

Congressional Caucuses – The Invisible Committees

By Michael J. McCormick

ABSTRACT

From first forming a quorum, the United States Senate evolved over time to include sixteen standing committees, four select and special committees and four joint committees that serve as its basic organizational building blocks (Mann and Ornstein 1981). That evolution included changes and reforms aimed to foster transparency, limit committee size, define committee jurisdiction, encourage open and full debate, increase or decrease the numbers and types of committees and subcommittees, and enable greater participation by junior Senators. However, a much less visible congressional institution, caucuses, grew from 5 informal groups in 1971 to 645 formal and informal groups in 2009 (Digler 2009). Many formal caucuses, known as Congressional Member Organizations, are affiliated with private institutes and foundations with shared goals and interests. This paper explores the theory that members join caucuses for the same reasons they seek appointment to committee panels: policy influence and constituent advocacy enabling member reelection (Fenno 1973). In addition, statistical analysis seeks to explain the inverse relationship between committee reform and the demand for caucuses. Owing to the exogenous influence of House caucus reform, the statistical analysis focuses on the relationship between Senate committees and Senate caucuses. Due to the extraordinary growth of formal and informal caucuses and the influence of outside entities within these groups, this paper recommends requirements to register caucus groups and declare affiliation with private institutes and foundations.

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I. Introduction and Background

Article 1, Section 5 of the United States Constitution states, “Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings.” Under the umbrella of this empowerment, the United States Senate evolved over time to include sixteen standing committees, four select and special committees and four joint committees that serve as its basic organizational building blocks (Mann and Ornstein 1981). That evolution included changes and reforms aimed to foster transparency, limit committee size, define committee jurisdiction, encourage open and full debate, increase or decrease the numbers and types of committees and subcommittees, and enable greater participation by junior Senators. However, a much less visible congressional institution, the caucuses, grew from five informal groups in 1971 to 645 formal and informal groups in 2009 (Digler 2009). Hammond (1991) defines a caucus as a voluntary group of members outside the formal Congressional structure striving for policy influence. Many formal caucuses, known as Congressional Member Organizations, are affiliated with private institutes and foundations with shared goals and interests.

The joint phenomenon of committee reform and caucus growth leads to the following research question: Do members of Congress join caucuses for the same reason they seek committee membership and, if so, does the number of caucuses increase when congress reforms committees? This research utilizes the number of caucuses as the dependent variable while the unit of analysis is the Congressional committee and caucus. As Congress reforms the committee structure, rules or size, the demand for caucuses may increase, decrease or remain the same.

Although the phenomenon of caucus growth is evident in both houses of Congress, this paper's analysis focuses on Senate committees for two reasons. First, the committee system developed in parallel between the House and Senate with each learning and building off the other. Therefore, the characteristics and motivations leading to caucus growth are similar. Second, House caucus reform created additional influences on caucus development not experienced in the Senate. Only the House developed rules creating the formal caucuses. The House created the Legislative Service Organization (LSO) that was replaced by the Congressional Member Organization (CMO). To control for this influence, this paper analyzes Senate committees against Senate caucuses.

Table 1
Congressional Caucuses, 92nd – 111th Congress

Congress	House Congressional Member Organization	House Legislative Service Organization	House Informal Caucus	Senate Informal Caucus	Total
111 th (2009)	256	-	335	54	645
110 th (2007)	306	-	152	37	495
109 th (2005)	289	-	96	39	417
108 th (2003)	240	-	75	35	350
107 th (2001)	105	-	67	29	201
106 th (1999)	75	-	85	25	185
105 th (1997)	70	-	82	26	178
104 th (1995)	56	-	73	25	154
103 rd (1993)	-	28	63	22	113
102 nd (1991)	-	30	71	23	124
101 st (1989)	-	30	63	23	116
100 th (1987)	-	32	55	22	109
99 th (1985)	-	35	45	23	103
98 th (1983)	-	36	36	20	92
97 th (1981)	-	31	27	12	70
96 th (1979)	-	26	22	11	59
95 th (1977)	-	-	27	5	32
94 th (1975)	-	-	18	3	21
93 rd (1973)	-	-	9	3	12
92 nd (1971)	-	-	5	0	5

Note: Data is from Digler (2009).

