.01–0.025) to p-values generated by simply referencing the binomial distribution for the probability of observing at least as many legislators with financial ties to the industry given the chamber proportion of such legislators, but these small differences do sometimes cross traditional boundaries of statistical significance.

In addition, I compare the percent of the committee who have a financial tie to the relevant interest to the percent of the chamber and find the difference. This is particularly useful in those chambers where there are only a few legislators who have a tie to a given interest. In a chamber of 100 with two legislators who have a tie to an interest, neither of which is on the committee, the committee will receive a simulation score of 1.000 (since all committees have at least zero interested legislators), even though the percent of interested legislators in the committee is very close to the value for the chamber. All of which is to say that directly examining the extent to which chambers over-represent (or under-represent) a given interest gives another picture of patterns of self-selection and interest representation.

Over-representation of interested legislators

In all of the five committee/interest pairings I examine, there is at least some evidence that legislators with financial interests in the industries regulated by the committee are over-represented. So long as legislators' financial interests are correlated with their preferences, this indicates a preference divergence from the chamber and so is consistent with the Weingast-Marshall model's assertion that committees are high-demanders. However, small or moderate degrees of preference deviation from the chamber are also consistent with the competing informational theory. (Krehbiel 1991) An important part of the formal models underlying the informational theory is the resource stage, in which the chamber induces the committee to learn about the relevant policy, a costly endeavor, by endowing the committee with resources. (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990, 552–555) If a slightly or somewhat biased committee can be induced to acquire expertise at a lower cost to the chamber than a fully representative committee can be, a somewhat biased committee might minimize the sum of resource costs and uncertainty costs. (Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990, 552–555)

Table 1 reports the simulation-based representativeness scores for each committee/interest pair. This is the probability of observing at least as many interested legislators as we actually observe if appointment were random, and low values indicate an outlying, high-demanding committee. Values in the neighborhood of 0.5 indicate committees with about as many interested legislators as we would expect from random appointment, and values well over 0.5 denote committees with fewer interested legislators than chance might supply. As the table notes, there are a substantial number of committees (58 of 225, or 23%) in all jurisdictions that are unrepresentative at a significance level of 0.05 or better. The percent of 0.05-outliers ranges from 13% of committees regulating banking to 53% of agriculture committees. All of these are substantially higher than the five percent of committees we would expect by chance. Note that the percentage of outlying committees in agriculture is much higher than the percentage for other jurisdictions. Using a different method, the Center originally found that 25% of legislators they examined have at least one committee assignment that regulated a personal or business interest. (Center for Public Integrity 2000)

However, these simple percentages do not take the stringency of reporting requirements into account, nor do they consider variations in the critical value for declaring a committee an outlier, a factor that Groseclose (1994) and Battista (2004) found important in understanding the joint significance of a chamber's set of committees. To deal with this, Table 2 displays the number of outliers and their joint significance figures for critical values of 0.01, 0.05, 0.10, and 0.20. The 0.01 and 0.05 columns represent clear, distinct outliers that should be consistent only with the distributive model. The 0.10 and 0.20 models, however, indicate less severe outliers that might be consistent with both the distributive and informational models. The joint significance numbers are taken from the binomial distribution and are the probability of observing at least as many outliers (at the relevant critical value) as we actually observe. For example, the 0.024 for banking at the 0.05 level is the probability of observing at least six events of 0.05 probability in 45 trials. It also displays separate values for all chambers, for the 26 chambers with "passing" (≥ 60) stringency grades, and for the 19 chambers with stringency scores of at least 75. The results here show dramatic differences between jurisdictions. Committees regulating banking and education have at most relatively mild tendencies towards being outliers. On the other hand, agriculture committees are strongly outlying.

The highest joint significance figure for agriculture committees is only 0.00005, while the lowest is 8.01×10^{-20} . Also, note that while committees regulating insurance are significantly more likely to be 0.05-outliers, they are not significantly more likely to be 0.20-outliers.

Table 3 reports the over-representation of interested legislators for all lower chambers. This is the percent of the committee who have a financial tie to the relevant industry minus the percent of the chamber who have such a tie. High values of this variable denote an outlier, while values below zero indicate that interested legislators are under-represented on the committee. These over-representation percentages are highly correlated (-0.841) with the simulated p-values. Obviously, many committees seriously over-represent legislators with a financial interest in the committee's jurisdiction. For every category except banking, the mean is distinguishably greater than zero with a simple t-test; for banking the values range from 0.06 for all chambers to 0.15 for chambers with stringency scores of at least 75. At the same time, there is at least one committee that under-represents interested legislators in every category. Figure 1 offers another way to examine the extent to which state legislative committees over-represent interested legislators, displaying the kernel densities of the over-representation scores for each jurisdiction/interest pair. In each subfigure, the vertical dashed line marks the zero axis where the relevant interest has the same share of the committee as it does of the chamber. As the figures demonstrate, banking and insurance behave differently than do agriculture, education, and health care. While the other committee/interest pairs have modes to the right of zero, if not always far to the right, the distribution of representation scores for committees regulating banking appears nearly normal and centered very near zero, while committees regulating insurance actually have a negative mode. A similar figure for simulation-based representativeness scores appears later in the paper.

