

# Claremont Graduate University SES Lunch & Learn

Carlos Algara, PhD

*Assistant Professor*

*Politics & Government, Claremont Graduate University*

✉ carlos.algara@cgu.edu

🌐 <https://calgara.github.io>

April 13, 2022

 Claremont Graduate University

# Today's Informal Agenda

- 1 Personal background information
- 2 Professional educational background
- 3 Theoretical basis of research & teaching agendas
- 4 Ongoing research projects & future work
- 5 The “best part” of my job: collaborating with graduate students

***Please feel free to interpret with questions at anytime about anything!***



► Can someone name this city? Perhaps the region of the world?



- ▶ What about within the context of this map outline?



► Last one, I promise! Where's this place?

# More Formal Background: The Long Journey



- ▶ Pre-K through HS



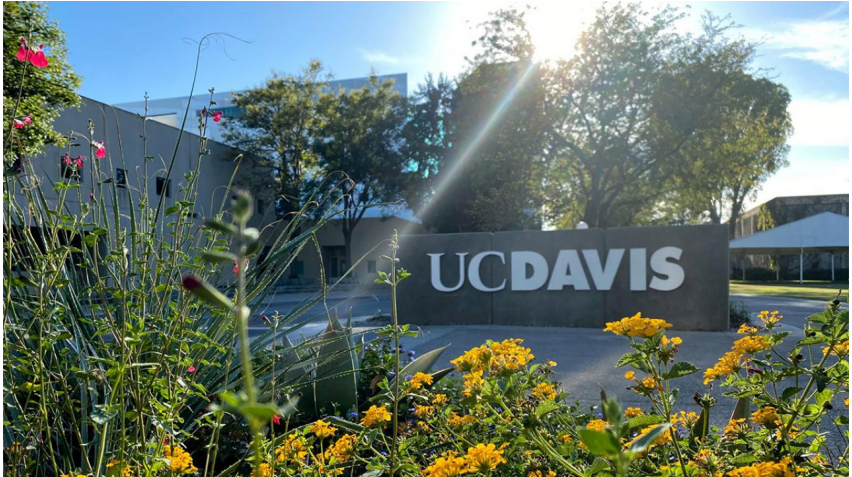
- ▶ B.A. Political Science, 2009



**Oregon State**  
University

- ▶ Master of Public Policy, 2012

# Beginning of the Academic Journey



- ▶ Specializing in American politics, research design, & quantitative methodology (September 2013 - June 2019)

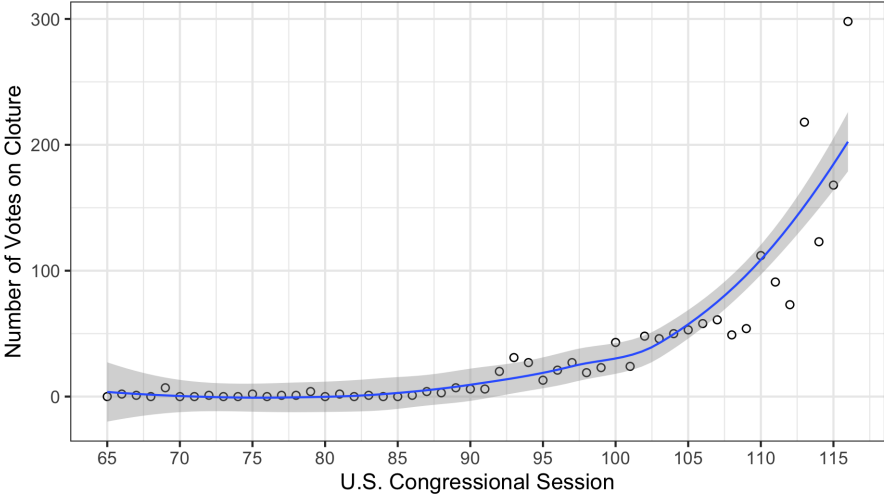
# Post-Doctoral Fellowship: The U.S. Senate



- ▶ 2019-2020 APSA Congressional Fellow
- ▶ Placement: U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)
- ▶ Legislative Portfolio: Democracy & Procedural Reform

# Heart of the Staffing: Rise in Obstruction

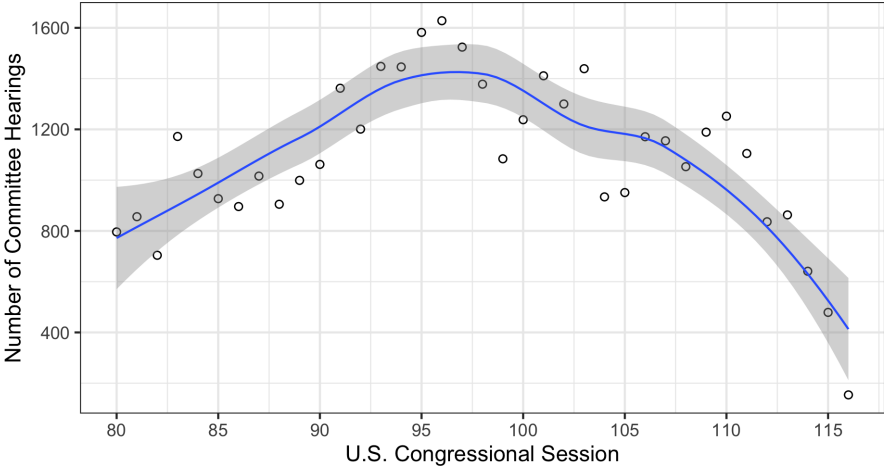
Number of Cloture Votes Over Time in the U.S. Senate, 1917-2020