II. Theory Development

The modern Senator, like his/her House counterpart, is described to be in a permanent campaign. The primary goal of the serving member is reelection and (s)he seeks committee seats to meet this goal. A seat on a committee serves the interests of the constituents by providing the member with the necessary influence to develop favorable policy or procure projects or his/her district (Fenno 1973). In turn, this creates the incumbent's advantage of 'bringing home the bacon', which fosters votes for the next election. The longer a member serves on the committee of interest, the more (s)he develops specific expertise within a favored policy arena. The expertise provides the opportunity for public exposure through sponsored legislation or national press attention that encourages continued attention from voters between elections (Mann and Ornstein 1981).

Perhaps the greatest advantage of committee membership is the facilitation of greater fundraising. The modern election process is expensive, and the fundraising pressure is relentless. As influence grows through participation on significant actions in committee, the member is able to generate funds for reelection from individual and corporate donors with a vested interest in the incumbent remaining in office. In addition, the member is able to attract donations directly to the party or party interests enabling continued party support for committee assignment.

A member of Congress participates in a caucus for much the same reasons. Members join caucuses to achieve individual goals, link to constituency issues, gain power and achieve policy goals (Hammond 2001). Caucuses, formal and informal, provide a member the ability to create or enhance constituency appeal (Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist 1981). Caucus membership provides recognition and public awareness that is important to constituents. Member support of a

caucus can influence, outside the formal committee structure, the ability to bring much needed projects or programs to their constituencies, outside of the formal committee structure (Hammond 2001).

Specialized information and analysis available from a caucus adds to a member's expertise in breadth and detail not available from a member's staff. Often, this analysis is specific to a member's constituency and contributes to their ability to secure federal funds (Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist 1981). Findings from many of these studies are used to determine the legislative agenda and to increase a member's influence. Additionally, informal and formal caucuses provide leadership in agenda-setting and coalition-building (Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist 1981). Therefore, participation and membership on a caucus assists with election and fund-raising pressures through increased influence, public recognition and constituency gratitude.

A. Committee Reform Increases the Demand for Caucuses

Senate committee reform in the 20th Century increased visibility on committee affairs and decreased the number of panels available for seats. After the last significant committee reforms in the 1970s, Congress experienced a phenomenal growth in formal and informal caucuses (Table 1). House caucus reform in 1973 did not significantly impact that growth. However, committee reform directed toward committee size, membership and transparency negatively impacted the ability to leverage committee membership to support reelection and fund-raising pressures. Membership on informal or formal caucuses mitigated those pressures. This is especially true for junior members unable to participate in the formal committee process. Junior

members disproportionately belong to caucuses and are more likely to support caucus positions (Hammond 2001).

In the Member Needs Theory, the number of congressional caucuses increases to meet rising member demand resulting from committee reform. The number of caucuses is the dependent variable while the number of committee panels is the independent variable. The independent variable, the number of committee panels, is a long-standing subject of committee reform and serves as a proxy for committee reform. However, the number of congressional caucuses may be subject to endogenous influence due to the changing demographics of Congress.

B. Caucus Demand is Driven by Centrist Ideology

The Centrist Ideology Theory states that caucuses are ideologically centrist and bridge the gap between parties. Additionally, caucuses strive to be bicameral and bipartisan. Therefore, this theory states that increases in the number of caucuses are explained by increased partisanship in Congress. Since the congressional formal structure is built upon party strength and seniority, an informal structure to work across party lines is attractive and advantageous for policy advocacy. By definition, caucuses provide that informal structure (Hammond 1991). A workable hypothesis is the number and salience of caucuses increases when the houses of Congress are divided politically or when Congress is divided from the Presidency.

Caucuses share information and policy analysis among members to enable member and cross-party agreement on legislation. In addition, caucuses endeavor to develop a position on specific legislation and create a voting bloc to support policy (Hammond 2001). A principal flaw of this theory is the reliance on members' willingness to break party loyalty to support a caucus position. Especially in a polarized Congress, a member risks loss of influence and power within

the traditional party and committee structures. In addition, this theory focuses on the somewhat altruist principle of cross-party policy goals and devalues the advantages to the individual from caucus membership.