Table 4 displays the results broken down by stringency level. In this table, the columns on the right report the number of committees in which interested legislators are over-represented by at least ten percentage points and the number of committees whose percentage of interested legislators is no higher than the chamber's percentage. In every committee/interest pair, there are a nontrivial proportion of committees that over-represent interested legislators, but there are also a nontrivial number of committees in which interested legislators are under-represented. Indeed,

Table 1: Representativeness of Committees Using Simulations

State	Agriculture	Banking	Education	Health Care	Insurance
Alaska	1.000	0.822	0.209	0.710	0.439
Alabama	0.089	0.951	0.060	0.154	0.048
Arkansas	0.051	0.268	0.014	0.194	0.004
Arizona	0.038	0.510	0.869	0.286	1.000
California	0.012	0.018	0.471	0.014	0.663
Colorado	0.003	0.758	0.176	0.012	0.343
Connecticut	0.047	0.157	0.002	0.010	0.194
Delaware	0.070	1.000	0.776	1.000	1.000
Florida	0.048	0.378	0.427	0.301	0.004
Georgia	0.007	0.277	0.291	0.253	0.004
Hawaii	1.000	0.617	0.235	0.060	1.000
Iowa	0.000	0.032	0.001	0.767	0.614
Illinois	0.325	0.499	0.551	0.189	1.000
Indiana	0.003	1.000	0.095	0.058	0.003
Kansas	0.000	0.147	0.662	0.017	0.776
Kentucky	0.003	0.023	0.007	0.124	0.006
Louisiana	1.000	1.000	0.781	1.000	0.336
Massachusetts	0.277	1.000	0.086	0.463	1.000
Maryland	0.105	0.878	0.882	0.370	0.809
Maine	0.143	0.102	0.569	0.418	0.134
Minnesota	0.001	0.011	0.038	0.061	0.649
Missouri	0.000	0.680	0.154	0.042	0.000
Mississippi	0.032	0.185	0.021	0.416	0.012
Montana	0.349	0.710	0.004	0.407	1.000
N. Carolina	0.003	0.374	0.242	0.304	0.022
N. Dakota	0.026	0.947	1.000	0.144	1.000
New Hampshire	0.031	1.000	0.292	0.452	0.281
New Jersey	0.173	1.000	0.384	0.078	1.000
New Mexico	0.108	0.718	0.465	0.106	1.000
Nevada	0.025	0.432	0.207	1.000	1.000
New York	0.104	0.929	0.947	0.138	0.667
Ohio	0.021	0.040	0.176	0.424	0.289
Oklahoma	0.001	1.000	0.613	0.050	1.000
Oregon	0.497	0.793	0.613	0.887	1.000
Pennsylvania	0.233	0.150	0.166	1.000	0.200
Rhode Island	1.000	1.000	0.355	0.003	1.000
S. Carolina	1.000	0.564	0.539	0.626	1.000
S. Dakota	0.011	0.217	0.437	0.280	0.335
Tennessee	0.041	0.296	0.096	0.031	0.187
Texas	0.002	0.014	0.553	0.286	0.673
Virginia	0.699	0.092	0.627	0.748	0.700
Washington	0.065	1.000	0.431	0.000	0.663
Wisconsin	0.041	0.307	0.286	0.109	0.347
W. Virginia	0.003	0.401	0.017	0.044	0.003
Wyoming	0.423	0.642	0.086	0.014	1.000
Mean	0.202	0.532	0.354	0.312	0.542
SD	0.321	0.363	0.290	0.316	0.400

Table 2: Joint Significance of Outliers, Simulation-Based

		Critical value							
		0.01		0.05		0.10		0.20	
		Outliers (%)	Jt. sig.	Outliers (%)	Jt. sig.	Outliers (%)	Jt. sig.	Outliers (%)	Jt. sig.
Agriculture	All chambers	12 (26.7)	0.000	24 (53.3)	0.000	28 (62.2)	0.000	33 (73.3)	0.000
	Stringency ≥ 60	6 (23.1)	0.000	12 (46.2)	0.000	16 (61.5)	0.000	19 (73.1)	0.000
	Stringency ≥ 75	4 (21.1)	0.000	8 (42.1)	0.000	11 (57.9)	0.000	12 (63.2)	0.000
Banking	All chambers	0 (0.0)	1.000	6 (13.3)	0.024	7 (15.6)	0.159	12 (26.7)	0.174
	Stringency ≥ 60	0 (0.0)	1.000	4 (15.4)	0.039	5 (19.2)	0.112	7 (26.9)	0.253
	Stringency ≥ 75	0 (0.0)	1.000	2 (10.5)	0.245	3 (15.8)	0.295	4 (21.1)	0.545
Education	All chambers	4 (8.9)	0.001	8 (17.8)	0.002	13 (28.9)	0.000	17 (37.8)	0.004
	Stringency ≥ 60	2 (7.7)	0.027	3 (11.5)	0.139	5 (19.2)	0.112	8 (30.8)	0.131
	Stringency ≥ 75	1 (5.3)	0.174	2 (10.5)	0.245	4 (21.1)	0.115	6 (31.6)	0.163
Health Care	All chambers	3 (6.7)	0.010	10 (22.2)	0.000	15 (33.3)	0.000	23 (51.1)	0.000
	Stringency ≥ 60	3 (11.5)	0.002	7 (26.9)	0.000	8 (30.8)	0.003	14 (53.8)	0.000
	Stringency ≥ 75	3 (15.8)	0.001	6 (31.6)	0.000	7 (36.8)	0.002	11 (57.9)	0.000
Insurance	All chambers	7 (15.6)	0.000	10 (22.2)	0.000	10 (22.2)	0.012	13 (28.9)	0.099
	Stringency ≥ 60	4 (15.4)	0.000	6 (23.1)	0.002	6 (23.1)	0.040	7 (26.9)	0.253
	Stringency ≥ 75	2 (10.5)	0.015	4 (21.1)	0.013	4 (21.1)	0.115	5 (26.3)	0.327

