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Minority Rights and Majority Power: Conditional Party Government and the Motion to Recommit in the House

Students of legislative politics have struggled to explain and measure party influence on voting and outcomes in Congress. Proponents of strong party effects point to the numerous procedural advantages enjoyed by the majority party as evidence of party effects, yet recent theoretical work by Krehbiel and Meirowitz (2002) argues that House rules guaranteeing the minority a motion to recommit with instructions effectively balances the procedural advantages enjoyed by the majority. This article identifies and tests the empirical implications of the Krehbiel and Meirowitz theory, using roll-call data from the 61st to 107th Congresses (1909–2002). The results call into question the validity of Krehbiel and Meirowitz's conclusions about party government in the House and provide support for the theory of conditional party government.

One of the most spirited debates in political science over the past decade has centered on whether or not political parties exert an independent impact on policymaking within the U.S. Congress. Krehbiel (1991) presented theory and evidence refuting the conventional wisdom regarding party effects on congressional organization, and he challenged the discipline to provide theoretical and empirical evidence of party effects with his 1993 piece, aptly titled, "Where's the Party?", as well as in other, more recent works (Krehbiel 1998). There has been no shortage of responses. Scholars have demonstrated party effects on individual pieces of legislation (Binder, Lawrence, and Maltzman 1999; Burden and Frisby 2004), on who wins final passage votes (Lawrence, Maltzman, and Smith n.d.), in the committee assignment process (Cox and McCubbins 1993), and at the agenda-setting stage (Campbell, Cox, and McCubbins 2002; Cox and McCubbins 2002). Scholars have also demonstrated the conditional nature of party influence (Aldrich and Rohde 1998, 2000; Rohde 1991).

Proponents of strong party effects often point to the numerous procedural advantages enjoyed by the majority party as evidence of

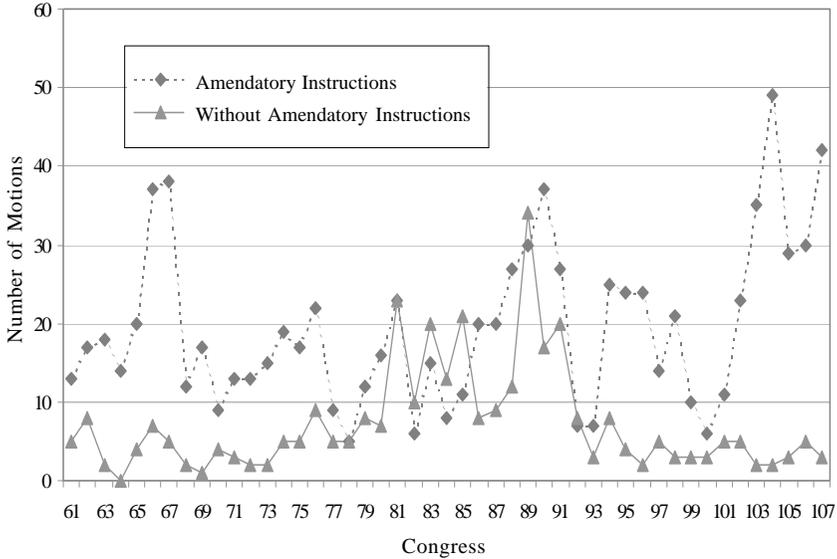
party effects, but recent theoretical work by Krehbiel and Meirowitz (2002; henceforth, “KM”) questions the spatial foundations of these models and argues that House rules guaranteeing the minority a motion to recommit effectively balances the procedural advantages enjoyed by the majority. In this paper, I assess the applicability of the KM model to House procedures and identify and test the empirical implications of the KM model for the 61st–107th Congresses (1909–2002). The results demonstrate that the KM model provides an inaccurate representation of House procedures and fails to predict empirical patterns in recommittal motion usage. Taken together, these results suggest that the recommittal motion is not particularly effective as a policy tool for legislative minorities and does not seriously undermine the power of the majority party in the House. Rather, the analytical and empirical results provide strong support for the theory that the majority party exerts an influence on the recommittal process.