This paper will analyze the first theory: the number of congressional caucuses increases to meet increased member demand resulting from committee reform. However, the analysis will include the primary element of the second theory and test for the hypothesis that caucus demand increases when Congress and the administration is split along party lines. Caucuses are important actors in Congress and the policy process (Hammond 2001) and this analysis expands the understanding of the roll, relationship and growth of caucuses.

III. Literature Review

This paper adds to the existing research regarding the phenomenal growth of congressional caucuses since 1970. A review of literature indicates peripheral exploration of that growth. Because committees define the formal congressional structure (Mann and Ornstein 1981) and caucuses create the informal structure (Hammond 1991), this paper reviews relevant literature regarding each structure.

A. Committees as the Formal Congressional Structure

Within a day of forming a quorum, the first United States Senate created two committees, one of which crafted the Senate's rules (Kravitz 1974). The Senate continued the use of ad-hoc temporary committees until 1816 when they established the standing committee structure. At that

time, the House of Representatives successfully utilized standing committees and the Senate was seeking a method to counter growing White House influence (Kura 2006). The standing committees acquired authority, prestige and expertise and, in time, drove the Senate's policy agenda (Kravitz 1974). However, both the permanence and the power of standing committees created a new structural dynamic.

Leading up to the Civil War, party politics grew more contentious and that was reflected in the committees. Because committee membership was determined by a majority vote of the Senate, the majority party locked out the minority party from committee participation. As a result, committee membership shifted dramatically as the Senate see-sawed between the parties. Therefore, the Senate adopted apportioned party lists for committee membership and created the catalyst for the seniority system (Kravitz 1974). Thereafter, committee chairmanship was based upon seniority and linked to office space, staff size and privileges. This created another phenomenon, the growth of standing committees and, by 1914, the number of Senate standing committees stood at seventy-four (Kravitz 1974).

In 1921, the Senate removed forty-one superfluous and irrelevant committees and, in 1941, combined panels into fifteen standing committees with defined jurisdiction (Kravitz 1974). In 1970, the Senate embarked upon a series of committee reforms aimed at diluting the power of committee chairs and increasing transparency on committee proceedings and expenditures (Kura 2006). Today, each party limits committee chairs and committee membership by defining and ranking Senate committees as "A", "B" or "C" based upon prestige and authority (Schneider 2006).

Kravitz (1974), Kura (2006) and Schneider (2006) describe the historical development of limits on Senate committee participation. A full exploration of this paper's theory begins with the

understanding that limits on congressional committees creates unmet member needs. Fenno (1973) explores member needs and their reasons to seek committee membership.

Fenno (1973) interviewed Representatives serving on the Appropriations, Ways and Means, Education and Labor, Interior, Post Office and Foreign Affairs Committees along with their Senate committee counterparts. The survey determined that members sought committee membership for reelection, constituent causes, influence (power, prestige and importance) and public policy application (Fenno 1973). Since the research was conducted prior to the explosive growth of caucuses, the analysis did not mention caucus influence on committees or committee participation.

The committee literature review yields three conclusions. First, members of Congress seek committee membership to assist in reelection, meet constituent needs, garner influence and create public policy. Next, historical rules regarding committee membership limits opportunities for committee participation. Third, the demand for committee seats exceeds available capacity creating unmet member needs.

B. Caucuses as Informal Congressional Structure

Another body of research explores the role, history and member participation of the congressional caucus. Since inception, members of Congress met informally with common interests and goals (Stevens, Mulhollan and Rundquist 1981). By their nature, informal congressional groups, commonly known as caucuses, are difficult to track (Hammond 2001).

In 1970, four informal congressional groups were sufficiently organized to reach prominence. By 1981, all Representatives and nearly all Senators belonged to at least one caucus, with the

average in the House of nine caucuses per Representative (Hammond 2001). In the 111th Congress, there were 256 Congressional Member Organizations, 335 Informal House Groups and 54 Informal Senate Groups for a total of 645 caucuses (Digler 2009). As of March 7, 2012, the House registered 378 Congressional Member Organizations for the 112th Congress (Committee on House Administration 2012).

