



Minutes of the 2011 Annual Business Meeting

**Legislative Studies Section
American Political Science Association
Seattle, WA
September 2, 2011**

Section Chair Sarah Binder called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. and reminded attendees of the section reception, sponsored by LSQ and Wiley-Blackwell, to follow the business meeting.

Binder introduced Erik Engstrom, program co-chair for the 2011 LSS Program. Engstrom noted that due to good attendance at 2010 panels, APSA increased our allocation to 16 panels (up from 13 the year before). Through creative use of theme panels and cosponsorship with other sections, LSS was able to offer a total of 22 panels. Engstrom thanked his co-chair, Michelle Taylor-Robinson, and noted that having co-chairs was a good idea and helped the section reach out to comparative politics scholars.

Greg Koger, the program co-chair for the 2012 meeting, then spoke. The theme for the 2012 meeting in New Orleans will be "Representation and Renewal," which presents opportunities for the section with theme panels and the like. Koger indicated that he and co-chair Carol Mershon will be organizing panels around themes rather than specific institutions.

Secretary-Treasurer Tracy Sulkin reported on the section's finances. As in past years, the section is operating with a small surplus. The section's only incoming funds are from dues. Since membership varies from year to year, but many of the section's costs (e.g., awards and maintenance of the website) are fixed, section officers have been wary about spending this surplus. However, if membership numbers hold in the coming years, this may present an opportunity for allocating these funds to additional section activities.

The meeting continued with the presentation of awards.

Carl Albert Dissertation Award for the best doctoral dissertation in the area of legislative studies (Selection Committee: Alan Wiseman, Patrick Egan, Elizabeth Oldmixon)

Recipient: Amber Wichowsky (Marquette University), "The Competitive Cure? The Consequences of Competitive Congressional Elections"

Amber Wichowsky's dissertation, "The Competitive Cure? The Consequences of Competitive Congressional Elections" engages a wide collection of questions that are fundamental to understanding the relationships between constituency preferences, electoral completion, legislator behavior, and representation in the United States

Congress. Drawing on survey data from the 2006 and 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Studies Amber develops new measures to analyze how constituents' policy preferences comport with those of their elected representatives, and how this measure of ideological and policy congruence corresponds to the presence (or absence) of competitive elections. Chief among her findings is that Representatives who are elected from marginal districts are no more (or less) ideological congruent than more electorally secure members; but voters do, indeed, sanction Representatives who are out-of-step with their constituencies, which can lead to improvements in the quality of representation. She also identifies clear differences in the nature of representation across political parties, and how these difference relate to the income distribution among the electorate; and demonstrates how district-level competition influences voter turnout and contributes to (or detracts from) political accountability among the electorate. Finally, Amber draws on data from the 2000 and 2004 National Annenberg Election Study to analyze the relationships between district preference heterogeneity and electoral competition, and demonstrates (among her many interesting findings) that incumbents who represent "cross-pressured" districts (meaning those in which voters have liberal positions on some issues, yet conservative positions on others) are generally the most electorally secure legislators; and that these same legislators appear to devote the most effort to bringing distributive spending to their districts. Such findings point to an important determinant of the allocation of pork in the United States Congress, and they suggest why some legislators might value pork barrel goods more than others (which, in turn, might suggest when pork barrel projects might be most effective in "greasing the wheels" to secure policy agreements).

Wichowsky's work makes an important contribution to the study of congressional elections and legislative politics, and it has broad implications for ongoing debates regarding the efficacy of contemporary democratic institutions in the United States. The committee was impressed with Wichowsky's ability to engage a substantial and diverse body of literatures and make a unique contribution to these works that will stimulate further scholarship in future years.

Jewell-Loewenberg Award for the best article in *Legislative Studies Quarterly* in 2010
(Selection Committee: Scott Meinke, Marvin Overby, Sebastian Saeigh)

Recipients: Matthew Levendusky (University of Pennsylvania) and Jeremy Pope (Brigham Young University), "Measuring Aggregate-Level Ideological Heterogeneity." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 35(2): 259-282.

The Jewell-Loewenberg Award committee is pleased to present its award for the best paper published in the 2010 volume of *Legislative Studies Quarterly* to Matthew Levendusky and Jeremy Pope for their article "Measuring Aggregate-Level Ideological Heterogeneity." The committee reviewed all of the 2010 LSQ articles and considered a number of them as serious contenders for the award. In the end, we unanimously agreed that Levendusky and Pope's article had earned the award for both its quality and the scope of its likely impact on legislative politics scholarship.