Data: VoteView & U.S. Senate Cloture Counts

# Decline in Deliberation

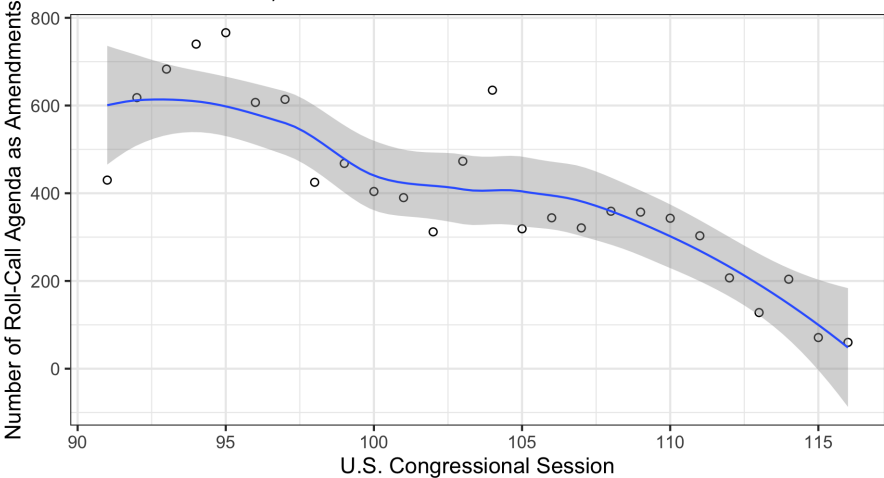
## Decline in Committee Hearings Over Time in the U.S. Senate, 1946-2020



Data: VoteView & Policy Agendas Project. Figure includes both full committee & subcommittee hearings.

# Ultimate Decline of the U.S. Senate

## Number of Roll-Call Agenda as Amendments as the U.S. Senate Polarizes, 1969-2020



Data: VoteView & PIPC Roll Call Dataset (Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma)

# Media Coverage of Fellowship Efforts

## Filibuster reform gains steam with Democrats



Bonnie Cash

Democrats are stepping up talks about reforming or abolishing the filibuster if they win back the Senate and White House in November.

The renewed discussions are being spurred by Sen. [Jeff Merkley](#) (D-Ore.), an outspoken liberal who has long championed revamping the procedural tactic that Democrats see as a serious obstacle to passing legislation and confirming nominees.

- ▶ The Hill Profile of Reform Efforts (June 29, 2020)

## Manchin emphatic he 'will not vote' to kill the filibuster

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell has pushed for a guarantee that the filibuster remain in place.



Some Democrats say if Republicans block Democrats' priorities, it's worth preserving the ability to change the rules later. Asked if there is any scenario that would change his mind, he replied: "None whatsoever that I will vote to get rid of the filibuster."

- ▶ Manchin thwarts effort (January 25, 2021)

# General Scholarly Interest in Topic



- ▶ Brookings Institution Discussion on Eliminating the Filibuster

DE GRUYTER

The Forum 2022; aop

Carlos Algara\* and Savannah Johnston

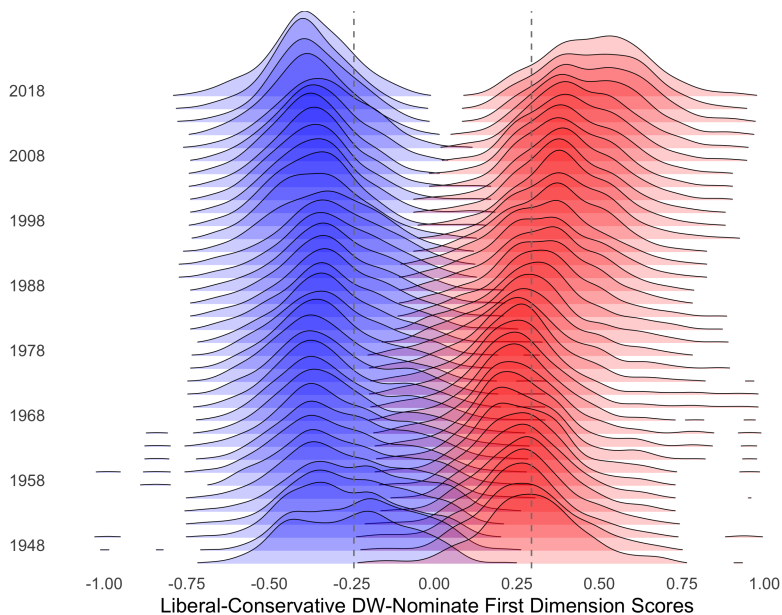
## The Rising Electoral Role of Polarization & Implications for Policymaking in the United States Senate: Assessing the Consequences of Polarization in the Senate from 1914–2020

