Ideological Sabotage, Party Competition, and the Decline in Legislative Capacity in the US House

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Abstract. Since the 1990s, members of the U.S. House have systematically shifted resources from legislative to non-legislative functions. We document this trend by tracking members' expenditures on legislative staff and offer an explanation for declining investments, drawing upon insights from transaction-costs economic theory. Using an original dataset constructed from 236,000 quarterly payroll disbursements for 120,000 unique House staff between the 103rd and 113th Congresses, we show that members' divestment in legislative capacity is symmetrical between and consistent within parties, contrary to expectations rooted in asymmetrical, ideological sabotage by conservative activists alone. Additionally, this divestment occurs within incumbent member-offices over time, accelerates when newly elected members of either party replace departing ones, and persists when the out-party takes over control of the chamber. We conclude that perpetual competition over institutional control and centralization of legislative functions motivates declining legislative capacity among members.

Keywords: Congress; political parties; legislative staff; legislative capacity; legislative professionalism; Contract with America.

In their classic article, "US Congressman as Enterprise," Salisbury & Shepsle (1981*b*) provide a rationale for congressional observers to rethink Congress. The legislature is not a monolithic body with 535 participants, but rather an industry in and of itself consisting of 535 "loosely coupled" companies with the members acting as their C.E.O.'s. To better understand the congressional economy, the authors further argue that legislative scholarship ought "to incorporate the phenomena of congressional staff systematically with the analysis of Congress rather than awkwardly appending it to a discussion of congressmen [sic] as discrete individuals" (562-3). This logic was a straightforward application of institutional theory to the U.S. House: members of Congress have many competing goals which may best be understood by simply observing how they strategically deploy scarce human resources. This observation was consistent with other foundational treatments of Congress, including how Congress became institutionalized and professionalized by expanding the role of staff (Polsby 1968), how its institutions employ staff to serve members' political objectives (Fenno 1973, Mayhew 1974), and how members allocate Washington and home-based staff to match their career stage (Fenno 1978).

Although Salisbury & Shepsle (1981*b*), Mayhew (1974) and Fenno (1973) suggest that members allocate their staffers to meet their particular goals, they provide little practical guidance regarding *how* to map members' goals onto their human resource needs. Further, despite the usefulness of the enterprise metaphor, few studies have extended its logic by considering how the well-documented changes in the congressional political context in recent decades have systematically altered members' resource allocation calculus.

We draw upon the transaction cost economics approach (Williamson 1981) to generate expectations of why members of Congress have altered their resource allocation strategies over the past several decades. Specifically, we borrow Williamson's concept "human asset specificity," which refers to labor skills that are highly specific to a particular enterprise, and thus are more costly for the enterprise to replace. We deduce that staff with different responsibilities have different asset specificity, which vary in utility to members over time.

We then test these expectations with new data on staff compensation in House personal offices over from 1993-2013. The transaction cost approach offers a useful theoretical framework for why House lawmakers have systematically decreased their investment in policy-oriented staff.

Importantly, all members have similar demands on their time, represent similarly sized constituent populations, and operate under institutionally dictated personal office budget constraints set by the Members Representation Allowance (MRA) formula. Given their MRA limitations, staffing decisions represent an opportunity cost on behalf of the legislative enterprise, in that resources devoted to one function effectively limit resources available for others. Thus, members must make choices as they deploy their scarce resources in pursuit of their individual goals, as Salisbury & Shepsle (1981*b*) state: "the choice of organizational style may often reflect the member's own conception of his or her role and the functional priorities associated with it" (560).

A Transaction Cost Theory of the Legislative Enterprise

In operating a legislative "enterprise," congressional staffers serve a variety of functions in members' offices, as members seek reelection, policy influence, and institutional advancement (Fenno 1973). Some staff focus on the actual process of legislating, others focus on casework in the district, and still others communications with national and local media. We argue that these functions vary systematically with respect to the *specificity* of the labor required to undertake them, which governs how costly it becomes to enterprises to replace staff performing each function. For example, within Williamson's (1981) framework, the work done by *representational staff* is low in specificity, as all members seek to earn attention for their district-focused activities and responses to constituent communication and service requests. Indeed, such tasks are relatively uniform across offices. For example, it is not uncommon for district staff to continue to work in the same office when new members are elected, even across party lines. This suggests that an effective representational staffer in one office can more easily transition to work effectively in another office. Moreover, even though effective constituent service may require assembling a staff that understands the member's specific district, all members have run a successful campaign within their district, generating a long list of potential staff capable of performing representational duties. Similarly, staffers responsible for administrative functions register low levels of specificity.

