

# Polarization: Implications for Policymaking & Accountability

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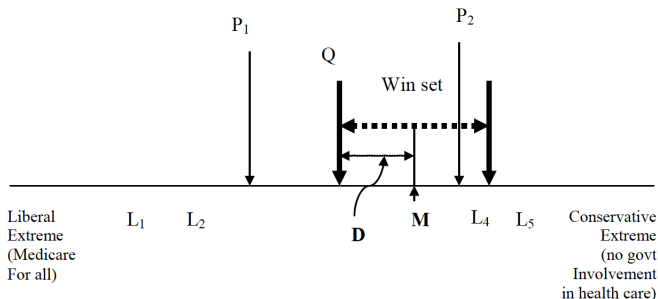
# Agenda

- 1 Wrapping up the Pivotal Politics Model
- 2 Procedural Cartel (Partisan) Model
- 3 Polarization & Policy Making

## All-is-Forgiven Policy

- ▶ For students who improve their performance consistently, especially on the final compared with the midterm, *the midterm grade will be discounted or completely ignored. It is possible to fail the midterm and earn an A in the class!*
- ▶ While there is a strong (but not perfect) correlation between performance on the midterm and the final, every year there are students who benefit (sometimes spectacularly) from the *all-is-forgiven* policy.
- ▶ If you need help for next week's final, get it now.
- ▶ Policy works *under assumption* that there is close to perfect participation in the course.

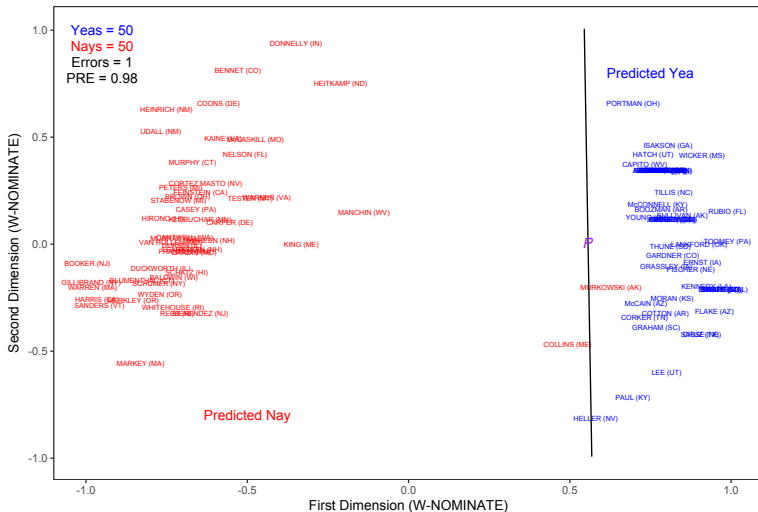
# Opening Question



- Opening Question: What are the assumptions of Krehbiel's spatial model of policymaking, the Pivotal Politics Model?

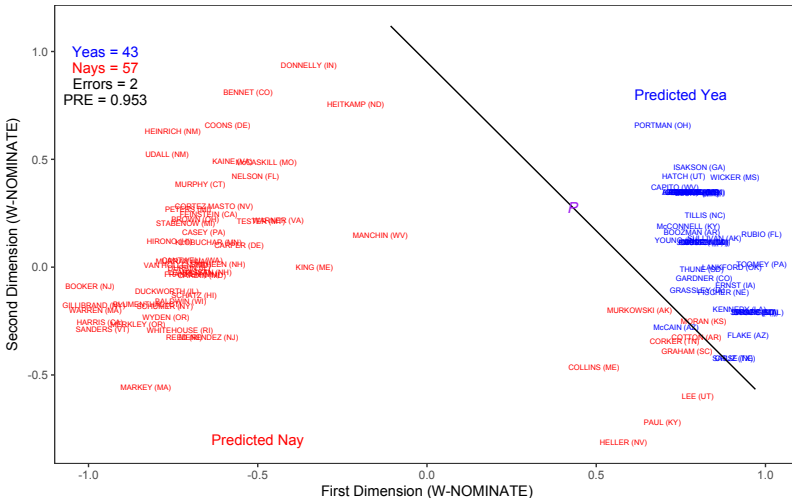
# Example of Spatial Voting in the U.S. Senate