<https://doi.org/10.1515/for-2021-2034>

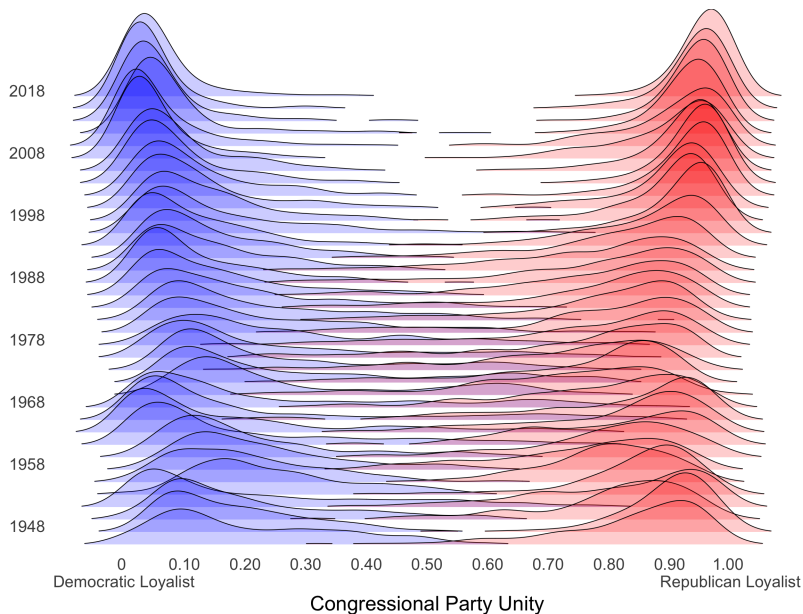
**Abstract:** The dramatic Democratic victories in the 2021 Georgia U.S. Senate runoffs handed Democrats their first majority since 2015 and, with this, unified Democratic control of Washington for the first time since 2011. While Democratic Leaders and President Joe Biden crafted their agenda, any hope of policy passage rested on complete unity in a 50–50 Senate and a narrow majority in the U.S. House. Against this backdrop, the 117th Senate is the most polarized since direct-election began in 1914 and, by popular accounts, the least deliberative in a generation. In this article, we examine the implications of partisan polarization for policymaking in the U.S. Senate throughout the direct-election era. First, we show that greater polarization coincides with more partisan Senate election outcomes, congruent with recent trends in the House. Today, over 90% of Senators represent states carried by their party's presidential nominee. Secondly, we show that polarization coincides with higher levels of observable obstruction, conflict, partisan unity, and narrower majorities. Lastly, we show that this polarization coincides with lower levels of deliberation in the form of consideration of floor amendments and committee meetings. Taken together, we paint a picture of a polarized Senate that is more partisan, more obstructionist, and less deliberative.

- ▶ *The Forum*: Special Issue on the U.S Senate

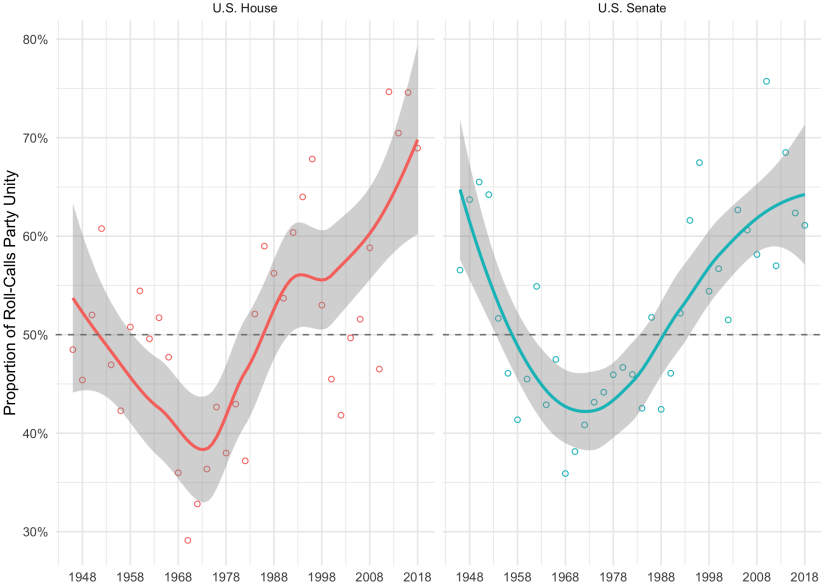
# More Ideological Party System, 1946-2019