Compared to representational and administrative staff, however, legislative staff traditionally register higher levels of specificity and are more costly for the member to replace. Members' preferences and priorities are often idiosyncratic as they respond to their different constituencies (Fenno 1973), coalitional demands, and individual goals (Bernhard & Sulkin 2018). Indeed, members' propensity to specialize is a well-documented regularity (Shepsle 1978). An effective legislative staffer must therefore understand not only substantive issue complexities, but also relevant procedural mechanisms, formal institutional considerations, and informal process norms. Perhaps most importantly, they must also consider the electoral ramifications of how legislation in their portfolio may be traced back to key interests in the district (Arnold 1992). Even once a staffer understands the policy and political dynamics of a piece of legislation, she must also understand her *boss's* idiosyncratic preferences and goals, including what can be bargained away and what is non-negotiable. As a result, we argue that effective legislative staff work is highly specific and valuable to the specific member who hired them.

A Puzzle: Over-time Declines in Legislative Staff Spending

In spite of their costliness, there are many benefits of high-quality legislative staff. Members with more experienced staff, for example, appear better able to advance their own legislative agenda (Crosson et al. forthcoming), which may aid in constituents' perceptions of the member and help the member ascend within Congress. Thus, traditionally, members have made use of professional legislative staff to pursue their policy goals, in spite of their costliness.

These advantages notwithstanding, we find that members have systematically divested in legislative staff over the past two decades. We do so by analyzing payroll disbursements for 120,000 unique personal staff in the U.S. House, from the 103rd through 113th Congresses. The full longitudinal data set categorizes 236,000 quarterly staffer-member observations. These data include information on compensation, employer, and job titles. Our main empirical contribution is to systematically categorize all staffers into five "primary responsibility" categories—legislative, political management, office management, communications, and constituency service—which we then collapse into the three staffer categories: constituent service, administrative, and legislative.

We systematically identify staff responsibilities using the quarterly *Congressional Yellow Book* volumes that coincide with the quarterly payroll statements. Our protocol permits some staff to have partial roles in multiple categories, so our process offers a higher degree of precision than simply relying on job titles. Relying on job titles alone may hide or inflate domain-specific roles (Petersen 2011), especially as they relate to legislators' dual representation and lawmaking responsibilities, which frequently conflict with each other (Fenno 1973). Our 236,000 detailed coding decisions represent the largest, most systematic account of member of Congress's resource allocation decisions ever reported.[1]

Figure 1 collapses the responsibility categories into the three broader classifications discussed above: (1) *Legislative staff* is unchanged from the original category, (2) *Representational staff* consist of constituency service and communications staff, and (3) *Administrative staff* consist of political management—typically the most senior non-legislative staffer, frequently the Chief of Staff—and office management, such as schedulers, information technology personnel, and other support staff.[2] At this most general level of analysis, the share of resources spent on administrative staff has sharply declined. This is unsurprising as our period of

[1] *Vital Statistics on Congress* aggregates staffer counts, but do not associate them with employing offices. The LegiStorm commercial directory includes payroll disbursements, but is truncated at calendar year 2001 and does not categorize individuals by their primary responsibilities. A legacy commercial directory published by Congressional Quarterly between 1993 through 2009 does not include payroll disbursements or responsibilities (Montgomery & Nyhan 2017).

[2] The original scheme may categorize political managers as also having partial legislative, constituency service, or communications responsibilities, so portions of their compensation may already be allocated to the *Legislative staff* and *Representational staff* categories in Figure 1.