Theoretical Importance of the Motion to Recommit

Much of the research regarding the power of parties to shape outcomes in the U.S. Congress has focused on the ability of the majority party to shape the legislative agenda. Cox and McCubbins (1993) view parties as legislative cartels that seek to enhance the party’s “brand name” and electoral viability by seizing control of the legislative agenda. While Cox and McCubbins view majority party agenda control as relatively constant, Rohde (1991) and Aldrich and Rohde (1998, 2000) contend that party influence in legislation is *conditional* upon the underlying preferences of the members of the party. This theory of conditional party government (CPG) holds that homogeneous parties are more apt to delegate the power to shape legislative outcomes to their party leaders: the procedural tools and other sources of influence granted to the majority party leadership when the party is cohesive and ideologically distant from the minority party increases legislative efficiency and promotes a higher level of party discipline than preferences alone would produce. Both the conditional and cartel perspectives on party influence contend that the majority party seeks to shape outcomes in a way that favors the party, and often grants itself procedural rights to help secure these outcomes.

While party theorists often point to the procedural advantages enjoyed by the majority party, Krehbiel and Meirowitz argue that the motion to recommit has important implications for theories of legislative parties in Congress. The motion to recommit is in order just prior to final passage and can take one of three forms: (1) without instructions,

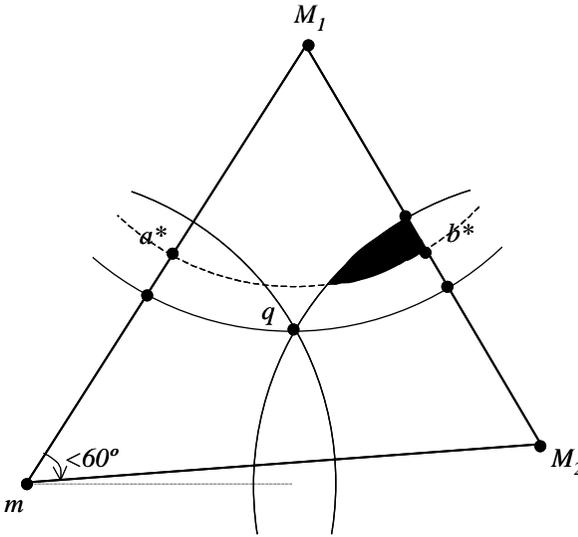
FIGURE 1
 Number of Motions to Recommit with a Recorded Vote,
 by Congress



which sends the bill back to its parent committee, effectively killing it, (2) with “general” instructions vaguely directing a committee to “hold more hearings” or “gather more evidence,” or (3) with instructions to report “forthwith” containing specified changes (Bach 1998). Under the third option, the bill does not actually return to the committee; instead, the bill is considered amended by the instructions and then is subject to a vote on final passage. As Figure 1 demonstrates, most recommittal motions contain instructions. Although House rules only require that the member offering the motion be opposed to the bill, in practice this right has been reserved for the ranking member of the minority party serving on the committee reporting the bill (Bach 1998).

KM analyze a simple three-person legislature consisting of two members of the majority party, denoted $M1$ and $M2$, and one minority party member, denoted m , considering a proposal to change the status quo, q (see Figure 2). KM assume, as do proponents of strong parties, that the majority party has the power to stack the appropriate committee with a majority of members who favor the party’s position and to bring the bill to the floor under a closed rule. Thus, for many status quo positions, the majority can obtain an outcome at b^* . KM use the spatial dynamics

FIGURE 2
 Spatial Diagram of the Motion to Recommit
 (adapted from Krehbiel and Meirowitz 2002, Figure 6)



of Figure 2 to argue, however, that even with the majority party using a stacked committee and a closed rule, the minority party member can successfully offer a motion to recommit with amendatory instructions at a^* that will move the outcome closer to the minority party's ideal point, m , and away from the center of the majority party, b^* .¹

KM infer several important points from Figure 2. First, they suggest that the right of the minority to offer a^* in the motion to recommit undermines the spatial model of conditional party government proposed by Aldrich and Rohde (1998). KM argue that the sequence of the legislative process makes the motion to recommit a powerful tool because it is the last opportunity to amend legislation prior to the final passage vote. Second, KM demonstrate that the bill location depends on the location of the status quo and the ideal points of the members, and they argue that the majority party cannot disproportionately influence the final bill location. Finally, KM demonstrate that, although majority party homogeneity—the key condition in conditional party government—leads to policy outcomes closer to the majority party median, the proximity of the outcome to the midpoint between the two majority party members

is due to the spatial alignment of preferences and not to procedural advantages held by the majority party (2002, 208–09). In short, KM conclude that House procedures ensure that preferences alone—not party influence—determine legislative outcomes.