# More **Unified** Party System, 1946-2019



# More **Divisive** Party System, 1946-2019



# Disconnect in Representation, 1914-2016 U.S. Senate

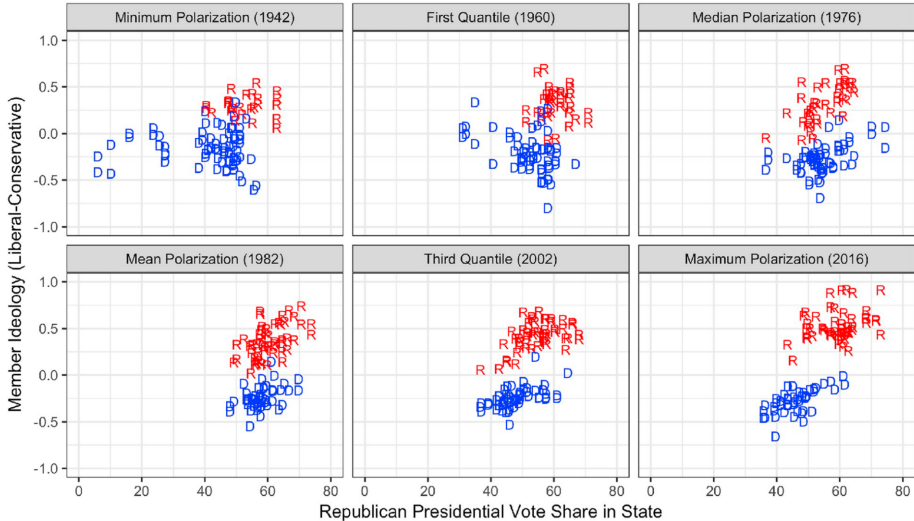


Fig. 6. Senator ideology by state partisanship at varying polarization levels.

# Theoretical Foundation of Research & Teaching Agenda

- ▶ “Classical” literature: the quality of policy representation provided by legislators & parties within the context of the U.S. Congress
- ▶ More nuanced: how do we assess what the public **wants** from their legislators and parties? Given these incentives, how do elites (i.e., legislators, parties, candidates) respond in terms of their behavior?
- ▶ Primarily focused on the literature of representational congruence, electoral accountability, partisan polarization, & legislative behavior
- ▶ Lately, and while decreasing, much of research agenda focusing on the context of COVID-19 pandemic (rapid research)
- ▶ Methodological interests: “latent” variable measurement, causal inference (observational & experimental methods), statistical modeling, dataset construction

# Recent Works on Representation & Accountability

Political Behavior  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-021-09678-x>

ORIGINAL PAPER

## Congressional Approval and Responsible Party Government: The Role of Partisanship and Ideology in Citizen Assessments of the Contemporary U.S. Congress

Carlos Algara<sup>1,2</sup>

Accepted: 15 January 2021  
© The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Science+Business Media, LLC part of Springer Nature 2021



Partisanship & nationalization in American elections: Evidence from presidential, senatorial, & gubernatorial elections in the U.S. counties, 1872–2020

Sharif Amlani<sup>1,2</sup>, Carlos Algara<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, University of California, Davis, United States of America  
<sup>2</sup>Department of Public & Government, Claremont Graduate University, United States of America



Original Research Article

## No Balance, No Problem: Evidence of Partisan Voting in the 2021 Georgia U.S. Senate Runoffs

Carlos Algara<sup>1</sup>, Isaac Hale<sup>2</sup>, and Cory L. Struthers<sup>3</sup>

American Politics Research  
2022, Vol. 9(4) 1–21  
© The Author(s) 2022  
Article reuse guidelines:  
[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](http://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)  
DOI: 10.1177/1532773X211070819  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/tpg](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/tpg)  
SAGE



Racial attitudes & political cross-pressures in nationalized elections: The case of the Republican coalition in the Trump era

Carlos Algara<sup>1,2</sup>, Isaac Hale<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, University of Texas at El Paso, United States  
<sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science, University of California, Davis, United States



RESEARCH ARTICLE

## The role of race and scientific trust on support for COVID-19 social distancing measures in the United States

Sara Kazemian<sup>1\*</sup>, Sam Fuller<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Carlos Algara<sup>2\*</sup>

**1** Department of Political Science, University of California, Davis, Davis, California, United States of America, **2** Division of Politics & Economics, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California, United States of America

\* These authors contributed equally to this work.  
\* [sfuller@ucdavis.edu](mailto:sfuller@ucdavis.edu)



Monkey Cage · Analysis

## As little as \$20 in cash might persuade the reluctant to get vaccinated, our research finds

But employer mandates may harden opposition.

By Carlos Algara and Daniel J. Simmons

August 25, 2021 at 6:00 a.m. EDT

## The Interactive Effects of Scientific Knowledge and Gender on COVID-19 Social Distancing Compliance

Carlos Algara<sup>1</sup>, University of Texas at El Paso

Sam Fuller, University of California, Davis

Christopher Hare, University of California, Davis

Sara Kazemian, University of California, Davis

*Public Opin Gender*. 36(2021), 1075–1083.