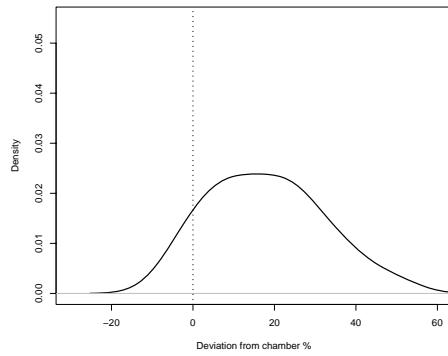
in the cases of banking and insurance, there are more committees that under-represent interested legislators than that over-represent them, at all three stringency-of-reporting levels.

Table 3: Over-Representation of Interested Legislators

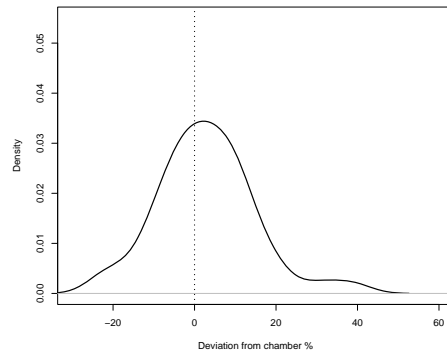
State	Agri.	Banking	Educ.	Health	Insurance
Alaska	-7.5	-5.7	16.1	-0.7	6.8
Alabama	14.3	-10.5	21.0	10.5	16.2
Arkansas	16.8	6.8	21.8	9.1	19.9
Arizona	35.0	6.7	-8.3	10.6	-5.0
California	30.0	30.7	2.9	18.8	0.2
Colorado	30.8	-4.6	17.7	24.6	6.2
Connecticut	11.8	11.1	22.9	20.3	8.3
Delaware	21.3	-22.0	-3.8	0.0	-7.3
Florida	25.8	7.3	5.8	2.6	33.0
Georgia	23.0	5.3	3.9	4.8	18.3
Hawaii	-2.0	0.4	15.0	24.8	-5.9
Iowa	40.0	12.0	19.1	-1.2	0.8
Illinois	5.0	2.2	1.1	6.3	-0.8
Indiana	33.0	-15.0	19.0	18.7	26.7
Kansas	51.4	11.8	-1.2	20.9	-2.1
Kentucky	27.1	20.8	22.6	11.6	18.9
Louisiana	-1.0	0.0	-4.0	0.0	4.8
Massachusetts	6.9	-8.8	21.7	4.4	-5.6
Maryland	4.8	-4.0	-7.4	3.7	-2.0
Maine	16.1	18.1	2.1	6.1	13.4
Minnesota	22.9	12.0	10.8	12.9	0.3
Missouri	40.5	-1.0	10.0	19.7	37.0
Mississippi	14.0	10.8	15.7	2.5	19.6
Montana	6.0	-0.5	22.0	17.3	0.0
N. Carolina	23.3	3.9	3.6	5.8	16.0
N. Dakota	26.5	-9.7	-10.2	10.8	-3.1
New Hampshire	10.3	-2.0	4.3	2.0	3.2
New Jersey	11.8	-21.3	8.8	23.8	-5.0
New Mexico	21.6	-1.9	3.6	20.0	0.0
Nevada	15.9	4.8	11.9	-2.4	-4.8
New York	6.4	-6.6	-10.0	8.3	0.0
Ohio	16.2	17.6	8.7	3.2	5.3
Oklahoma	37.0	-6.9	0.1	6.4	-5.0
Oregon	5.0	-3.9	1.7	-6.7	-3.3
Pennsylvania	4.4	9.2	8.4	-3.4	4.6
Rhode Island	-2.0	-5.0	6.3	28.8	-1.0
S. Carolina	-2.5	1.4	1.7	0.8	-2.5
S. Dakota	32.1	10.2	4.3	9.3	4.8
Tennessee	25.3	4.9	11.1	20.2	6.1
Texas	46.7	38.7	2.9	12.7	-0.2
Virginia	-1.5	12.8	-0.3	-1.9	-1.6
Washington	18.4	-12.2	5.8	43.0	0.2
Wisconsin	23.7	6.9	7.8	14.1	6.6
W. Virginia	12.0	3.0	18.3	19.3	14.0
Wyoming	6.7	1.1	18.3	29.2	-5.0
Mean	17.85	2.87	7.85	10.92	5.13
SD	14.11	11.92	9.42	10.56	10.64

