

the roll call process the congressman is usually able to tailor his positions to suit his audiences. A solid consensus in the constituency calls for ringing declarations; for years the late Senator James K. Vardaman (D., Miss.) campaigned on a proposal to repeal the Fifteenth Amendment.¹⁰⁶ Division or uncertainty in the constituency calls for waffling; in the late 1960s a congressman had to be a poor politician indeed not to be able to come up with an inoffensive statement on Vietnam ("We must have peace with honor at the earliest possible moment consistent with the national interest"). On a controversial issue a Capitol Hill office normally prepares two form letters to send out to constituent letter writers—one for the pros and one (not directly contradictory) for the antis.¹⁰⁷ Handling discrete audiences in person requires simple agility, a talent well demonstrated in this selection from a Nader profile:

"You may find this difficult to understand," said Democrat Edward R. Roybal, the Mexican-American

amendment? a Northern Senator asked rhetorically. 'Because there is no political advantage in not signing. If you do sign, you don't offend anyone. If you don't sign, you might offend some Jews in your state.'" David E. Rosenbaum, "Firm Congress Stand on Jews in Soviet Is Traced to Efforts by Those in U.S.," *New York Times*, April 6, 1973, p. 14.

* 106. "... an utterly hopeless proposal and for that reason an ideal campaign issue." V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1949), p. 232.

107. Instructions on how to do this are given in Tacheron and Udall, *Job of the Congressman*, pp. 73-74.

can representative from California's thirtieth district, "but sometimes I wind up making a patriotic speech one afternoon and later on that same day an anti-war speech. In the patriotic speech I speak of past wars but I also speak of the need to prevent more wars. My positions are not inconsistent; I just approach different people differently." Roybal went on to depict the diversity of crowds he speaks to: one afternoon he is surrounded by balding men wearing Veterans' caps and holding American flags; a few hours later he speaks to a crowd of Chicano youths, angry over American involvement in Vietnam. Such a diverse constituency, Roybal believes, calls for different methods of expressing one's convictions.¹⁰⁸

Indeed it does. Versatility of this sort is occasionally possible in roll call voting. For example a congressman may vote one way on recommittal and the other on final passage, leaving it unclear just how he stands on a bill.¹⁰⁹ Members who cast identical votes on a measure may give different reasons for having done so. Yet it is on roll calls that the crunch comes; there is no way for a member to avoid making a record on

108. William Lazarus, Nader profile on Edward R. Roybal (D., Cal.), p. 1.

109. On obfuscation in congressional position taking see Raymond A. Bauer, Ithiel de Sola Pool, and Lewis A. Dexter, *American Business and Public Policy* (New York: Atherton, 1964), pp. 431-32.

hundreds of issues, some of which are controversial in the home constituencies. Of course, most roll call positions considered in isolation are not likely to cause much of a ripple at home. But broad voting patterns can and do; member "ratings" calculated by the Americans for Democratic Action, Americans for Constitutional Action, and other outfits are used as guidelines in the deploying of electoral resources. And particular issues often have their alert publics. Some national interest groups watch the votes of all congressmen on single issues and ostentatiously try to reward or punish members for their positions; over the years some notable examples of such interest groups have been the Anti-Saloon League,¹¹⁰ the early Farm Bureau,¹¹¹ the American Legion,¹¹² the American Medical Association,¹¹³ and the National Rifle Association.

110. "Elaborate indexes of politicians and their records were kept at Washington and in most of the states, and professions of sympathy were matched with deeds. The voters were constantly apprised of the doings of their representatives." Peter H. Odegard, *Pressure Politics: The Story of the Anti-Saloon League* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), p. 21.

111. On Farm Bureau dealings with congressmen in the 1920s see Orville M. Kile, *The Farm Bureau through Three Decades* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1948), ch. 7.

112. V. O. Key, Jr., "The Veterans and the House of Representatives: A Study of a Pressure Group and Electoral Mortality," *Journal of Politics* 27-40 (1943).

113. "The American Medical Association," pp. 1011-18. See also Richard Harris, *A Sacred Trust* (New York: New American Library, 1966).

action.¹¹⁴ On rare occasions single roll calls achieve a rather high salience among the public generally. This seems especially true of the Senate, which every now and then winds up for what might be called a "showdown vote," with pressures on all sides, presidential involvement, media attention given to individual senators' positions, and suspense about the outcome. Examples are the votes on the nuclear test-ban treaty in 1963, civil rights cloture in 1964, civil rights cloture again in 1965, the Haynsworth appointment in 1969, the Carswell appointment in 1970, and the ABM in 1970. Controversies on roll calls like these are often relived in subsequent campaigns, the southern Senate elections of 1970 with their Haynsworth and Carswell issues being cases in point.