## The Conditional Effect of Scientific Knowledge and Gender on Support for COVID-19 Government Containment Policies in a Partisan America

Carlos Algara<sup>1b</sup>

University of Texas at El Paso

Sam Fuller<sup>1b</sup>

University of California, Davis

Christopher Hare

University of California, Davis

# How does this inform my teaching agenda?

- ▶ Courses offered (so far) & planned at CGU
  - 1 PP 300: Introductory Core Seminar on American Politics
  - 2 PP 313: Representation & Elections in the United States
  - 3 PP 305: Executive (Presidential)-Legislative (Congressional) Relations in the United States
  - 4 PP 487 (Spring 2023): Maximum Likelihood Estimation (applied statistics course)
- ▶ Future courses in legislative behavior, political methodology, partisan polarization

# Ongoing Research Projects (Pre-Published)

## Dynamics of Partisan Competition for Legislative Majorities in the U.S. House & Senate, 1959-2020

Carlos Algara\*

March 2022

### Abstract

What drives partisan competition over the pursuit of legislative majorities in contemporary congressional elections? While conventional wisdom suggests that the chances of a legislative majority is largely predicated on the public's ideological policy preferences or national standing of the president, there is little work assessing the dynamics of partisan competition over the course of the electoral cycle. Leveraging over 60 years of new generic congressional ballot data measuring the monthly preference of the mass public's partisan preference for the congressional majority, this paper finds that partisan competition for the majority largely centers on the national policy mood and the public perception of presidential performance rather than partisan conflict. This paper validates the importance of these findings relating to partisan competition for the legislative majority by showing that this electoral competition plays a significant role in predicting the national normal popular vote and partisan seat turnover from 1960 to 2018.

## Does Military Service Matter? How Veteranship Motivates Legislative Collaboration, Success, & Effectiveness in the U.S. Senate\*

Carlos Algara\* & Jared Stefani†

April 2022

### Abstract

In what respects does military service matter in the legislative behavior observed in the U.S. Senate? While scholars long posit that the personal backgrounds of political elites shape the legislative behavior of U.S. Senators, relatively little is known to what extent military service influences legislative collaboration and effectiveness. We argue that military service, an intensive personal and professional experience, socializes U.S. Senators to be effective lawmakers by providing them with critical leadership skills, and a sense of collaboration, needed to work constructively towards legislative ends. In this paper, we use originally collected data on the military background of U.S. Senators to test whether veteran Senators are more collaborative and engage in more successful legislative pursuits. First, we find strong evidence that veteran Senators collaborate more on proposed legislation than non-veterans, particularly in bipartisan pairs across differing policy issues. Secondly, we find legislation with more veteran sponsors make it further in the legislative process from being reported out of committee to ultimately becoming law. Considering these findings, we test our theoretical mechanism and find evidence that military service is correlated with more effective and legislatively productive Senators. Taken together, we show that pre-senatorial careers in public service shapes collaboration and effectiveness in the contemporary U.S. Senate.

Carlos Algara

## The Severity of COVID-19 & Republican Party Fortunes in the 2020 Elections: The Semblance of a Down-Ballot Presidential Spillover

Carlos Algara<sup>1</sup>, Sharif Amlani<sup>2</sup>, Sam Colliitt<sup>3</sup>, and Sara Kazemian<sup>4</sup>\*

September 2021

### Abstract

From the onset of the first confirmed case of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in January 2020 to Election Day in November, the United States experienced over 9,400,000 cases and 232,000 deaths. This crisis largely defined the campaign between former Vice President Joe Biden and President Donald Trump, centering on the Trump administration's response in mitigating the number of cases and deaths. While conventional media wisdom suggested that Trump and his party would lose support due to the severity of COVID-19 across the country, previous literature suggests that the electorate could rally around the incumbent party during this exogenous shock. In this research, we evaluate the extent to which the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the electoral support of President Trump and his party during the 2020 elections. Across differing modeling strategies, we find evidence that President Trump gained support in counties with higher COVID-19 deaths and that this electoral gain did trickle down to his co-partisans running for Congress. However, we find these gains did not trickle down to Senate Republicans, suggesting institutional variation in spillover. We improve our understanding of Trump's electoral gains by using voter-level data from the 2016-2020 American National Election Panel Study, finding evidence that positive COVID-19 job approval assessments, particularly among independents in states severely impacted by COVID-19, may have motivated these electoral gains for President Trump. Our findings suggest a rally effect for President Trump that benefited his Republican allies in Congress during an era of remarkably nationalized partisan elections.

## Partisanship, Ideology, & Issue Salience: Assessing the Dimensions of U.S. Congressional Representation in a Unified Framework\*

Carlos Algara†

April 2022

### Abstract

Do constituents reward legislators for advocating the policy issues that are salient to them? While standing theories of representation emphasizes ideological or partisan congruence between citizens and legislators, it is unclear whether legislators are rewarded for advocating for the policies important to their constituents. In this paper, I argue that constituents reward their members of Congress for the issues they advocate for, in addition to the partisan or ideological representation they provide, which provides a mechanism by which members garner support from their constituents. Using two different conjoint experimental designs fielded in the 2021 *Cooperative Election Study* and observational measures of citizen perceptions of the issues advocated by their congressional delegation in Washington, I find that citizens, particularly regular news followers, reward legislators for advocating issues that are important to them in addition to partisan and ideological considerations. These findings suggest an additional dimension to the classical model of American legislative representation.