This extraordinary growth spurred two attempts at caucus reform. In 1981, the Committee on House Administration recognized and regulated a sub-set of caucuses known as Legislative Service Organizations (LSOs) (Richardson 1989). The Committee on House Oversight adopted new regulations in 1995 eliminating the LSO and formalized the Congressional Member Organization (CMO). Each CMO is required to register with the House Oversight Committee and declare the name, purpose, officers and associated staff (Richardson 1995). However, informal caucuses continued to grow and operate in the House and the Senate.

Hammond (1985) conducted ninety-five interviews during the 95th through 98th Congresses, analyzing the role of caucuses. She found that 80% of the caucuses, formal and informal, actively seek to establish and maintain issues on government and public agendas. Additionally, the caucuses are generally successful in this agenda setting (Hammond 1985). Although the data was gathered through individual member interviews, the unit of analysis was the caucus.

Additionally, Hammond (2001) surveyed individual members as the unit of analysis to explore caucus participation and support. Hammond (2001) analyzed variables that affect the number of caucuses a member joins and factors why a member joins a category of caucuses. The likelihood of caucus membership increased if a member is liberal, junior, Democrat, not a leader and a representative from the Northeast. Further analysis explored an individual member's support of a caucus position during legislative voting (dependent variable) against caucus membership,

seniority, party affiliation, leadership role, prestige committee membership and constituency concerns (independent variables). Hammond (2001) found that caucus membership is statistically significant for member support during voting.

This body of literature is summarized into four findings. First, despite House reform, the number of formal and informal caucuses exhibited extraordinary growth. Second, most caucuses seek to influence government and public agendas and are generally successful. Next, members join caucuses if they do not belong to relevant committees or if they are a junior member seeking to influence policy (Hammond 2001). Last, caucus membership strongly influences member voting.

C. Exploring New Research Not Evident in the Literature

The literature review reveals that members seek participation on committees and caucuses for the same reasons: to pursue individual goals including reelection, to link with constituencies' causes; and to gain influence and power and to achieve policy goals. Additionally, committee reform increased transparency and limited member participation while caucus reform in the House did little to control explosive growth. However, the review discovered three elements missing from analysis.

First, this review found no analysis on caucus activity and growth since the 104th Congress when the House implemented its final caucus reform. Yet, there has been over a four-fold increase in the number of informal and formal caucuses since 1995 (645 versus 154). This paper overcomes that gap through utilization of data through the 111th Congress.

Second, there is little analysis on caucus, committee and subcommittee panels or Congress as the unit of analysis. Although Hammond (2001) developed extensive quantitative and qualitative analysis regarding caucuses, the primary unit of analysis was the individual member of Congress. This analysis describes individual member caucus participation and support in detail while exploring the influence of caucuses on policy agenda and action from the perspective of the individual member. In contrast, this paper analyzes caucuses and committee panels as member alternatives with the Senate as the unit of analysis.

Third, the literature review contains analysis that controls or defines the influence of individual member demographics on caucus participation and support. However, there is no literature that explores the larger demographics of Congress and controls for influence on caucus growth. This paper controls for seventeen demographic variables across the House and Senate as part of the analysis.

IV. Data Development and Analysis

As articulated in the literature review, this paper develops new research with a different unit of analysis with new explanatory and control variables. The hypothesis supporting the Member Need Theory is that caucuses grow to meet increased member demand resulting from committee reform. The number of caucuses is the dependent variable while the number of committee panels is the independent variable. The independent variable, the number of committee panels, is a long-standing subject of committee reform and serves as proxy for committee reform. Demographic control variables include age, service length, education, minority status, sex, party and military service.

As an alternate, the Centrist Ideology Theory states that caucuses are ideologically centrist and bridge the gap between parties. Therefore, the analysis will include the primary element of the alternate theory and test for the hypothesis that caucus demand increases when Congress and the administration is split along party lines.