In their article, Levendusky and Pope tackle a critical but problematic measure in legislative research—the heterogeneity of legislators' constituencies. The authors construct measures of district-level heterogeneity based on, first, the variance in respondents' attitudes

within a district and, second, the ideological distance between the Democratic and Republican subconstituencies in the district. In the article, the authors present this approach in a generalized way that can be applied in many legislative contexts, and they build and validate measures for the U.S. states and House districts. Using their measure for state heterogeneity, Levendusky and Pope proceed to test common assumptions about the relationship between constituency demographics and constituency heterogeneity, showing the limits of the former as a proxy for the latter.

Levendusky and Pope's approach represents a significant methodological advancement that will be widely used by legislative scholars, and the committee is pleased to recognize their contribution with the 2011 Jewell-Loewenberg Award.

Richard F. Fenno, Jr. Prize for the best book in legislative studies published in 2010 (Selection Committee: Frances Lee, Georg Vanberg, Lynda Powell)

Recipient: Gregory Koger (University of Miami), *Filibustering: A Political History of Obstruction in the House and Senate*. University of Chicago Press.

This year's Fenno Award Committee received 30 nominated books. Among them were many strong entries. Just based on the amount of new books published in 2010, it is clear that the study of legislative politics continues to be a very vibrant research area. Despite the many fine choices we were presented with, the committee unanimously selected Gregory Koger's *Filibustering: A Political History of Obstruction in the House and Senate* for this year's Fenno award.

Political scientists might think they already know what there is to know on the subject of the Senate filibuster, considering the amount that has been written on the topic. Koger's important book should dispel any such complacency. Both specialists and non-specialists will find much that is new and surprising in this book.

It has become conventional for journalists and political scientists to refer to the "60-vote Senate." Koger begins his book by reminding us that the need for contemporary Senate majorities to routinely muster 60 votes is a recent phenomenon that does not coincide with a change in Senate rules.

To understand how the Senate became a 60-vote chamber, Koger turns to historical analysis. He adopts a bicameral approach, because the House of Representatives and the Senate have both struggled with filibustering. Koger documents the incidence of legislative obstruction in every congress throughout American history. In this ambitious effort, he devises new measures of obstructive activity that are sure to be widely adopted by future scholars.

Perhaps Koger's most notable finding is that the House experienced far more legislative obstruction throughout the nineteenth century than the Senate. The House took many more votes on dilatory motions than the Senate. Similarly, quorums disappeared on a far more regular basis in the House than in the Senate. By Koger's summary measure, there was more than twice as much legislative obstruction in the House than in the Senate prior to 1901.

In this light, Koger views the imposition of majority rule in the House of Representatives (with the adoption of Reed's Rules) as occurring in the context of an institutional crisis more severe than the Senate had as yet encountered. Koger draws some interesting inferences about the future of the contemporary Senate. He writes: "[T]he trajectory of the historic House is interesting as a parallel to the modern Senate: We observe a cycle of low obstruction, steadily mounting filibustering, institutional crisis, and drastic reforms to squelch obstruction" (p. 37). Perhaps the Senate will follow a similar path over the long run.

Embedded with the results from his systematic measures of Senate obstruction, Koger also offers first-rate congressional history. He writes concise and lively sketches of important incidents of obstruction throughout congressional history.

A great strength of the book is its elaboration of a complex and empirically satisfying theory of legislative obstruction. Koger conceives of legislative obstruction as a bargaining game in which the two sides "Pro" and "Con" consider a range of available options. Each step along the way, lawmakers weigh the political and policy costs and benefits of such options as: "surrender," "seek cloture," "attempt to wear down the opposition with attrition," "reform Senate rules," and even "filibuster or not?"

Koger's study emphasizes that one of the most important effects of filibustering is on legislative agenda setting. Filibusters are often waged for the purpose of forcing new issues on the Senate's policy agenda, rather than to oppose or alter any pending legislative proposal. Similarly, lawmakers anticipating minority obstruction will often adjust their legislative proposals in order to short circuit opposition. The potential for obstruction thus pervasively affects the proposals that legislative leaders bring to the floor in the first place.

Taken together, Koger's book contains a wealth of new information and insights. It is a worthy recipient of the Fenno Prize, and it is sure to have a significant influence on how future researchers theorize about and investigate legislative obstruction. The findings and arguments will have long-standing value to scholars, as well as to a broader audience beyond academia.

CQ Press Award for the best paper on legislative studies presented at the 2010 annual meeting (Selection Committee: Leslie Schwindt-Bayer, Christian Grose, Christopher Mooney)

Recipients: Sean Theriault (University of Texas-Austin) and David Rohde (Duke University), "The Gingrich Senators and their Effect on the U.S. Senate."

The committee is pleased to award the CQ Press Award for the best paper presented at the 2010 APSA Annual Meeting to Sean Theriault and David Rohde for their paper "The Gingrich Senators and their Effect on the U.S. Senate." We received five nominations for the award, both self-nominations and nominations from discussants, and the papers were all quite good. This made the decision-making process difficult, but in the end, we unanimously supported Professors Theriault and Rohde's paper as the best paper.