The KM argument is at odds with most of the scholarly and journalistic literature on parties in the House of Representatives. Most party theories are predicated on the notion that the disciplined use of House rules is the foundation for party government in the House. In contrast, KM suggest that the rules themselves ensure that legislation will not be unduly influenced by the majority party. Before we accept the KM conclusion, we must ask and answer two important questions: (1) Does the KM model adequately portray House procedures on the motion to recommit? and (2) Does the motion to recommit actually undermine majority party power?

Procedural Accuracy of the Krehbiel-Meirowitz Model

Does the KM model accurately portray House procedures? The answer is mixed. The motion to recommit is, as KM suggest, in order just prior to final passage and is preserved for use by those opposed to the bill in question. However, some critical details neglected by KM undermine many of their arguments about the strategic importance of the motion to recommit.

First, from 1934 through 1994, a controversial House precedent allowed the House Committee on Rules to place restrictions on the content of amendatory instructions or to ban them outright. As Wolfensberger (1991, 2003) notes, House Republicans were often stymied by this practice in the 1980s and early 1990s, and, upon attaining majority status in the 104th Congress, they changed the rules to ban this practice.² Thus, from 1995 to the present, House rules have in fact allowed the minority party to offer a recommittal with instructions located at *a**

Second, KM's assertion that the motion to recommit with instructions is the final step in the legislative process prior to final passage is technically correct. However, KM fail to consider that the recommittal motion itself is subject to amendment. If the previous question on the motion to recommit is defeated, then House precedent dictates that the member leading the opposition to the previous question on the motion to recommit then gains the right to offer an amendment to the recommittal motion.³ In contrast to KM's claims, House rules allow the majority party to "fight fire with fire" and amend the motion to recommit (Weingast 1992). Thus, although KM are correct that the motion to

recommit is the last stage in the legislative process prior to final passage, the possibility of amending the motion to recommit undermines the KM claim that the minority party has the last move.⁴

A recent episode illustrates this practice. The special rule for consideration of the Internet Freedom and Broadband Deployment Act of 2001 (HR 1542) provided for an amendment to the bill sponsored by John Conyers (D-MI), with a subsequent second-degree amendment to be offered by Steve Buyer (R-IN). Foreseeing that the second-degree amendment would undermine the content of the original amendment, Conyers chose not to offer the amendment in the Committee of the Whole, thus ensuring that the Buyer amendment could not be offered either. Ed Markey (D-MA) then offered the text of the Conyers amendment as the motion to recommit with instructions. Without the opportunity to amend the motion to recommit, this move would have been tantamount to the take-it-or-leave-it offer that KM suggest the minority makes with the motion to recommit. The House would have been forced to vote up or down on the Conyers amendment (in the form of a motion to recommit) without voting on the Buyer amendment. The response to this move by Buyer and his allies demonstrates how a determined majority can fight off an unwanted motion to recommit. Realizing the situation he was facing, Buyer first inquired about the parliamentary process, then offered the following instructions to his colleagues:

To those who have walked into this body and were going to support the Buyer-Towns amendment to the Conyers-Cannon amendment, let me share what I believe is about to happen and what I believe Members should do. If they support the Buyer-Towns amendment, vote no on the previous question; vote yes when I have the opportunity to amend the recommit[al] after the previous question is defeated. So they will vote yes on the Buyer-Towns amendment to the recommittal, vote yes on the amended motion to recommit, and vote yes on final passage. (*Congressional Record*, February 27, 2002, H605)

Buyer's instructions did not go unheeded. The previous question on the motion to recommit failed, the amended motion to recommit passed via voice vote, and the bill secured final passage in the House.⁵

Majority Party Power and the Motion to Recommit

The previous section demonstrates that the KM model provides an incomplete portrait of the recommittal process, but it remains to be seen whether or not the possibility of amendment to the motion to recommit upsets the equilibrium of the game derived by KM.