CGU SES Lunch & Learn

# Research Collaboration with CGU Graduate Students

## Fenno's Paradox During the Polarized Age: How Polarization Lowers the Mass Public's Assessments of the Congress & Legislators\*

Byungseon Bae<sup>‡</sup> & Carlos Algara<sup>†</sup>

February 2022

### Abstract

Fenno (1975) famously posited that the mass public's assessments of the U.S. Congress are rooted in a paradox, with citizens holding negative evaluations of the collective Congress while holding favorable views of their individual members of Congress. Since the conceptualization of "Fenno's Paradox", the Congress underwent pronounced changes due to increased ideological polarization between increasingly homogeneous parties comprised of more partisan loyal, ideologically extreme, legislators. In this paper, we ask whether this partisan polarization shifted the public's assessment of the Congress and their individual representatives over time. Leveraging over 45 years of new data measuring the monthly approval of Congress and legislators with a fully specified model, we find that greater polarization lowers the approval rating of both over time. We also find that polarization lowers legislator approval to a greater extent than congressional approval, suggesting that greater polarization weakens Fenno's Paradox by considerably lowering legislator approval. We explore this finding at the individual-level, finding that co-partisan support for Congress and out-partisan support for legislators has collapsed since 1980. Taken together, our results suggest that partisan polarization plays a large role in motivating the historic decline in congressional approval and the ability of legislators to amass a personal incumbency advantage.

- ▶ Paper presented last week at 2022 Midwest Political Science Association in Chicago, IL & currently under review

## The Role of State & National Institutional Evaluations in Fostering Collective Accountability Across the U.S. States\*

Carlos Algara<sup>†</sup> & Alexander Specht<sup>‡</sup>

April 2022

### Abstract

Theories of collective accountability in American elections center on the ability, and willingness, of voters to hold legislators accountable for the job performance of the president and his party in Congress. While this work finds that presidential and congressional approval finds that legislators pay an electoral penalty for low institutional approval ratings under their party's control, little is none whether this form of collective accountability translates to the state legislative context. We argue that collective accountability in state legislative elections follows a two-tiered approach, with state legislators being held accountable for national and state policymaking institutions. Using new state-level measures of institutional approval for national and state institutions, along with voter-level data from the 2007-2020 Cooperative Election Study, we find that presidential approval is the principal growing motivator of state legislative partisan choice with other policymaking institutions playing a minimal role, at best. These findings suggest that the electoral fortune of state legislative candidates, and state parties, are largely and increasingly determined by national forces outside of the purview of state-level policymaking institutions.

- ▶ Paper presented next week at 2022 State Politics & Policy Conference at Florida State University



- ▶ Collaboration at every step of project from idea creation, data collection, data coding, model estimation, data visualization, writing of the manuscript, submission for publication
- ▶ Presentation by Seon at MPSA. . .

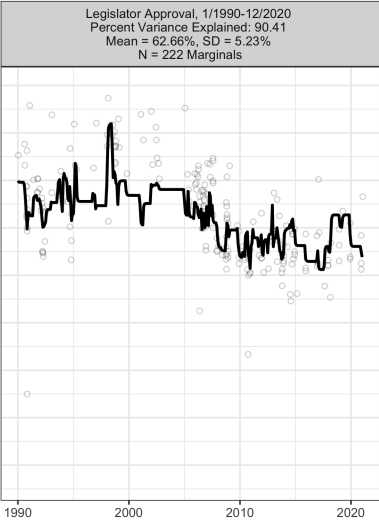
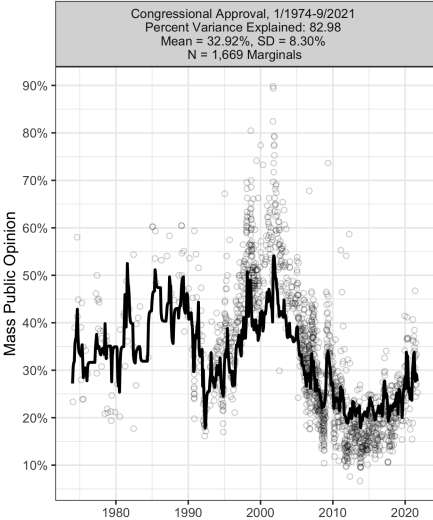
## Polarization & Approval of the “First Branch”

- ▶ Since the 1970s, the Congress is increasingly polarized. The mass public views a polarized Congress as one marred in a lack of deliberation, more conflict, and more gridlock
- ▶  $H_1$ : At the aggregate level, greater ideological partisan polarization coincides with lower mass public job approval of the U.S. Congress.
- ▶ Opposing partisans would disapprove Congress on the basis of ideological incongruence, whereas co-partisans (and independents) may also disapprove Congress because of gridlock in Congress.
- ▶  $H_2$ : At the individual-level, the partisan differential in congressional approval between majority party co-partisans and majority party opposing partisans shrinks as Congress becomes more polarized due to a lack of policy victories enjoyed by co-partisans in a polarized, and gridlocked, Congress.