Probably the best position-taking strategy for most congressmen at most times is to be conservative—to cling to their own positions of the past where possible and to reach for new ones with great caution where necessary. Yet in an earlier discussion of strategy the suggestion was made that it might be rational for

114. On the NRA generally see Stanford N. Sesser, "The Gun: Kingpin of 'Gun Lobby' Has a Million Members, Much Clout in Congress," *Wall Street Journal*, May 24, 1972, p. 1. On the defeat of Senator Joseph Tydings (D., Md.) in 1970: "Tydings himself tended to blame the gun lobby, which in turn was quite willing to take the credit. 'Nobody in his right mind is going to take on that issue again [i.e. gun control],' one Tydings strategist admitted." John F. Bibby and Roger H. Davidson, *On Capitol Hill: Studies in the Legislative Process* (Hinsdale, Ill.: Dryden, 1972), p. 50.

members in electoral danger to resort to innovation. The form of innovation available is entrepreneurial position taking, its logic being that for a member facing defeat with his old array of positions it makes good sense to gamble on some new ones. It may be that congressional marginals fulfill an important function here as issue pioneers—experimenters who test out new issues and thereby show other politicians which ones are usable.¹¹⁵ An example of such a pioneer is Senator Warren Magnuson (D., Wash.), who responded to a surprisingly narrow victory in 1962 by reaching for a reputation in the area of consumer affairs.¹¹⁶ Another example is Senator Ernest Hollings (D., S.C.), a servant of a shaky and racially heterogeneous southern constituency who launched "hunger" as an issue in 1969—at once pointing to a problem and giving it a useful nonracial definition.¹¹⁷ One of the

115. A cautious politician will not be sure of an issue until it has been tested in a campaign. Polling evidence is suggestive, but it can never be conclusive.

116. David Price, *Who Makes the Laws?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1972), p. 29. Magnuson was chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee. "Onto the old Magnuson, interested in fishing, shipping, and Boeing Aircraft, and running a rather sleepy committee, was grafted a new one: the champion of the consumer, the national legislative leader, and the patron of an energetic and innovative legislative staff." P. 78.

117. Marjorie Hunter, "Hollings Fight on Hunger Is Stirring the South," *New York Times*, March 8, 1969, p. 14. The local reaction was favorable. "Already Senator Herman E. Talmadge, Democrat of Georgia, has indicated he will begin a hunger crusade

most successful issue entrepreneurs of recent decades was the late Senator Joseph McCarthy (R., Wis.); it was all there—the close primary in 1946, the fear of defeat in 1952, the desperate casting about for an issue, the famous 1950 dinner at the Colony Restaurant where suggestions were tendered, the decision that "Communism" might just do the trick.¹¹⁸

The effect of position taking on electoral behavior is about as hard to measure as the effect of credit claiming. Once again there is a variance problem; congressmen do not differ very much among themselves in the methods they use or the skills they display in attuning themselves to their diverse constituencies. All of them, after all, are professional politicians. There is intriguing hard evidence on some matters where variance can be captured. Schoenberger has found that House Republicans who signed an early pro-Goldwater petition plummeted significantly farther in their 1964 percentages than their colleagues who did not sign.¹¹⁹ (The signers appeared genuinely

in his own state. Other Senators have hinted that they may do the same."

118. Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (New York: Hayden, 1970), p. 29. Rovere's conclusion: "McCarthy took up the Communist menace in 1950 not with any expectation that it would make him a sovereign of the assemblies, but with the single hope that it would help him hold his job in 1952." Richard Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (Cleveland: World, 1961), p. 120.

119. Robert A. Schoenberger, "Campaign Strategy and Party Loyalty: The Electoral Relevance of Candidate Decision-Making

to believe that identification with Goldwater was an electoral plus.) Erikson has found that roll call records are interestingly related to election percentages: "[A] reasonable estimate is that an unusually liberal Republican Representative gets at least 6 per cent more of the two-party vote . . . than his extreme conservative counterpart would in the same district."¹²⁰ In other words, taking some roll call positions that please voters of the opposite party can be electorally helpful. (More specifically, it can help in November; some primary electorates will be more tolerant of it than others.) Sometimes an inspection of deviant cases offers clues. There is the ideological odyssey of former Congressman Walter Baring (D., Nev.), who entered Congress as a more or less regular Democrat in the mid-1950s but who moved over to a point where he was the most conservative House Democrat outside the South by the late 1960s. The Nevada electorate reacted predictably; Baring's November percentages rose astoundingly high (82.5 percent in 1970), but he encountered guerrilla warfare in the primaries which finally cost him his nomination in 1972—whereupon the seat turned Republican.