This is a very original and interesting paper that questions why political parties in the U.S. Senate have become almost as polarized as those in the House of Representatives in recent years. While research has explained polarization in the House, those explanations

do not work as well for the Senate. Theriault and Rohde offer a new perspective: “that almost the entire growth in Senate party polarization since the early 1970s can be accounted for by Republican senators [who they dub Gingrich Senators] who previously served in the House after 1978.” The paper presents empirical evidence that the increased Senate polarization coincides with the election of these senators and then offers a statistical test of constituency-based explanations for the Gingrich Senators’ more conservative voting records. The paper was original, persuasive, and well-written, earning it the 2011 CQ Press Award.

Alan Rosenthal Prize for the best book or article in legislative studies written by a junior scholar that has potential value to legislative practitioners (Selection Committee: Colleen Shogon, Craig Goodman, Susan Carroll)

Recipient: Kristina Miler (University of Maryland), *Constituency Representation in Congress: The View from Capitol Hill*. Cambridge University Press.

The Alan Rosenthal Prize is given to junior scholars who make significant advances in political science that also can be applied to practical legislative work and will advance the practice of representative democracy. In her book *Constituency Representation in Congress*, Kristina Miler achieves this distinction by analyzing how Members of Congress view their constituents and the subsequent effects on legislative decision-making.

Looking back at his experiences traveling with Members, Richard Fenno observed that what matters in studies of representation is the elected official’s perception of his or her constituency. Determining the “mind’s eye” of a Member is a complicated enterprise that requires careful examination. This book answers this challenge by formulating a theory of legislative perception based upon the cognitive processes by which individuals use information to assess the world around them. Utilizing analytical insights from psychology, Miler determines the impact of such perceptions on Members’ legislative actions. Miler concludes that legislators act on behalf of the subconstituencies they recognize or “see” in their districts. Such perceptions affect the daily actions that Members undertake, such as participation in markup sessions and floor debate. If legislators see constituents in their districts on both sides of an issue, their actions are often more moderate. In the aggregate, Miler’s findings help to explain increasing polarization of the House. Her conclusions also point towards a fuller depiction of representation which incorporates the reality that Members view their districts in terms of issue-specific subconstituencies.

LSS Chair Sarah Binder congratulated the award winners and thanked the committees for their service. She then moved to the election of new officers. The nominations committee (Jan Box-Steffensmeier, Bruce Oppenheimer, and Wendy Schiller) offered the slate of Larry Evans (Chair), Tracy Osborn (Secretary-Treasurer), and David Canon and Scott Meinke (At-Large Members). The slate was approved by voice vote.

Binder then raised the issue of amending the section By-laws to include the possibility of annual meeting program co-chairs. (The current document just describes a single chair.) She offered some sample language, and the membership approved the change.

She then discussed the issue of section membership. Membership fluctuates from year to year, with a current total of about 615. This reflects a return to the numbers from the mid-2000s,

which preceded a decrease in membership when dues went up to accommodate the LSS membership-LSQ subscription link. Over the summer, Binder contacted a number of individuals to encourage them to join or rejoin the section. This included lapsed members, individuals who were members of APSA but not the section, and individuals who were neither current members of APSA or the section, but who checked “Congress” as an area of interest. These efforts paid off, as several of these individuals joined the section.

The discussion then turned to the status of *Extension of Remarks*. Binder noted that Valerie Heitshusen had raised with her the difficulty in getting people to agree to contribute and then to follow through on this commitment. Garry Young will be joining her for this year to attempt to revitalize *Extension of Remarks*. It is likely that blogs and other venues for short pieces may be cutting into the role that *Remarks* has played. Binder encouraged members to contact Heitshusen, Young, or Larry Evans with ideas about alternatives.

Binder raised two additional questions regarding awards that Evans and the new LSS leadership may consider in the future. First, for the Carl Albert Dissertation Award, should it be possible for departments to nominate more than one dissertation, or should the section stick with the status quo of only one nomination? Second, for the Alan Rosenthal Prize, should eligibility be extended to works published in the previous two calendar years (rather than just the previous year)?

LaDonna Sullivan of the Carl Albert Center then asked about members’ use of the “Book Notes” section of the newsletter, in particular whether people actually read the book reviews in their entirety or just scan the list of books. Several members noted that they value the book reviews and do read them. (Sullivan reported that counts of web page use for the past year indicate that the LSS home page was viewed by 495 people, announcements by 239. The front page of each LSS Newsletter was viewed by about 150 people, book notes by 75, list of journal articles by 58, legislative news by 40, list of conference papers by 35, and research and teaching section by 33.) Sullivan indicated that the book reviews would continue for the time being.

Binder also raised the issue of opening the listserv beyond section members, and suggested that this be an issue for further discussion.

Adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Tracy Sulkin
LSS Secretary-Treasurer

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