# Polarization & Approval of the “Best Congressman in the United States”

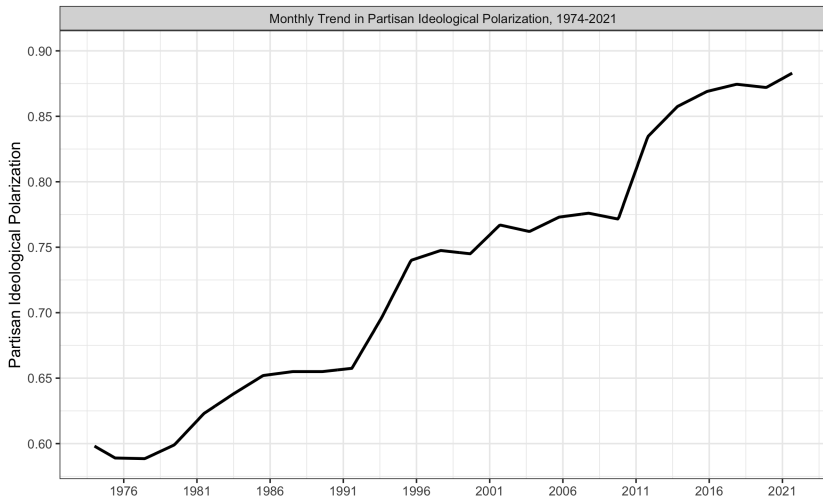
- ▶ Opposing partisans (and independents) would disapprove their representatives because home-style is no longer effective in a polarized age.
- ▶ However, co-partisan would approve their representatives because of ideological congruence.
- ▶  $H_3$ : At the aggregate level, greater ideological partisan polarization coincides with lower mass public job approval of the legislator they send to represent them on Capitol Hill.
- ▶  $H_4$ : At the individual-level, the partisan differential in congressional approval between legislator co-partisans and legislator opposing-partisans (and independents) grows as Congress becomes more polarized due to greater identification of legislators with their congressional party as the parties diverge ideologically.

# Monthly Approval of the U.S. Congress & Members of Congress, 1974-2021



Data: Roper Center Archive. Survey Approval Marginals N = 1,891

# Monthly Ideological Polarization in the U.S. Congress, 1974-2021



Data: VoteView. Monthly polarization series from 1/1974 to 9/2021.  
Polarization measured in linearly interpolated trend from biennial congressional polarization.  
Polarization articulated as absolute difference in first dimension DW-Nominate ideological positions of congressional partisan medians.

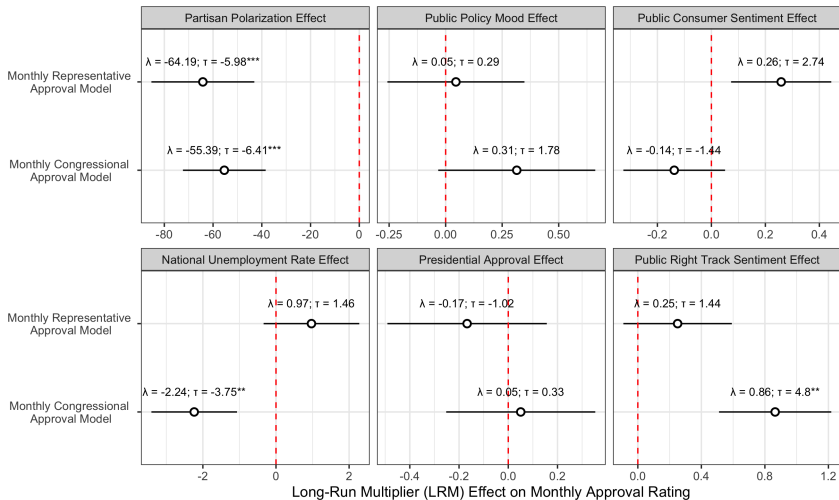
# Specifying a Model of Congressional & Legislator Approval

$$\Delta y_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 y_{t-1} + \beta_0 \Delta x_t + \beta_1 x_{t-1} + \epsilon_t$$

- ▶ Generalized error correction model (GECM) & hypothesis-testing method identified by Webb, Linn & Lebo (2019, 2020)
- ▶ Key covariate: monthly partisan polarization in Congress
- ▶ Control covariates: public policy mood, public consumer sentiment, unemployment rate, presidential approval, and public right track sentiment
- ▶ Time-series hypothesis testing quantities of interest: Long-run multipliers & estimated lag distributions