In a one-shot game, it does not. Returning to Figure 2, we see that a vote on the previous question, presumably proposed by *M2*, pits the motion to recommit a^* against b^* , with KM demonstrating that *M1* and *m* prefer a^* to b^* . Thus, with sincere behavior, the vote on the previous question mimics the vote on the motion to recommit and both are adopted. To be sure, *M2* could choose to offer an amendment to the motion to recommit that both majority party members would prefer to both a^* and the status quo, since there exists a set of policies that are Pareto superior to a^* for both *M1* and *M2* (shaded area in Figure 2). Once gaining control of the motion to recommit, however, *M2* has no clear incentive to offer an amendment any closer to *M1* than b^* . Thus, if we solve the one-shot game by backwards induction, a^* remains the equilibrium result.⁶

The equilibrium analysis of the one-shot game reflects the minority player's opportunity to minimize the harm to her interests, as KM suggest. But we must consider that the legislative process is a repeated game. Congress deals with hundreds of bills and amendments in any given two-year period; it is reasonable to suspect that members may consider the consequences of their behavior in each stage game on future plays of the game. As the literature on the prisoner's dilemma demonstrates, repeated games usually have more equilibria than do one-shot games; among these are equilibria wherein players sustain cooperation despite each having the incentive to defect in every stage game (Axelrod 1984; Taylor 1995). Members of the majority party agree *ex ante* to cooperate on the motion to recommit. Indeed, scholars have noted that political parties may form in part as "long coalitions" to ensure that only bills that benefit all members will pass (Aldrich 1995; Schwartz 1989). As Aldrich (1995, 35) succinctly states, "The reason to enter a party is to win more, and here that means reducing uncertainty over future outcomes."

Pursuing a "winning" strategy may lead majority party members to vote differently than they would if they were only pursuing their policy preferences. In the case of the motion to recommit, intra-party cooperation could entail either always voting "no" on the motion and thus preserving b^* as the outcome, or going through with the complex process of defeating the previous question on the motion to recommit and then amending the instructions to move the policy back to a location preferred by both majority party members. In neither case would we expect to see the motion to recommit have the effect on outcomes suggested by KM.

Even with an *ex ante* agreement to cooperate on the motion to recommit, the majority party is still faced with the dilemma of how to

maintain cooperation in the face of the constant incentive for individual members to defect for short-term gain. As discussed earlier, parties can enforce cooperation by empowering their leaders to protect the party's "brand name" through the use of tools such as agenda control, closed rules, and, in some circumstances, committee assignments (Cox and McCubbins 1993). If members foresee retribution for defecting from the party position, then they will not consider defection as appealing and a cooperative equilibrium may ensue. Considering this process as a repeated game does not undermine the KM equilibrium, but it does demonstrate that other equilibria are possible in this game—including one in which the majority party cooperates to defeat the recommittal motion.

Empirical Implications of the Motion to Recommit

In the previous sections, I demonstrated that the motion to recommit is theoretically important and has potentially substantial consequences for theories of congressional parties. Table 1 presents the empirical predictions of the KM and party theories. The theory presented by KM has only one equilibrium, which, as Table 1 shows, produces two empirical predictions: (1) the minority party should always offer the motion to recommit, and (2) the motion to recommit should always pass with complete support of the minority party and only enough majority party votes to secure a minimum winning coalition. Thus, if the KM model is correct, we should see recommittal motions passing against the wishes of a majority of the majority party.

Party theories also have distinct empirical implications. The cartel theory suggests that the majority party should seek to avoid losing a vote on the motion to recommit, either by defeating the motion to recommit or by keeping the underlying bill off the agenda. Since the cartel theory predicts few, if any, passing recommitments, it makes no predictions regarding variation in the success rate of the recommittal motion. In contrast, the theory of conditional party government suggests that the power of the party leaders, and hence the ability of the majority to fend off the motion to recommit, should increase with both the homogeneity of the majority party and the ideological distance between the parties. In sum, KM predict an equilibrium with a large number of recommittal motions, all of them passing, whereas party theorists would make no specific prediction regarding the rate of offering but would suggest that the majority party can sustain an equilibrium in which they successfully fend off the motion to recommit either by defeating it outright or by amending the instructions. Which, if either, of these patterns is observed in the House, I discuss in the next section.