Since no existing data offers these variables, this research creates a unique dataset from multiple sources. Control variable demographics are drawn from Congressional Research Service profiles for the 107th through 112th Congresses. The dependent variable is extracted from the number and types of informal and formal caucuses for the 92nd through 111th Congresses from the Congressional Research Service (Digler 2009). The independent variable is drawn from the Congressional Research Service for the 92nd through 104th Congresses (Vincent, Hardy and Rybicki 1996). Additional committee and subcommittee panel numbers for the 105th through 112th Congresses is extracted from online archives of the Library of Congress (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/lcwa/>). Additionally, control variables for party control of Congress and the White House are drawn from historical data available from multiple online references (http://artandhistory.house.gov/house_history/partyDiv.aspx and http://www.dmfine.com/Congress_makeup.html) for the 92nd through 112th Congresses and comparable White House administrations.

As discussed in the literature review, influences on caucuses appear different between the House and the Senate. While the Senate took no action regarding caucuses, the House twice reformed caucus organization and rules. Previous to the 96th Congress, the House and Senate allowed caucuses to organize and preform informally and autonomously. Again in the 104th Congress, the House created additional structure and restrictions on formal caucuses, such as the number and types of caucuses. Therefore, the statistical analysis focuses on the Senate only

where caucuses operated within a ‘free market’ and were not subject to oversight controls and influence.

A level-level linear regression analysis generated the results in Table 2 and the scatter plot in Figure 1. Although not definitive, the scatter plot indicates a non-linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Therefore, additional analysis comparing level-level, log-log, log-level and level-log regression generated the results in Table 3. Based upon these results, the analysis accepted the log-level regression as the most robust model.

Table 2

Level-Level Regression Analysis, Senate Informal Caucuses and Senate Committee Panels 92nd – 111th Congresses

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 20		
Model	2428.04075	1	2428.04075	F(1, 18) =	40.30	
Residual	1084.50925	18	60.2505141	Prob > F =	0.0000	
Total	3512.55	19	184.871053	R-squared =	0.6912	
				Adj R-squared =	0.6741	
				Root MSE =	7.7621	

senate_inf~m	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
s_tot_panels	-.367871	.0579493	-6.35	0.000	-.4896179	-.2461241
_cons	66.45436	7.237548	9.18	0.000	51.24884	81.65989

Note: Results are from Stata IC 12

Table 3

Results of Regression Analysis, Senate Informal Caucuses and Senate Committee Panels 92nd – 111th Congresses

Model	n	R ²	Prob > F	Coefficient	P Value	Durbin-Watson
Level-Level	20	.6912	0.0000*	-.367871	0.000*	.7593155
Level-Log	20	.7025	0.0000*	-48.20242	0.000*	.7348329
Log-Log	19	.8046	0.0000*	-3.27303	0.000*	.7231537
Log-Level	19	.8391	0.0000*	-.0258924	0.000*	.918659

Note: Results are from Stata IC 12. Senate informal caucus is “0” for the first sample. Stata could not generate a natural logarithm and the sample size is reduced to 19. * P < 0.001.