There can be no doubt that congressmen believe positions make a difference. An important consequence

in the 1964 Congressional Elections," 63 *American Political Science Review* 515-20 (1969).

¹²⁰ Robert S. Erikson, "The Electoral Impact of Congressional Roll Call Voting," 65 *American Political Science Review* 1023 (1971).

quence of this belief is their custom of watching each other's elections to try to figure out what positions are salable. Nothing is more important in Capitol Hill politics than the shared conviction that election returns have proven a point. Thus the 1950 returns were read not only as a rejection of health insurance but as a ratification of McCarthyism.¹²¹ When two North Carolina nonsigners of the 1956 Southern Manifesto immediately lost their primaries, the message was clear to southern members that there could be no straying from a hard line on the school desegregation issue. Any breath of life left in the cause of school bussing was squeezed out by House returns from the Detroit area in 1972. Senator Douglas gives an interesting report on the passage of the first minimum wage bill in the Seventy-fifth Congress. In 1937 the bill was tied up in the House Rules Committee, and there was an effort to get it to the floor through use of a discharge petition. Then two primary elections broke the jam. Claude Pepper (D., Fla.) and Lister Hill (D., Ala.) won nominations to fill vacant Senate seats. "Both campaigned on behalf of the Wages and Hours

¹²¹ Griffith, *The Politics of Fear*, pp. 122-31. The defeat of Senator Millard Tydings (D., Md.) was attributed to resources (money, endorsements, volunteer work) conferred or mobilized by McCarthy. "And if Tydings can be defeated, then who was safe? Even the most conservative and entrenched Democrats began to fear for their seats, and in the months that followed, the legend of McCarthy's political power grew." P. 123.

bill, and both won smashing victories. . . . Immediately after the results of the Florida and Alabama primaries became known, there was a stampede to sign the petition, and the necessary 218 signatures were quickly obtained."¹²² The bill later passed. It may be useful to close this section on position taking with a piece of political lore on electoral impact that can stand beside the piece on the impact of credit claiming offered earlier. The discussion is of the pre-1972 sixth California House district:

Since 1952 the district's congressman has been Republican William S. Mailliard, a wealthy member of an old California family. For many years Mailliard had a generally liberal voting record. He had no trouble at the polls, winning elections by large majorities in what is, by a small margin at least, a Democratic district. More recently, Mailliard seems caught between the increasing conservatism of the state's Republican party and the increasing liberalism of his constituency.

After [Governor Ronald] Reagan's victory [in 1966], Mailliard's voting record became noticeably more conservative. Because of this, he has been spared the tough conservative primary opposition that Paul McCloskey has confronted in the 11th. But Mailliard's move to the right has not gone

¹²² Douglas, *In the Fullness of Time*, p. 140.

unnoticed in the 6th district. In 1968 he received 73% of the vote, but in 1970 he won only 53%—a highly unusual drop for an incumbent of such long standing. Much of the difference must be attributed to the war issue. San Francisco and Marin are both antiwar strongholds; but Mailliard, who is the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has supported the Nixon Administration's war policy. In the 6th district, at least, that position is a sure vote-loser.¹²³

These, then, are the three kinds of electorally oriented activities congressmen engage in—advertising, credit claiming, and position taking. It remains only to offer some brief comments on the emphases different members give to the different activities. No deterministic statements can be made; within limits each member has freedom to build his own electoral coalition and hence freedom to choose the means of doing it.¹²⁴ Yet there are broad patterns. For one thing senators, with their access to the media, seem to put more emphasis on position taking than House members; probably House members rely more heavily on particularized benefits. But there are important differences among House members. Congressmen from

¹²³ Barone et al., *Almanac of American Politics*, p. 53. Mailliard was given a safer district in the 1972 line drawing.