# Long-Run Multipliers (LRMs) of Error Correction Models

## Monthly Covariates

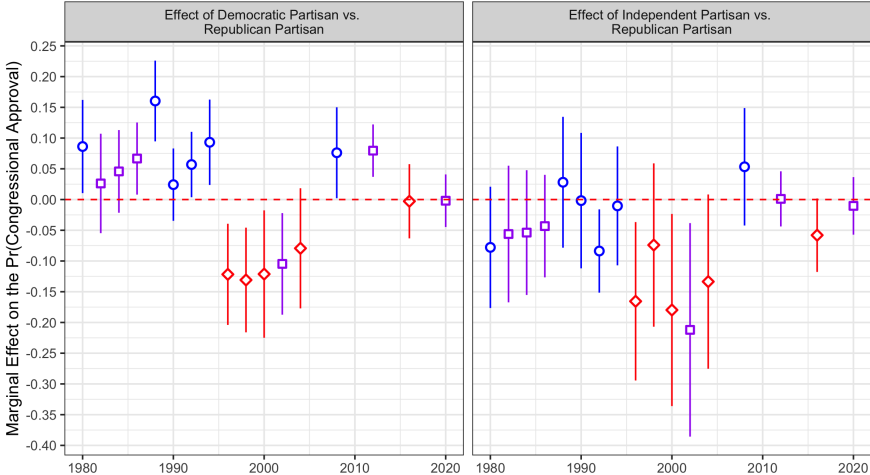


LRMS post-estimated from generalized error correction models (GECM).  
 Representative Approval Monthly Model N = 371 (1/1990-12/2020), R2 = 0.10  
 Congressional Approval Monthly Model N = 563 (1/1974-12/2020) & R2 = 0.14.  
 Significance of LRMS assessed using critical bounds hypothesis testing framework by Webb, Linn, & Lebo. \*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.10

# Specifying a Model of Relationship Between Citizen Level Partisanship & Institutional Approval, 1980-2020

- ▶ 1980-2020 American National Election Study (ANES)
- ▶ Time series Cross-sectional logistic regression model
- ▶ Dependent variable: approval coded 1, disapproval coded 0
- ▶ Key covariate: Partisanship
  - \* Congressional approval model: Democrat, independent, and Republican
  - \* Legislator approval model: opposing partisan, independent, and co-partisan
- ▶ Control variables: age, race, gender, education, retrospective evaluations, southern state, and symbolic ideological identification.

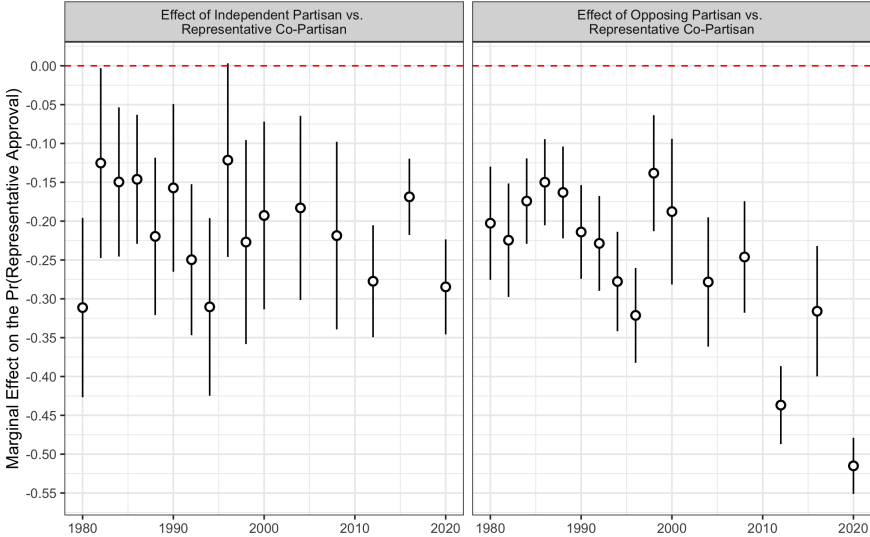
# Congressional Approval Model



Congressional Partisan Control    ○ Democratic Congress    ◻ Split Congress    ◇ Republican Congress

Data: American National Election Study (1980-2020). Marginal effects derived from cross-sectional models. Models control for age, race, gender, education, symbolic ideology, southern respondent, and national retrospective economic evaluations.

# Legislator Approval Model



Data: American National Election Study (1980-2020). Marginal effects derived from cross-sectional models. Models control for age, race, gender, education, symbolic ideology, southern respondent, and national retrospective economic evaluations.

# The Implications of Fenno's Paradox During the Polarized Era

- ▶ As Congress undergoes partisan polarization, Fenno's Paradox wanes due to the inability of the congressional majority to galvanize support among co-partisans and the inability of members of Congress to cultivate support among opposing partisans.
- ▶ However, Fenno's Paradox should not be discarded entirely.
- ▶ Polarization in Congress is harmful for the legitimacy of the Congress and thus undermines democracy.
- ▶ Polarization improves policy representation because legislators are increasingly seen in the ideological form of their party as polarization increases.

Thank you!

 [carlos.algara@cgu.edu](mailto:carlos.algara@cgu.edu)

 <https://calgara.github.io>