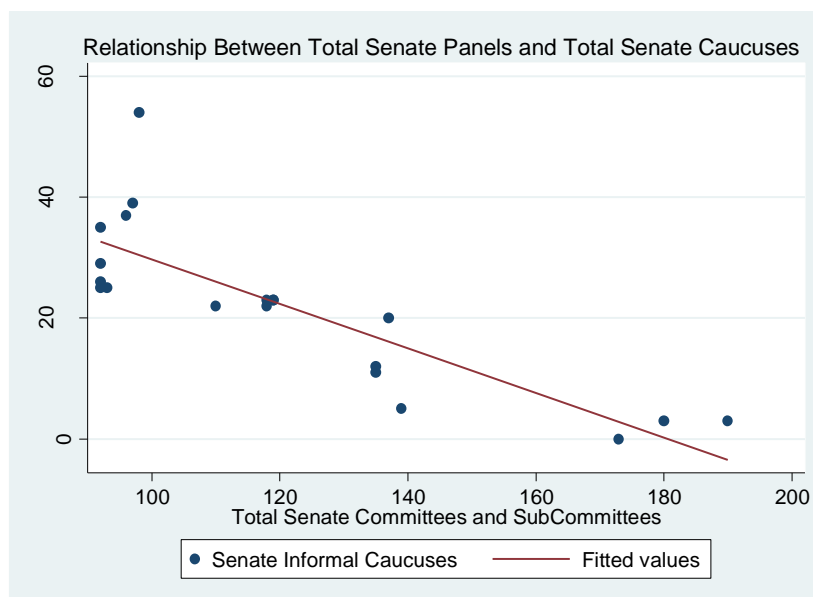


Fig. 1

Scatter Plot and Fitted Line, Senate Informal Caucuses and Senate Committees Panels
92nd – 111th Congress, Level-Level Regression Analysis

Table 4

Results of Regression Analysis, Senate Informal Caucuses and Senate Committee Panels
Control for Demographic Variables, Split Congress and Split White House

Control Variable	n	R ²	Prob > F	P-Value of Senate Panels	P-Value of Control Variable
No Control	19	.8391	0.000*	0.000*	N/A
Average Age	5	.6430	.1785	0.553	0.359
Average Service Length	5	.5358	.2321	0.171	0.517
Foreign Born	5	.7061	.1470	0.161	0.283
Military Service	5	.6131	.1934	0.938	0.399
African American	5	.7061	.1470	0.161	0.283
Hispanic	5	.8146	.0927	0.051	0.167
Other Minority	5	.7061	.1470	0.161	0.283
Female	5	.6328	.1836	0.440	0.373
Number of Democrats	5	.6805	.1597	0.130	0.313
Democrat Majority	5	.8264	.0868	0.197	0.155
Law Degree	5	.4854	.2573	0.244	0.613
Masters Degree	5	.8264	.0868	0.197	0.155
PhD Degree	5	.4857	.2571	0.267	0.612
Medical Degree	5	.8213	.0894	0.046	0.160
Total Advanced Degrees	5	.4359	.2820	0.227	0.738
Split Congress	19	.8288	.0000*	0.000*	0.353
Senate – White House Split	19	.8222	.0000*	0.000*	0.602

Note: Results are from Stata IC 12. * P < 0.001.

Next, the analysis developed multiple regressions utilizing the log-level model with seventeen control variables for Senate demographics and party control of Congress and the White House. Table 4 contains the results.

The results of the log-level regression present the following analysis. The model is robust explaining 84% of the relationship between the number of Senate informal caucuses and Senate committee panels. The independent variable, total Senate committee panels, is highly statistically significant at .1%. Although not ideal, this model is the least influenced by auto-regression with Durbin-Watson results of .92. As a result, the model states that an incremental decrease in Senate committee panels increases the number of Senate informal caucuses by 2.6%.

Table 4 highlights that ten demographic control variables are not significant and demonstrates that Senate demographics does not influence the number of Senate informal caucuses. However, demographic data was not available beyond the 107th Congress. Therefore, the observations are limited to $n = 5$. Additionally, the analysis rejects the Centrist Ideology Theory that the number of caucuses increases when the Houses of Congress or Congress and the White House is split along party lines. Table 4 shows that Split Congress and Senate – White House Split control variables are not significant.

The log-level model was tested through Shapiro-Wilk which determined that the residuals were normally distributed (subject to Type I error due to $n = 19$). However, Breusch-Pagan/Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity rejects the model at $\text{Prob} > \chi^2 = 0.8884$ and assumes the variance is not constant. Table 5 contains the log-level results.