U.S. Senate Rollcall Vote to Begin Debate on ACA Replacement; July 25, 2017



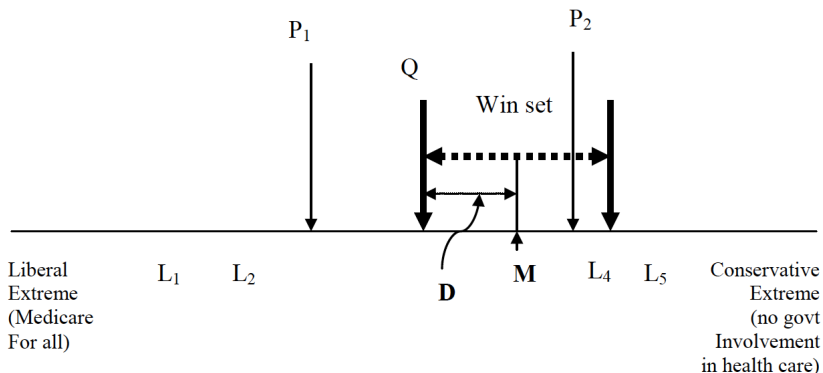
# Example of Spatial Voting in the U.S. Senate

U.S. Senate Rollcall Vote for Clean Repeal of ACA; July 25, 2017



# Krehbiel's *Pivotal Politics* Model

Consider the following model of a simple legislature:



## Simple Legislature

The following conditions apply to the model:

- ▶ Single, left-right dimension of conflict (in the example, on the issue of health care reform)
- ▶ Each legislator ( $L_1, L_2, L_3, L_4, L_5$ ) has an “ideal-point”, vote is by majority rule (i.e. majoritarian)
- ▶  $Q$  is the status quo policy. For legislators, the choice is always between  $Q$  and a proposal to change the status quo,  $P$ .
- ▶  $M$  is the median voter's ideal point. Recall that the median voter is the legislator in the **MIDDLE** of the distribution of legislators and not necessarily in the middle of the issue or ideological space. In other words, the median legislator need not be a moderate.
- ▶  $D$  is the distance between  $M$  &  $Q$  and the win-set is  $M + / - D$



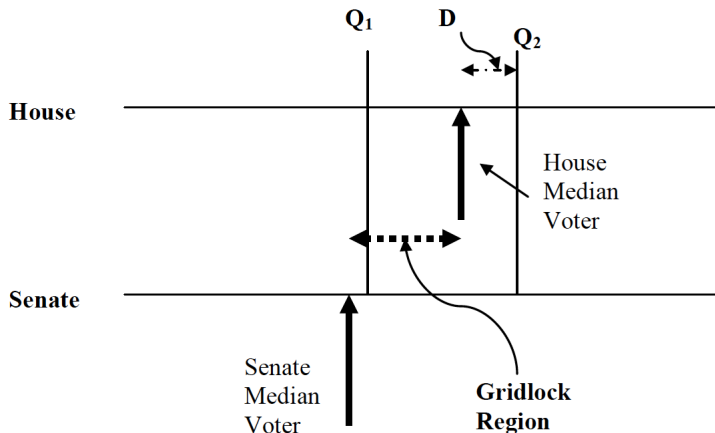
# Working through the Simple Legislature

Consider the following questions:

- ▶ Why does Proposal  $P_1$  fail and proposal  $P_2$  win. What do the legislative coalitions look like?
- ▶ What is the new win set if  $P_2$  passes and becomes the new  $Q$ ?
- ▶ Why will any policy proposal within the win set pass as an alternative to  $Q$ ?
- ▶ Why does policy converge to equilibrium at the preferences of the median voter  $M$ ? Under what conditions does policy change after it converges to  $M$ ?
- ▶ How does one change the location of  $M$ ?

# Krehbiel's *Pivotal Politics* Model

Now, consider the following model of a bicameral legislature:

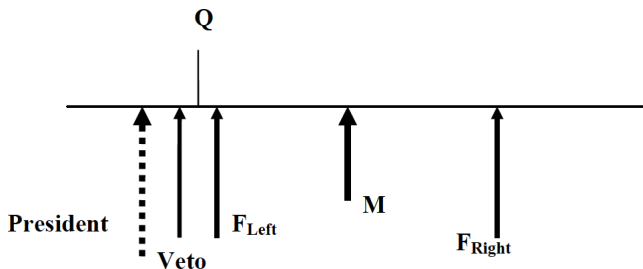


# Working through Bicameralism

- ▶ Why might the median voters  $M$  be located in different positions in the House & Senate?
- ▶ Consider that this is divided government in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress with a conservative House & a relatively liberal Senate and the House wants to overturn Obamacare  $Q_1$  for a replacement proposal  $Q_2$ , why couldn't it change policy?
- ▶ Under what conditions could  $Q_1$  change?
- ▶ What happens if the status quo policy,  $Q_2$ , is outside the *gridlock region*?
- ▶ What is the “win set” for  $Q_2$ ? What happens if the Senate median voter moves in the direction of the House median voter, like it did following the 2014 elections?