¹²⁴ On member freedom see Bauer et al., *American Business and Public Policy*, pp. 406–07.

the traditional parts of old machine cities rarely advertise and seldom take positions on anything (except on roll calls), but devote a great deal of time and energy to the distribution of benefits. In fact they use their office resources to plug themselves into their local party organizations. Congressman William A. Barrett (D., downtown Philadelphia), chairman of the Housing Subcommittee of the House Banking and Currency Committee, claimed in 1971 to have spent only three nights in Washington in the preceding six years. He meets constituents each night from 9:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M. in the home district; "Folks line up to tell Bill Barrett their problems."¹²⁵ On the other hand congressmen with upper-middle-class bases (suburban, city reform, or academic) tend to deal in positions. In New York City the switch from regular to reform Democrats is a switch from members who emphasize benefits to members who emphasize positions; it reflects a shift in consumer taste.¹²⁶ The same dif-

125. Linda M. Kupferstein, Nader profile on William A. Barrett (D., Pa.), p. 1. This profile gives a very useful account of a machine congressman's activities.

126. One commentator on New York detects "a tendency for the media to promote what may be termed 'press release politicians.'" A result is that "younger members tend to gravitate towards House committees that have high rhetorical and perhaps symbolic importance, like Foreign Affairs and Government Operations, rather than those with bread-and-butter payoffs." Donald Haider, "The New York City Congressional Delegation," *City Almanac* (published bimonthly by the Center for New York City

ference appears geographically rather than temporally as one goes from the inner wards to the outer suburbs of Chicago.¹²⁷

Another kind of difference appears if the initial assumption of a reelection quest is relaxed to take into account the "progressive" ambitions of some members—the aspirations of some to move up to higher electoral offices rather than keep the ones they have.¹²⁸ There are two important subsets of climbers in the Congress—House members who would like to be senators (over the years about a quarter of the senators have come up directly from the House),¹²⁹ and senators who would like to be presidents or vice presidents (in the Ninety-third Congress about a quarter of the senators had at one time or another run for these offices or been seriously "mentioned" for them). In both cases higher aspirations seem to produce the same distinctive mix of activities. For one thing credit claiming is all but useless. It does little good to talk

Affairs of the New School for Social Research), vol. 7, no. 6, April 1973, p. 11.

127. Snowiss, "Congressional Recruitment and Representation."

128. The term is from Joseph A. Schlesinger, *Ambition and Politics: Political Careers in the United States* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), p. 10.

129. *Ibid.*, p. 92; Matthews, *U.S. Senators*, p. 55. In the years 1953-72 three House members were appointed to the Senate, and eighty-five gave up their seats to run for the Senate. Thirty-five of the latter made it, giving a success rate of 41 percent.

about the bacon you have brought back to a district you are trying to abandon. And, as Lyndon Johnson found in 1960, claiming credit on legislative maneuvers is no way to reach a new mass audience; it baffles rather than persuades. Office advancement seems to require a judicious mixture of advertising and position taking. Thus a House member aiming for the Senate heralds his quest with press releases; there must be a new "image," sometimes an ideological overhaul to make ready for the new constituency.¹³⁰ Senators aiming for the White House do more or less the same thing—advertising to get the name across, position taking ("We can do better"). In recent years presidential aspirants have sought Foreign Relations Committee membership as a platform for making statements on foreign policy.¹³¹

There are these distinctions, but it would be a mistake to elevate them over the commonalities. For most congressmen most of the time all three activities are essential. This closing vignette of Senator Strom Thurmond (R., S.C.) making his peace with universal suffrage is a good picture of what the electoral side of

130. Thus upstate New York Republicans moving to the Senate commonly shift to the left. For a good example of the advertising and position-taking strategies that can go along with turning a House member into a senator see the account on Senator Robert P. Griffin (R., Mich.) in James M. Perry, *The New Politics* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1968), ch. 4.

131. Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*, pp. 141–42.

American legislative politics is all about. The senator was reacting in 1971 to a 1970 Democratic gubernatorial victory in his state in which black turnout was high:

Since then, the Republican Senator has done the following things:

—Hired Thomas Moss, a black political organizer who directed Negro voter registration efforts for the South Carolina Voter Education Project, for his staff in South Carolina, and a black secretary for his Washington office.

—Announced Federal grants for projects in black areas, including at least one occasion when he addressed a predominantly black audience to announce a rural water project and remained afterwards to shake hands.

—Issued moderate statements on racial issues.

In a statement to *Ebony* magazine that aides say Thurmond wrote himself, he said, "In most instances I am confident that we have more in common as Southerners than we have reason to oppose each other because of race. Equality of opportunity for all is a goal upon which blacks and Southern whites can agree."¹³²

132. "Thurmond Image Seen as Changing," *New York Times*, October 17, 1971, p. 46.