Table 5

*Log-Level Regression Analysis, Senate Informal Caucuses and Senate Committee Panels
92nd – 111th Congresses*

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 19		
Model	10.1385573	1	10.1385573	F(1, 17) =	88.68	
Residual	1.94352829	17	.114325194	Prob > F =	0.0000	
Total	12.0820856	18	.671226979	R-squared =	0.8391	
				Adj R-squared =	0.8297	
				Root MSE =	.33812	

lg_senate_~m	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
s_tot_panels	-.0258924	.0027495	-9.42	0.000	-.0316934	-.0200915
_cons	5.971867	.3349943	17.83	0.000	5.265091	6.678644

Note: Results are from State IC 12.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

This unique statistical analysis demonstrates that there is a highly statistically significant relationship between the number of Senate committee panels (full committee and subcommittee) and the number of Senate informal caucuses. This supports the hypothesis that limits on committee participation creates unmet demand, and that members form caucuses to create additional capacity. Members turn to caucus capacity to pursue individual goals, including reelection, to link with constituencies' causes, to gain influence and power and to achieve policy goals.

Additionally, the analysis rejects the alternate hypothesis that members increase demand for caucuses to serve as ideologically centrist bridges when the House of Congress or the Senate and

the White House are politically split. The demographics of the Senate are not significantly related to the demand for caucuses.

A. Further Analysis to Strengthen the Model

As demonstrated in the statistical analysis, the model is subject to auto-regression and heteroskedasticity. Both concerns can be overcome with additional observations. Extending observations before the 92nd Congress is not viable, as the phenomenon of caucus growth occurred since that time. However, additional observations are available if each Congress is divided into Session 1 and Session 2. Essentially, this doubles the number of observations while adding greater detail, as caucus and committee changes are dynamic through each Congress. In addition, archival research can produce congressional demographics earlier than the 107th Congress. This data extends the control variables across the database.

Although the model is 84% explanatory, it is one-dimensional and does not capture the full influence by other possible variables. Additional research should explore influences such as strong, controlling full committee chairs, subcommittee autonomy from the full committee and committee/subcommittee rules. Perhaps, the most significant unexplored variable is the effectiveness of the each individual caucus. A caucus is effective when it influences policy decisions causing public policy to align with caucus goals. Hammond (2001) states that caucus will remain a vital part in Congress because the caucus system works. This missing variable may explain why some senior members, who participate on committees, also join and support caucuses which add to the growth and permanency of the caucus system.

B. The Paradox of Information Necessitates Policy Reform

The paper's analysis and literature review demonstrates that 1) members of Congress utilize caucus membership as they would committee participation and 2) caucuses continue to be a growing and significant force in Congress for the foreseeable future (Hammond 2001). There is both enough information to clearly demonstrate caucus influence but not enough information to understand the full impact and source of that influence. Many of the larger formal and informal caucuses are associated with external foundations that receive private funding. The associated foundations supply expertise, analysis and information that influences caucus positions and power. Contrary to committee and lobbying reform, much caucus activity remains shielded from public eye. There is no public source data regarding the number, types and activities of informal caucuses.

The lack of public discourse and disclosure may contribute to the effectiveness and utility of the informal caucuses. At a minimum, public policy must recognize caucuses for what they are: an informal and invisible substitute for the formal and visible structure of the committee system. Any expectation that committee reform yields transparency and structured participation must be mitigated by the reality of the shadow committees, the caucuses. If the American voter does not accept or support the shadow committees, then Congress must increase visibility on formal and informal caucus participation, action and support.

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APPENDIX – Variable Definitions

Variable	Label	Type
congress	Congress Number	Index
s_f_standing	Senate Standing Committees	Explanatory Discrete
s_s_standing	Senate Standing Subcommittees	Explanatory Discrete
s_f_special	Senate Special Committees	Explanatory Discrete
s_s_special	Senate Special Subcommittees	Explanatory Discrete
s_f_joint	Joint Committees	Explanatory Discrete
s_s_joint	Joint Subcommittees	Explanatory Discrete
s_full_comm	Senate Total Committees	Explanatory Discrete
s_sub_comm	Senate Total Subcommittees	Explanatory Discrete
s_tot_panels	Senate Total Panels	Explanatory Discrete
h_f_standing	House Standing Committees	Explanatory Discrete
h_s_standing	House Standing Subcommittees	Explanatory Discrete
h_f_special	House Special Committees	Explanatory Discrete
h_s_special	House Special Subcommittees	Explanatory Discrete
h_full_comm	House Total Committees	Explanatory Discrete
h_sub_comm	House Total Subcommittees	Explanatory Discrete
h_tot_panels	House Total Panels	Explanatory Discrete
c_tot_panels	Congress Total Panels	Explanatory Discrete
house_cmo	House Congressional Member Organizations	Explanatory Discrete
house_iso	House Legislative Service Organizations	Explanatory Discrete
house_inform	House Informal Caucuses	Explanatory Discrete
senate_inform	Senate Informal Caucuses	Explanatory Discrete
tot_caucus	Total Congressional Caucuses	Control Discrete
h_dem	Democrats in the House	Control Discrete
h_ind	Independents in the House	Control Discrete