TABLE 1
 Empirical Predictions of Krehbiel-Meirowitz vs. Party Theories

Theory	Motion to Recommit Offered	Motion to Recommit Passing
Krehbiel-Meirowitz	Always	Always
Conditional Party Government	No Prediction	Sometimes ^a
Cartel Theory	No Prediction	Never

^aThe conditional party government theory suggests that the number of rolls should decrease with majority party homogeneity and interparty distance.

Empirical Patterns in Motion to Recommit Usage

To assess the extent to which the KM and party theories explain the occurrence of motions to recommit passing against the wishes of a majority of the majority party, I coded all motions to recommit producing a recorded vote (61st–107th Congresses, 1909–2002) to determine if they contained instructions to report forthwith.⁷ Of those votes containing specific recommittal instructions, I coded the outcomes as pass, fail, and pass with a “roll” of the majority party, with the third category being the dependent variable of interest.⁸ Neither the KM model nor the cartel theory of party influence makes specific predictions about variation in the rate of passage of recommittal—KM predict a high passage rate, and cartel theory predicts a low, or even zero, rate of passage. CPG theory predicts, however, that the majority party will be more successful when it is internally homogeneous and ideologically distant from the minority party.

For the 61st–107th Congresses (1909–2002), a motion to recommit with instructions was offered on 31% of bills receiving a final passage vote. Approximately 10% of motions to recommit with instructions passed. KM suggest that the minority should be able to roll the majority on the motion to recommit, yet this occurs in only 8% of bills that have a recommittal with instructions, and if we use the number of bills receiving a vote on final passage as the denominator, then the roll rate falls to 2%. These results suggest that neither the KM nor party theories perfectly predict outcomes. The low passage and roll rate is, however, particularly devastating to KM’s theory. KM suggest that all motions to recommit with instructions should pass, with the majority party divided over the motion. In practice, the motion fails over 90% of the time.⁹

Turning to patterns in voting on the motion to recommit, we can clearly see that these votes often expose the partisan divisions in the chamber. Over 80% of votes on the motion to recommit are “party votes,” where majorities of each party vote against one another, as compared to approximately 50% of all other vote types.¹⁰ On average, more than 75% of the minority party votes in favor of the motion to recommit, while more than 80% of the majority party votes against recommitment. Thus, when the motion to recommit is offered, the general voting pattern predicted by the KM model appears—minority party in favor of recommitment, majority party against. Yet, in stark contrast to KM’s predictions, the minority rarely wins these votes. This finding suggests that something outside the spatial model—the majority party—is affecting the outcomes of these votes.

Testing the KM and Party Theories

The summary evidence presented here suggests that the majority party is usually successful at fending off recommitment motions, but a nontrivial number of recommitment motions still pass over the wishes of a majority of the members of the majority party, and the rate of success is not constant across time.

To test the KM and party theories explicitly, I employed a number of independent variables. I defined internal homogeneity of the majority party as the standard deviation of first and second dimensions of DW-NOMINATE (Poole and Rosenthal 1997). If CPG theory holds in this context, then the frequency of rolls should increase as the majority party becomes more heterogeneous. CPG theory suggests that the power of the majority party to successfully fend off recommitment motions should increase as the distance between the parties increases. I measured interparty distance as the absolute value of the distance between party medians on the first and second dimensions of DW-NOMINATE. Because the ability of the minority party to get recorded votes on amendments increased with the adoption of recorded voting in the Committee of the Whole, I included a dummy variable that controls for recorded voting in the Committee of the Whole, with the 92d Congress (1971–72) forward coded as 1. We also have to reason to expect that the frequency of restrictions placed on amendatory instructions by House Democrats will have a negative impact on the number of rolls in any given Congress, thus I included a control variable for the number of restrictions as counted by Wolfensberger (1991).¹¹ The dependent variable for this analysis is a count (number of rolls per Congress), thus it was important that I control for the number of

opportunities for the event to occur (King 1989). This number is potentially important theoretically, as Cox and McCubbins (2002) argue that one of the most important powers of the majority party is to keep items off the legislative agenda, hence leaving the status quo intact. There may be cases in which the majority is so divided that it cannot agree to bring legislation to the floor. Therefore, I included the natural log of the number of measures subject to votes on final passage as a measure of the opportunity to roll.¹²