Table 4: Over-representation of Interested Legislators by Stringency Level

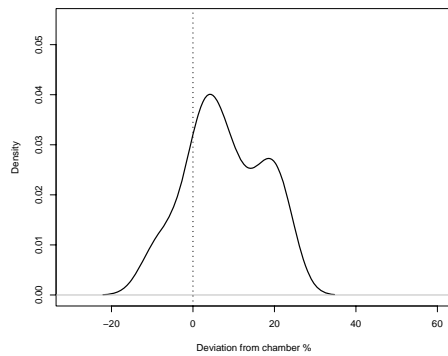
		Mean	SD	# \geq 10 (%)	# \leq 0 (%)
Agriculture	All chambers	17.8	2.1	31 (68.9)	6 (13.3)
	Stringency \geq 60	17.8	3.1	17 (65.4)	5 (19.2)
	Stringency \geq 75	15.5	3.7	11 (57.9)	5 (26.3)
Banking	All chambers	2.9	1.8	12 (26.7)	19 (42.2)
	Stringency \geq 60	3.5	2.6	7 (26.9)	12 (46.2)
	Stringency \geq 75	3.2	3.0	4 (21.1)	9 (47.4)
Education	All chambers	7.8	1.4	18 (40.0)	8 (17.8)
	Stringency \geq 60	7.2	1.9	9 (34.6)	6 (23.1)
	Stringency \geq 75	8.4	2.3	8 (42.1)	3 (15.8)
Health Care	All chambers	10.9	1.6	22 (48.9)	8 (17.8)
	Stringency \geq 60	11.9	2.2	14 (53.8)	4 (15.4)
	Stringency \geq 75	13.0	2.8	11 (57.9)	3 (15.8)
Insurance	All chambers	5.1	1.5	11 (24.4)	20 (44.4)
	Stringency \geq 60	5.3	2.3	6 (23.1)	13 (50.0)
	Stringency \geq 75	4.8	2.5	4 (21.1)	9 (47.4)



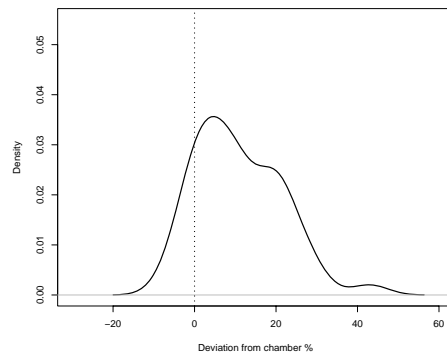
(a) Agriculture



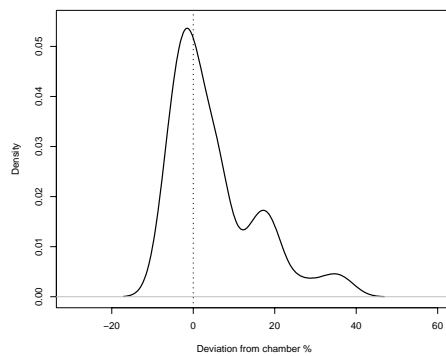
(b) Banking



(c) Education



(d) Health Care



(e) Insurance

Figure 1: Kernel Densities of Interested Legislator Representation

Jurisdiction breadth and interest over-representation

Variation in the breadth or specificity of committee jurisdictions provides another venue for testing the distributive model. In the Weingast-Marshall model, the committees reflect the salient parts of the logroll given institutional form. However, the constituent elements of the logroll coalition might vary from state to state. This is not to say that we should expect different patterns of winners and losers. Rather, we might expect one state to distributively divide itself along regional lines, with committee jurisdictions reflecting this, while another might divide along economic-sector lines and so have a different set of committees. If the distributive model is a powerful model, then we should expect different logrolls to result in different committee systems, and for different types of legislators to self-select onto committees with wider or narrower jurisdictions. That is, an environment and agriculture committee should attract a different mix of legislators than a straightforward agriculture committee, and a unified health, education, and welfare committee ought to represent a different logroll coalition (one in which, perhaps, policy liberals are important) than does a committee dealing only with K-12 education, which might be dominated by legislators with ties to education. This idea is not new; Shepsle (1978) argued that committees with broad, multipart jurisdictions should be less prone to his interest-advocacy-accommodation syndrome because the various parts of its jurisdiction would attract members with different interests, thus making it harder for any one interest to have a commanding majority of the committee.