Variable	Label	Type
h_rep	Republicans in the House	Control Discrete
h_dem_majority	Democrat Majority in the House	Control Discrete
s_dem	Democrats in the Senate	Control Discrete
s_ind	Independents in the Senate	Control Discrete
s_rep	Republicans in the Senate	Control Discrete
s_dem_majority	Democrat Majority in the Senate	Control Discrete
h_age	Average Age in the House	Control Continuous
s_age	Average Age in the Senate	Control Continuous
c_age	Average Age in Congress	Control Continuous
h_college	Representatives with University Degree	Control Discrete
s_college	Senators with University Degree	Control Discrete
h_masters	Representatives with Masters Degree	Control Discrete
s_masters	Senators with Masters Degree	Control Discrete
h_law	Representatives with Law Degree	Control Discrete
s_law	Senators with Law Degrees	Control Discrete
h_phd	Representatives with PhD	Control Discrete
s_phd	Senators with PhD	Control Discrete
h_md	Representatives with Medical Degree	Control Discrete
s_md	Senators with Medical Degree	Control Discrete
h_service	House Average Length of Service	Control Continuous
s_service	Senate Average Length of Service	Control Continuous
h_female	Females in the House	Control Discrete
s_female	Females in the Senate	Control Discrete
h_hispanic	Hispanics in the House	Control Discrete
s_hispanic	Hispanics in the Senate	Control Discrete
h_black	African Americans in the House	Control Discrete
s_black	African Americans in the Senate	Control Discrete
h_other	Other Minorities in the House	Control Discrete

Variable	Label	Type
s_other	Other Minorities in the Senate	Control Discrete
h_foreign	Foreign Born in the House	Control Discrete
s_foreign	Foreign Born in the Senate	Control Discrete
h_military	Military Veterans in the House	Control Discrete
s_military	Military Veterans in the Senate	Control Discrete
lg_tot_caucus	Natural Log of Total Caucuses	Explanatory Continuous
lg_tot_panels	Natural Log of Total Panels	Explanatory Continuous
lg_s_tot_panels	Natural Log of Total Senate Panels	Explanatory Continuous
lg_senate_inform	Natural Log of Senate Informal Caucuses	Explanatory Continuous
resid1	Residuals of Log-Level Regression	Test Continuous
s_tot_minority	Senate Total Minorities	Control Discrete
s_percent_minority	Senate Percent Minority	Control Continuous
s_percent_foreign	Senate Percent Foreign	Control Continuous
s_percent_female	Senate Percent Female	Control Continuous
s_percent_military	Senate Percent Former Military	Control Continuous
s_minority_female	Senate Total Minority or Female	Control Continuous
s_percent_femminority	Senate Percent Minority or Female	Control Continuous
s_adv_degree	Senators with Advance Degree	Explanatory Discrete
split_congress	House and Senate Split by Party	Control Dummy
s_split_white_house	Senate and White House Split by Party	Control Dummy
h_split_white_house	House and White House Split by Party	Control Dummy
h_formal_caucus	House Formal Caucuses	Explanatory Discrete
h_tot_caucus	House Total Caucuses	Explanatory Discrete
lg_h_tot_panels	Natural Log of House Total Panels	Explanatory Continuous
lg_h_tot_caucus	Natural Log of House Total Caucuses	Explanatory Continuous
lg_h_formal_caucus	Natural Log of House Formal Caucuses	Explanatory Continuous
lg_house_inform	Natural Log of House Informal Caucuses	Explanatory Continuous