# Krehbiel's *Pivotal Politics* Model

Now, consider the following Congress with extraordinary majorities:



Where:

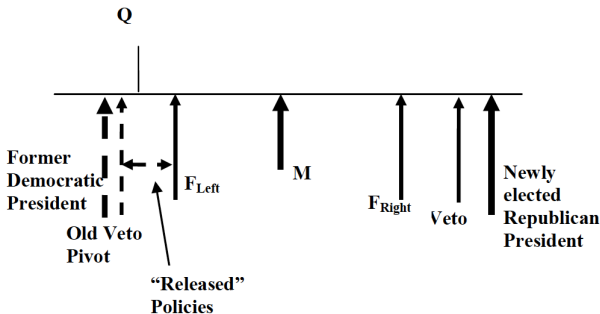
- ▶  $M$  = median voter
- ▶  $F_{Left}$  = Liberal filibuster pivot
- ▶  $F_{Right}$  = Conservative filibuster pivot
- ▶  $Veto$  = Congressional veto pivot

# Working Through Varying Majorities

- ▶ What is the rule for stopping a filibuster (*cloture*)? Explain what that means for the definition of the two filibuster pivots.
- ▶ What happens to the gridlock region under an extraordinary-majority rule such as the filibuster? Who is pivotal & under what conditions?
- ▶ What is a filibuster-proof majority?
- ▶ How does partisan polarization affect the placement of the Left and Right filibusters in the absence of a filibuster-proof majority?
- ▶ Why do you think the model drops bicameralism? Under what conditions would the unicameral model be inaccurate?
- ▶ What is the rule for overriding a presidential veto? Explain what that means for the definition of the veto pivot.
- ▶ Why is the veto pivot **ALWAYS** on the same side as the president?

# Changing the Presidential *Pivot*

Now, consider the following Congress with presidential turnover:



- ▶ What happens to  $Q$ ? What's the win set for  $Q$ ?
- ▶ What policy  $P$  should  $M$  propose? Why?
- ▶ Why my "released policies", such as  $Q$  in this example, contribute to the appearance of a presidential honeymoon?

## Pivotal Politics Model & Gridlock

- ▶ When does Krehbiel's *Pivotal Politics* predict gridlock both within chamber (House, Senate) & across the system?
- ▶ Is policy change substantial or incremental under the model?
- ▶ How does this model formalize Madison's model positing that *ambition must be made to counteract ambition* & that *the interest of the man must be connected with the constitutional rights of the place*?
- ▶ Does Binder find evidence for the Krehbiel model in her article *The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock*?
- ▶ Yes, inter-branch, intra-branch & bicameral distance conflict predicts legislative gridlock
- ▶ Policies have a harder time passing when large ideological distance within the House/Senate & when there is large ideological distance between House & Senate medians
- ▶ Loss of *moderates* also contributes to greater gridlock, why?

## Partisan Model of Policy Making

- ▶ What's one of the criticisms of the Krehbiel *Pivotal Politics* Spatial Model?
- ▶ The *Pivotal Politics* is purely a spatial model, no mention of parties or agenda control powers
- ▶ Why might parties be relevant with policymaking in Congress?
- ▶ Legislative agenda is not an *infinite* resource, member's of Congress need legislative accomplishments to be re-elected
- ▶ Cox & McCubbin's *Procedural Cartel Agenda* is a partisan-centered model of congressional policymaking