If the Weingast-Marshall model is strong, narrow committees should be more homogeneously high-demanding than broad committees are. To examine this, I classified each jurisdiction into two levels of specificity. Narrow-jurisdiction committees include committees whose stated jurisdiction lines up perfectly with the relevant interest, such as education committees and banking committees, as well as committee systems which assign more than one committee to the relevant interest, such as chambers with separate higher education and K-12 education committees. Broad-jurisdiction committees are those committees whose stated jurisdiction includes both a relevant interest and some other concern. Examples of these multiple jurisdictions include committees on commerce; banking and insurance; health and welfare; health, education, and welfare; agriculture and natural

resources, and so on. The jurisdictions are coded from the committee titles and the Council of State Governments' 1999 *Directory II*, which lists contact information for various legislative subject areas. (Council of State Governments 2000) I then simply compared the representativeness statistics, both raw scores and percents of outliers at various degrees of severity, between narrow and broad committees.

Table 5 displays these results for all committees and offers p -values from simple one-tailed t tests. As it shows, there is a mixed effect of jurisdiction. In committees regulating health care, banking, and insurance, at least some measures of representativeness vary in response to the breadth of the relevant committee's jurisdiction. At the same time, however, there is no apparent effect in committees regulating agriculture and education. Table 6 displays the analogous table for over-representation of interested legislators in percentage terms. In this table, the raw values are the percent of the committee who have a financial interest in the jurisdiction less the chamber percentage of interested legislators. Entries reading " $\% \leq 0\%$ " give the percentage of committees that under-represent interested legislators, those reading " $\% \geq 10\%$ " indicate the percentage of committees in which interested legislators are over-represented by at least ten percentage points, and so on. The results are similar for this table, except that Table 6 shows an effect for jurisdiction in agriculture as well. In broad terms, what this means is that while health and welfare committees differ from health committees, and commerce committees and unified banking and insurance committees differ from banking or insurance committees, unified health, education, and welfare committees do not differ noticeably from education committees. In neither case does dividing the data by stringency-of-reporting levels offer any additional useful illumination. Further, the effect remains even when the relevant interest is broadened with the jurisdiction. That is, banking committees are more likely to over-represent bankers than banking-and-insurance committees are to over-represent the banking and insurance industries and than commerce or other broad committees are to over-represent legislators with ties to financial industries.

These findings offer further support for the distributive model. Not only are there significant numbers of outlying committees, committees with narrow jurisdictions are more outlying than are committees with broad jurisdictions. The data are consistent with a story of logroll coalitions

Table 5: Differences in Representativeness between Narrow and Broad Committees

		Broad	Narrow	1-Tailed Sig.
Agriculture	N	24	21	
	Raw values	0.210	0.194	0.435
	0.05-Outliers %	45.8	61.9	0.146
	0.10-Outliers %	58.3	66.7	0.288
	0.20-Outliers %	70.8	76.2	0.347
Banking	N	29	16	
	Raw values	0.601	0.407	0.044
	0.05-Outliers %	6.9	25.0	0.046
	0.10-Outliers %	10.3	25.0	0.101
	0.20-Outliers %	17.2	43.8	0.028
Education	N	8	37	
	Raw values	0.343	0.356	0.547
	0.05-Outliers %	12.5	18.9	0.338
	0.10-Outliers %	37.5	27.0	0.718
	0.20-Outliers %	37.5	37.8	0.493
Health Care	N	28	17	
	Raw values	0.411	0.150	0.003
	0.05-Outliers %	21.4	23.5	0.437
	0.10-Outliers %	25.0	47.1	0.067
	0.20-Outliers %	39.3	70.6	0.021
Insurance	N	29	16	
	Raw values	0.600	0.437	0.097
	0.05-Outliers %	17.2	31.3	0.145
	0.10-Outliers %	17.2	31.3	0.145
	0.20-Outliers %	27.6	31.3	0.400

varying from state to state, with jurisdictional breadth following the shapes of the coalitions. This lines up neatly with a comparativized version of the distributive model.

Discussion and conclusions

Taken as a whole, the evidence here provides a very different picture of the distributive model than does previous research. Research using ideological or near-ideological estimates of preferences has found either a lower proportion of 0.05-level outliers than we might expect by random appointment (Battista 2004, Overby and Kazee 2000) or at most only slightly more than we might expect by chance (Overby, Kazee, and Prince 2004). Research exploring other aspects of the distributive model (Martorano 2006) has argued that state legislative committees by and large lack the institutional capacity to act as distributive committees, and finds empirical relationships that should only hold for non-distributive committees.

In contrast, over one-quarter of the committee/interest pairs I examine are 0.05-level outlying and 11.6% are 0.01-level outlying. This is obviously far in excess of what we might expect by chance. And while agriculture committees are clearly far more dominated by interested legislators than are the other committee/interest pairs, every committee/interest pair has more 0.05-level outliers than we would expect by chance, though this excess is not always itself statistically significant. Aggregated, raw over-representation percentages show a similar pattern: positive and often large, concentrated in agriculture, and diminished in banking and insurance. Further evidence in support of the distributive model comes from examining variation in the breadth of committee jurisdictions. Consistent with the distributive model, committees whose stated jurisdiction is more tightly limited to a relevant economic interest are more outlying than committees whose jurisdictions combine more interests.