Table 2 presents a multivariate model of the number of majority party rolls per Congress.¹³ The parameter estimates for majority party heterogeneity are positive and statistically significant, suggesting that heterogeneous majorities are much more likely to get rolled on the motion to recommit than are homogeneous majorities. Also in keeping with CPG theory, the parameter estimates for ideological distance are negative and significant, indicating that the majority party is less likely to get rolled on the motion to recommit when it is ideologically distinct from the minority party. Further, the results in Table 2 suggest that larger majorities are less likely to get rolled on the motion to recommit. Although not a direct prediction of party theories, this result makes intuitive sense: a larger majority can afford to lose the votes of more of its members while still winning the vote (Krehbiel 2003). Finally, these results suggest that the majority party is less likely to get rolled on the motion to recommit after the advent of recorded voting in the Committee of the Whole. Also, as expected, the variable measuring the size of the legislative agenda indicates that rolls are more frequent when more bills are taken to the final stages of the legislative process.

The predicted number of rolls per Congress when all independent variables are at their mean is 0.8. Holding all other variables at their mean, we see that the substantive impact of majority party homogeneity on the first dimension of DW-NOMINATE is quite large, with the predicted number of rolls varying from .15 for the highest level of homogeneity in this sample to 4.5 for the lowest value of homogeneity. Ideological distance also appears to be substantively important because the predicted number of rolls varies from .36 to 1.29 as the distance between the parties on the first dimension of DW-NOMINATE goes from the largest observed value to the lowest. These data suggest that House minorities have a difficult time convincing members of the majority party to join them in voting for recommittal motions at all times, and even more so in times when conditional party government predicts that the majority would be more likely to stick together.

In sum, the multivariate results cast further doubt on the validity of the KM theory. The number of rolls on the motion to recommit is

TABLE 2
 Generalized Event Count Model of Majority Party Roll Rate
 On the Motion to Recommit with Instructions
 (standard errors in parentheses)

Variable	Coefficient
Majority Party Size	-4.70* (0.37)
Majority Party Heterogeneity (DW-NOMINATE 1st Dimension)	20.02* (0.40)
Majority Party Heterogeneity (DW-NOMINATE 2d Dimension)	-0.056 (0.44)
Party Distance (DW-NOMINATE 1st Dimension)	-2.71* (0.35)
Party Distance (DW-NOMINATE 2d Dimension)	-2.46* (0.35)
Recorded Voting in the Committee of the Whole	-0.75 (0.24)
Restrictions on Amendatory Instructions	0.006 (0.28)
Final Passage Votes (Natural Log)	0.065 (0.28)
Dispersion	-0.05 (0.20)
Constant	2.07* (0.32)
Log-likelihood	-21.88
Number of Cases	47

* $p < .05$.

low and varies systematically with the distribution of preferences within the majority party and the distance between the two parties. Both results directly contradict the predictions of the KM model. The low number of rolls provides some support for both the cartel and conditional theories of party government, but the ability of conditional party government to explain the variability in the number of rolls over time suggests that it is the best explanation of patterns of voting on the motion to recommit.

Discussion

This study again demonstrates the critical importance that rules and the sequence of the legislative game have on congressional parties and policy outcomes. While the motion to recommit is codified as a minority right, the rules of House do allow a majority party to amend this motion and effectively take the right away from the minority. The history of the motion to recommit suggests that it is of great importance to congressional parties, and the results presented here imply that the majority party affects outcomes on these votes.

In his 1993 piece “Where’s the Party?”, Krehbiel challenged the discipline to demonstrate that “individual legislators vote with fellow party members in spite of their disagreement about the policy in question” (238). Although my study certainly will not end the debate concerning the power of political parties in Congress, it does provide evidence that, in rejecting motions to recommit that the spatial model suggests will pass, legislators are attuned to the collective interests of their party. The results presented here demonstrate that the theoretical model presented by Krehbiel and Meiowitz has little empirical validity and hence is not damaging to party theories; in fact, it helps demonstrate the existence of party effects. The motion to recommit can certainly be used to make cooperation more difficult for the majority party, but, as demonstrated here, the majority party is almost always able to fend off this motion. Further, the ability of the majority to defeat the motion to recommit increases when the conditions of conditional party government are met, suggesting that CPG theory does an accurate job of explaining legislative outcomes. Finally, while analyses of procedural minutiae such as the motion to recommit are often not page-turners, the results of this study demonstrate that a proper understanding of these procedures is critical to answering larger theoretical and substantive questions, such as those regarding the role of political parties in the legislative process.