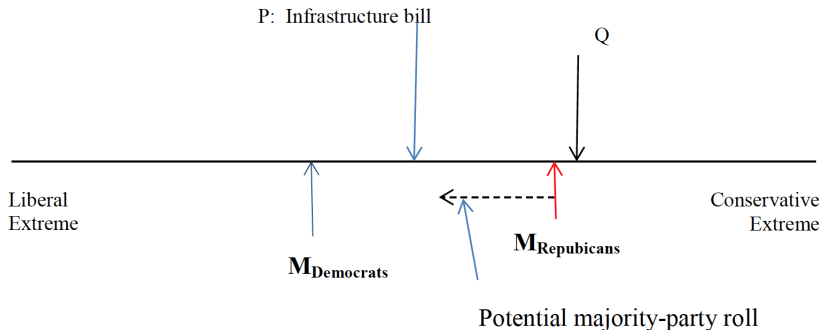
# The *Partisan* Model in Congress

## Critical Elements of the Theory:

- ① Members seek re-election, policy, & majority status
- ② Party brand/reputation important for re-election & winning majority (explicitly collective accountable model)
- ③ Party brand/reputation depends on legislative record
- ④ Building a legislative record involves overcoming collective action problems:
  - ▶ All would like more for their own districts
  - ▶ Party label is a public good, free-riding incentive
- ⑤ Primary way of solving collective action problems is delegation to central authority: party leaders, including committee chairs.
- ⑥ Key resource that is delegated is agenda control:
  - ▶ Party leaders, rules committee & substantive committees
  - ▶ Cartel assures that all positions are in hands of senior party leaders.
  - ▶ Negative agenda control: prevent majority party from being *rolled*

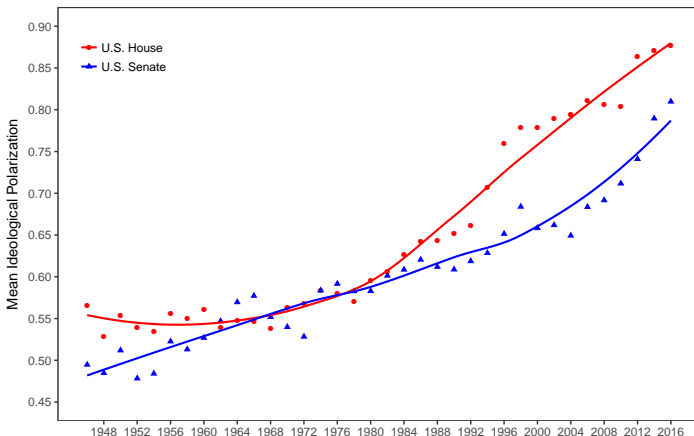
## What is a Majority-Party *Roll*?

Majority-party roll occurs when the **majority-party median voter** opposes legislation & passes. Ultimately, responsibility of the Speaker to keep majority rolls off the agenda. Consider  $P$ , a Trump infrastructure bill &  $Q$ , the status quo. Will it require a majority-party *roll*?



# Congressional Polarization

## Partisan Polarization in Congress since WWII



Polarization measured as absolute difference between first dimension DW-NOMINATE party means.

# Polarization & Policymaking

- ▶ How do you expect polarization to influence American policymaking under the *Pivotal Politics & Partisan Model*?
- ▶ Under the *Partisan Model*, party polarization & internal unity facilitates delegation to party leaders
- ▶ Would this lead to a reduction of agency loss for members & congressional party caucuses?
- ▶ What are the implications of polarization for the Madisonian vision of the *district-centered* Congress?
- ▶ When conditions of polarization and elements of the Partisan theory of Congress are weakened, you get more of a district-centered Congress (ex: 1950's - 1970's)

# Does Partisan Polarization Help Voters?

- ▶ Does Jones present a positive argument for political polarization?
- ▶ Jones argues that partisan polarization should help voters assess who to punish or reward for how Congress functions as an institution: “the subordination of individual officeholders to the party lessens their ability to separate themselves from party action.”
- ▶ Why would a lack of polarization foster the notion that “party disunity leads to diffused accountability?”
- ▶ What is Jones’ main finding?
- ▶ If congressional approval is high, majority party members see an increase in their vote percentages & minority party members see a decrease in their vote-shares
- ▶ How is this collective accountability? Implications for the partisan model?

## Key Points:

- ▶ Krehbiel's *Pivotal Politics Model* is a formalization of Madison's model of constitutional government, thus incremental policy change
- ▶ Binder finds evidence bicameralism & loss of moderates leads to more gridlock
- ▶ Political changes *ideological* location of pivotal players in model, (median voter in House & filibuster pivots in Senate)
- ▶ One of the main criticisms of the *Pivotal Politics Model* is that it does not take into account political parties
- ▶ Partisan model of policymaking posits a principal-agent relationship: Party Members (Caucus) → Party Leaders
- ▶ Party leaders responsible for exercise of agenda control power, to benefit of members
- ▶ Partisan Model posits *importance* of party brand for members to seek re-election, agenda control critical