Another finding of note is that the distributive model extends well to committees where the relevant interests might not be firmly related to the district's economic interests. Unless there are districts with very high concentrations of K-12 educators or health care workers, we would not expect these committees to be biased based upon district needs. However, these committees turn

Table 6: Differences in Interest Representation between Narrow and Broad Committees

		Broad	Narrow	1-Tailed Sig.
Agriculture	N	24	21	
	Raw values	14.4	21.8	0.039
	$\% \leq 0\%$	12.5	14.3	0.568
	$\% \geq 10\%$	66.7	71.4	0.369
	$\% \geq 25\%$	20.8	42.9	0.058
Banking	N	29	16	
	Raw values	0.4	7.4	0.030
	$\% \leq 0\%$	48.3	31.3	0.139
	$\% \geq 10\%$	17.2	43.8	0.028
	$\% \geq 25\%$	0.0	12.5	0.027
Education	N	8	37	
	Raw values	9.2	7.6	0.669
	$\% \leq 0\%$	12.5	18.9	0.662
	$\% \geq 10\%$	50.0	37.8	0.732
	$\% \geq 25\%$	0.0	0.0	
Health Care	N	28	17	
	Raw values	8.6	14.8	0.029
	$\% \leq 0\%$	28.6	0.0	0.007
	$\% \geq 10\%$	39.3	64.7	0.051
	$\% \geq 25\%$	7.1	5.9	0.564
Insurance	N	29	16	
	Raw values	3.4	8.2	0.074
	$\% \leq 0\%$	48.3	37.5	0.249
	$\% \geq 10\%$	20.7	31.3	0.221
	$\% \geq 25\%$	3.4	12.5	0.127

out to be stacked in favor of interested legislators, if only mildly in the case of education committees. This finding indicates that committees can serve as engines of vote-trading across policy areas that are not necessarily of traditionally distributive import. At the same time, it should be noted that agriculture committees, which would combine any exogenous interests legislators might have with strong district needs, are substantially more biased than the other committee/interest pairs.

All of this means that our understanding of legislative committees and theories of legislative committees must be more nuanced. It is not the case that the informational model is “simply rational,” as Overby, Kazee, and Prince (2004) wrote when they found that only a few state legislative committees were unrepresentative using NFIB scores. Borrowing an analogy from Groseclose and King (1997), earlier evidence may have led us to award the Intercontinental Heavyweight Championship belt to the informational model, at least for state legislatures, but the evidence presented here indicates that this may have been premature. At the very least the picture is more complicated, as it is for the U.S. House, where mixed findings are the norm.

One way in which our understanding might become more nuanced is at the intersection of the distributive and informational models. In this paper, I have found unprecedented levels of support for the distributive model among state legislatures. At the same time, earlier findings using (nearly) ideological measures of preferences remain, and these articles found support for the informational model. The question of how the findings here and earlier findings compare to each other immediately presents itself. Happily, a direct comparison is possible for nearly all committees in my sample. The interest data I use was submitted by legislators in 1999, and Wright (2004) collected roll-call votes for all state legislative chambers in the 1999–2000 biennium (with one exception). Given the roll-call votes, computing NOMINATE scores is trivially easy. This conjuncture of different data sources makes comparing interest-based and NOMINATE-based measures of committee representativeness a tedious but ultimately uncomplicated matter of simply generating the requisite representativeness scores again using unidimensional NOMINATE scores instead of financial interests as a measure of preferences.

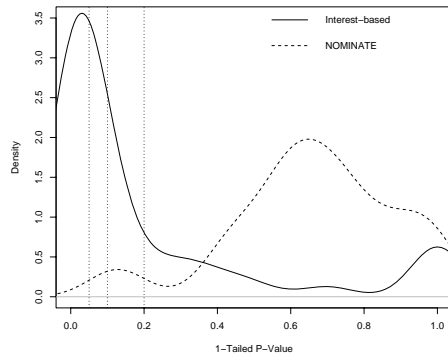
I generated the NOMINATE-based representativeness scores again using simulations, except that these simulations compare the actual committee median to the distribution of simulated committee

medians. Like the interest-based scores, the NOMINATE-based scores are essentially one-tailed p -values; in this case, they are the proportion of simulated committees whose medians were to the left¹ of the actual committee median. Thus, a score of 0.01 indicates a liberal outlier.²