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NOTES

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1. Note that the spatial alignment in Figure 2 renders b^* the optimal proposal for the majority. In a multidimensional policy space, the majority cannot seize the power of the motion to recommit by anticipating the minority party proposal.

2. Specifically, House Rule XIII, Section 6(c)((2)) bans “a rule or order that would prevent the motion to recommit a bill or joint resolution from being made as provided in clause 2(b) of rule XIX, including a motion to recommit with instructions to report back an amendment otherwise in order.”

3. The House Rules Manual declares, “although the motion to recommit is the prerogative of the minority if opposed [to the bill], a Member who in the Speaker’s determination led the opposition to the previous question on the motion to recommit, such as the chairman of the committee reporting the bill, is entitled to offer an amendment to the motion to recommit, regardless of party affiliation” (764).

4. See Cox, Den Hartog, and McCubbins 2003 for a more detailed critique of the Krehbiel-Meirowitz model.

5. Although some Democrats (namely Towns) supported Buyer’s strategy, the larger point of this example is that House rules provide a way for a determined majority to usurp the power of the motion to recommit. Examples of this method of fighting off a motion to recommit are rare, but the possibility that majority members may use this strategy undermines KM’s last-move argument.

6. Although a^* remains the equilibrium outcome in this situation, it is difficult to imagine a situation, even in a one-shot game, in which a majority party would construct a special rule leading to b^* in the Committee of the Whole, only to have this coalition undone by the motion to recommit.

7. The motion to recommit became a minority motion at the outset of the 61st Congress (1909–1910). I coded these data using ICPSR study #0004, Voteview 3.0 for Windows, and various issues of the *Congressional Record*.

8. A roll is a motion that passes despite the opposition of a majority of the members of the majority party. In a recent paper, Krehbiel (2003) has criticized the use of the party roll in legislative research on a number of grounds. First, he objects to the use of roll rates, which are calculated by dividing the number of rolls by some denominator. He points out that the choice of denominator can have a large effect on the inferences drawn from the roll rate. Second, he points out that studies employing the roll rate often fail to account for the size of the two parties in the legislature. All else being equal, the greater the proportion of seats in a legislature that a party holds, the less likely it is to be rolled. Finally, Krehbiel posits a probabilistic voting model in an effort to demonstrate that a “partyless” legislature can produce roll rates that appear to be shaped by party influence. Despite Krehbiel’s critique, the use of rolls in this context seems defensible. I use the number of rolls rather than the roll rate and control for majority party size. Further, Cox and McCubbins (2003) demonstrate that the concerns about a “partyless” legislature generating roll rates similar to legislatures with strong parties do not apply to a spatial model of voting such as the KM model addressed in this paper.

9. The KM model could explain the absence of recommittal motions in a unidimensional legislature, but it provides no rationale for failed recommittals.

10. I draw this conclusion from data for the 53d–106th Congresses only. The data were generously provided by David Rohde and the Political Institutions and Public Choice Program at Michigan State University.

11. I also used reports of the Rules Committee (102–1101 and 103–891) as data sources for the 102d and 103d Congresses. Wolfensberger's data on the number of restrictions only goes back to the 95th Congress, thus we do not have a wholly accurate count of the number of restrictions placed in the earlier time period. Wolfensberger (1991) notes, however, that prior to the late 1970s restrictions on amendatory instructions were both rare and noncontroversial, which suggests that they should not have an impact on the number of rolls on the motion to recommit; thus I code this variable as 0 for years in which data are not available. Note that the substantive results of the model do not change if this variable is omitted entirely.

12. One could argue that the number of motions to recommit offered is a more appropriate measure of opportunities to roll. But this operationalization could cause simultaneity bias if the perceived likelihood of victory on the recommital motion affected the frequency with which the minority offered a motion.

13. Because I have no a priori expectations regarding the dispersion of the dependent variable, I estimated the model using a Generalized Event Count model (King 1989).

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