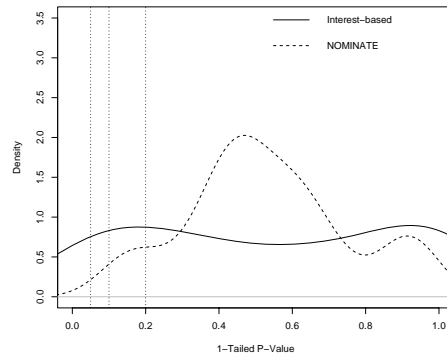
Figure 2 displays the densities of interest-based and NOMINATE-based measures of committee representativeness. The vertical lines indicate the critical values of 0.05, 0.10, and 0.20. Because these are one-sided p -values, high values do not denote committees that are especially representative. Rather, they denote committees in which interested legislators are radically under-represented or committees far more conservative than we might expect from random appointment. Representative committees should be clustered near the 0.5 point. In each case, the distribution consistent with the null hypothesis of random appointment is flat. The figure shows that interest-based and NOMINATE-based measures of committee representativeness tell radically different tales. Except for committees regulating agriculture, which trend slightly conservative, NOMINATE-based measures show more-or-less representative committees that tend to be neither disproportionately liberal nor disproportionately conservative. Interest-based measures, however, are in three cases shifted strongly to the left, showing a tendency towards the high-demanding outliers that the distributive model predicts. In the cases of banking and insurance, the distribution of interest-based scores is flatter than that of NOMINATE-based scores. However, this is to some extent an artifact of the kernel density estimator, and readers should note that the distributions in both of these committee / interest pairs are slightly more bimodal and concentrated at the extremes than the figure might indicate.

¹Strictly, closer to the NOMINATE endpoint dominated by Democrats.

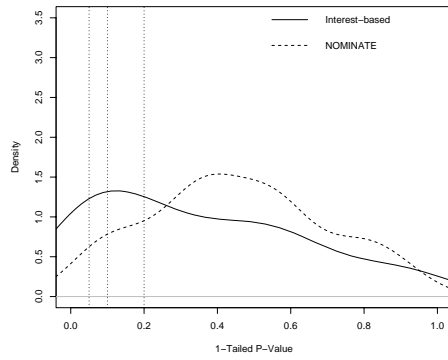
²The NOMINATE-based analysis is taken from a different project with a different data-collection effort for committee assignments. Accordingly, there are occasionally very slight variations in committee membership between the committee in the interest-based analysis and the committee in the NOMINATE-based analysis if the Center's data collection and my previous data collection on committee assignments looked at different times in the relevant session. Based on an examination of a large sample of committees, these differences are both rare and trivial and do not affect any conclusions.



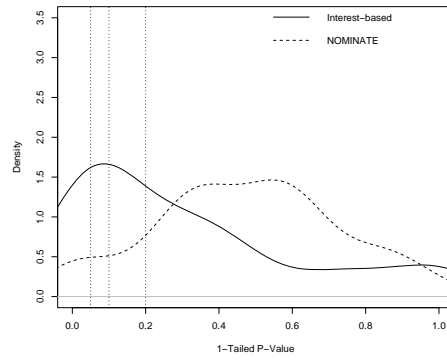
(a) Agriculture



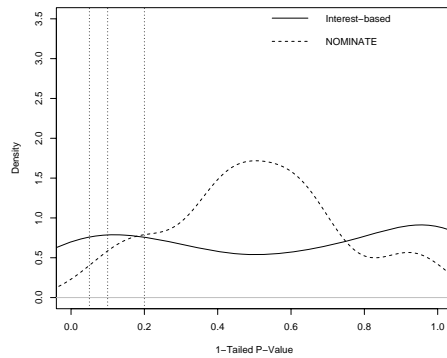
(b) Banking



(c) Education



(d) Health Care



(e) Insurance

Figure 2: Kernel Densities of Simulation-Based Representativeness Scores

Table 7: Regression Results Linking Interest- and NOMINATE-based Estimates

Committee / Interest	Coef. on liberal	$p > t $	Adj. R^2	$p > F$
Agriculture	0.059	0.792	-0.022	0.792
Banking	-0.124	0.619	-0.017	0.619
Education	-0.162	0.380	-0.005	0.381
Health Care	-0.147	0.427	-0.008	0.427
Insurance	0.392	0.121	0.033	0.121

A second factor to note is that interest-based and NOMINATE-based estimates of representativeness are nearly perfectly uncorrelated ($r = -0.045, p = 0.607$). Table 7 illustrates this for each committee/interest pair by means of OLS regressions. For each committee/interest pair, I ran a regression using the NOMINATE-based liberalism scores to explain the interest-based representativeness scores, and the table displays the resulting coefficient on liberalism scores, the associated two-tailed p-value, the model’s adjusted R^2 , and the p-value associated with the model’s F statistic. As the table indicates, these are very bad models. In only one case is the adjusted R^2 even above zero, and no regression has a coefficient significant at even the 0.10 level. However, it should be noted that committees regulating insurance have a relationship between interest-based and NOMINATE-based scores that approaches the 0.10 level.

The lack of any observable relationship between ideological and interest-based committee representativeness is puzzling. If it were the case that committees that were ideologically unrepresentative were also homogeneous high-demanders, this would have indicated that the distributive and informational models are the opposites that their intellectual history often implies. However, the data do not support any connection. A committee can be ideologically representative and strongly over-represent interested legislators at the same time. Indeed, 14 of the committees in the sample have NOMINATE medians so near the chamber median that 95% or more randomly-appointed committees are at least as far, and fully half of these 14 committees are also interest-based outliers at a standard of 0.05 or better. From another point of view, seven of the 51 committees that were interest-based outlying at 0.05 or better³ were ideologically highly representative.

³And which also had ideological representativeness scores.

What should we make of such two-faced committees? One option arises if we consider a multidimensional policy space. Under such circumstances, it is at least possible that the distributive dimensions are not the dimensions with the greatest uncertainty. In the informational model, or in the underlying Crawford and Sobel (1982) information transmission model, the “goal” of the chamber is to reduce the uncertainty about the effects of policy. However, not all policies or policy dimensions have equal amounts of uncertainty over the effects of policies. In particular, there ought to be generally less uncertainty about more straightforward distributive policies – figuring out the likely effects of a direct subsidy, or of building an arguably unneeded road or bridge, should not be rocket science. If the prime dimension of uncertainty is a general left-right continuum, the same dimension that we would expect to be the primary dimension of conflict in the chamber, this allows the possibility of committees that are both distributive and informational, that deliver accurate information where there is uncertainty and, at the same time, bring home the bacon for their constituents on other dimensions. That is, distributiveness and informativeness need not be opposites if the information needed to reduce the relevant uncertainty is not strongly related to distributive politics. Likewise, estimates of committee representativeness generated using ideological preference estimates need not be merely (bad) proxies for estimates created using jurisdiction-specific preference estimates; both may carry their own information. Hurwitz, Moiles, and Rohde (2001) support this possibility. In an intensive study of the Agriculture Committee and agriculture-related subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee in the 104th U.S. House, they found that on some issues, the committees behaved consistently with the distributive model, while on others its behavior was consistent with the partisan model. Similarly, Battista’s (2006) mixed findings discussed earlier support the contention that distributiveness and informativeness can lie along different dimensions. Of course, this only raises the possibility of such mixed committees; there is no guarantee that the committees observed here that are interest-based outliers and ideological inliers were consciously selected to be such.

In summary, this paper presents new evidence for distributive committees in state legislatures. By estimating preferences with financial interests, I have found that committees dealing with agriculture, banking, education, health care, and insurance have some tendency towards high-demanding

outliers. This represents far more support for the distributive theory of committees than had previously been found in state legislatures. Further, more narrowly-defined committees are more prone to unrepresentativeness than are committees with broad jurisdictions, consistent with the distributive model.

The most obvious implication of this is that the vote-trading based distributive model generalizes far better than we had previously suspected. Previous recent work on Congress and state legislatures led to the conclusion that while the distributive model might have something to say about the organization of Congress, it was relatively limited to that institution. Here, I find that this is not the case. The distributive model applies reasonably well to state legislatures. Note that this is the case even for committees that are not distributive in the conventional sense, though tendencies towards unrepresentativeness are far stronger for agriculture, the lone traditionally distributive committee. This offers further support for the Weingast-Marshall model by supporting its hypothesized mechanism of committees as agents of vote trading across issue areas, showing that it generalizes to dimensions of political conflict beyond geographically distributive politics. This paper's findings also indicate that, much like in Congress, estimating preferences in ways that are appropriate to the theory in question is an important part of testing the applicability of that theory.

A second implication joins other recent work: committees are more complex creatures than most of our theories posit. While the evidence here supports the distributive model, it does not do so wholeheartedly or without hesitation. Twenty-seven percent of the committees in my sample under-represent the relevant interest on the committee, and a further 17% over-represent the relevant interest by no more than five percentage points, and these committees are concentrated in banking and insurance. So even at the most direct level, the evidence presented here does not imply that the informational or partisan models have been somehow invalidated or disconfirmed. When placed into context with results from NOMINATE-based measures of preferences, this becomes even more stark. Committees, it seems, can have both distributive and informational elements, and having more of one does not imply having less of the other.

Understanding the greater complexity of legislative committees points towards one obvious venue for future research, following along the lines of Hurwitz, Moiles, and Rohde (2001). What

drives a chamber's choices among different levels of informativeness and distributive utility at the same time? What institutional features conduce to more purely informational or distributive committees, and which foster committees with strong elements of both? For committees that share distributive and informational aspects, when do they show their distributive face, and when their informational? What determines when the party or chamber steps in to take more effective control of the committee, or constrain it more rigorously? How can we predict committee behavior when our baseline is multidimensional and complex instead of a one-dimensional, reductionist account? Given that the breadth or narrowness of a committee's jurisdiction seems an important predictor of interest over-representation, what institutional, membership, or other factors can help us predict when a chamber will choose narrow jurisdictions over broad?

Another obvious ground for future research involves cross-checking and triangulating on jurisdiction-specific measures of preferences. Doing so might help to address the key drawback of the financial-interest data I use to estimate preferences, the lack of scale. The data I use here indicate whether a legislator has an interest in a given economic sector, but not how strong that interest might be. One way to check would be to compare financial-interest data to interest group scores. Key problems with interest group scores in state legislatures are availability and comparability – the scores are hard to come by, and difficult or impossible to compare across states since there are very few national interest groups that rate state legislators. However, it should be possible to check that state legislators with a financial interest in an industry also have higher interest-group scores for that industry, as well as getting some sense of the average magnitude of the effect. Similarly, if the data were more easily available it would be possible to compare a district's economic and demographic characteristics with the financial interests (and possibly interest group scores) of their elected legislators.

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