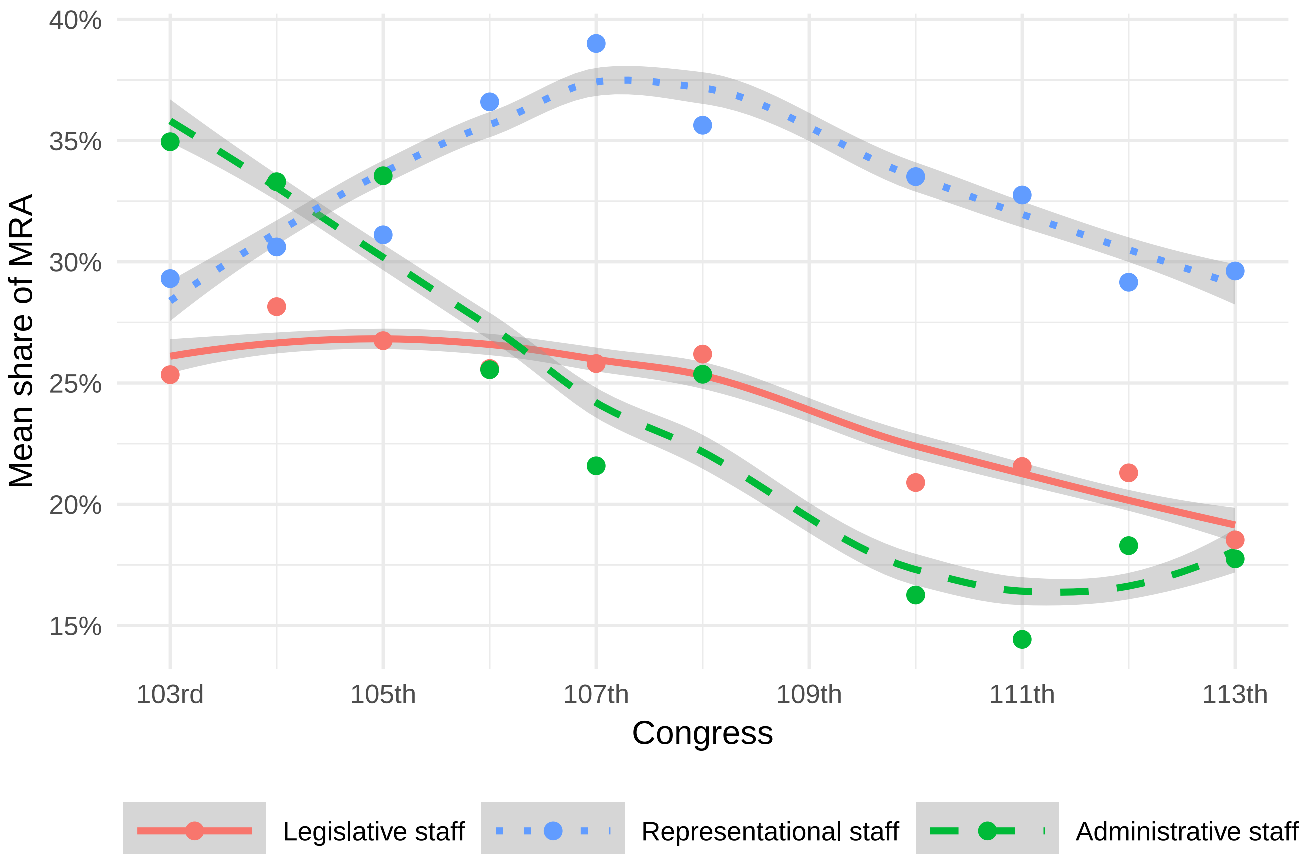


Fig 1: Mean share of member representational allowances allocated to different staff types. Dots show the mean percentage, while the loess smoother is estimated based on the full distributions. "Representational staff" is a collapsed category of constituent service and communications staffers, "Administrative staff" is a collapsed category including political and office management, and "Legislative staff" is any staffer with policy responsibilities in the Congressional Yellowbook.

observation coincides with the rise of widespread information communication technology in the workplace. The widespread accessibility of email, personal calendars and word processing obviated the need for as many dedicated administrative personnel as these basic functions could now be performed by all staffers (**??**). More interestingly, we reveal that members have shifted staffing resources systematically from legislative functions to representational operations. The share of staffing resources allocated to legislative staffers peaked in the 104th Congress, with the median office allocating 27.1 percent, or $230,869 for the median MRA. By the 113th Congress this share had decreased to 18.3 percent, or $225,768 for the median MRA.[3]

While the share of total available resources directed towards legislative staff has decreased consistently over

[3]All salaries are in 2017 inflation adjusted dollars.

time, the value in absolute terms has fluctuated as the MRA formulas expanded (at least until they partially contracted in the 112th Congress). Members have near full discretion on how to allocate their MRA to personnel, franked mail, and other overhead such as district office rental. Figure 2 plots inflation-adjusted MRA allocations to all 440 voting and non-voting member offices. The median spending on legislative staffers peaked in the 111th Congress at $\$316,245$ in response to these budget increases, but has since plummeted by nearly $\$90,000$. Thus, in recent Congresses, members have faced even starker trade-offs between legislative and non-legislative investments with their MRAs. In spite of this fact, as Figure 1 depicts, MRA investments in legislative staff have continued to drop—indicating that members have opted to cut legislative staff, rather than representational staff, in response to such budget cuts.

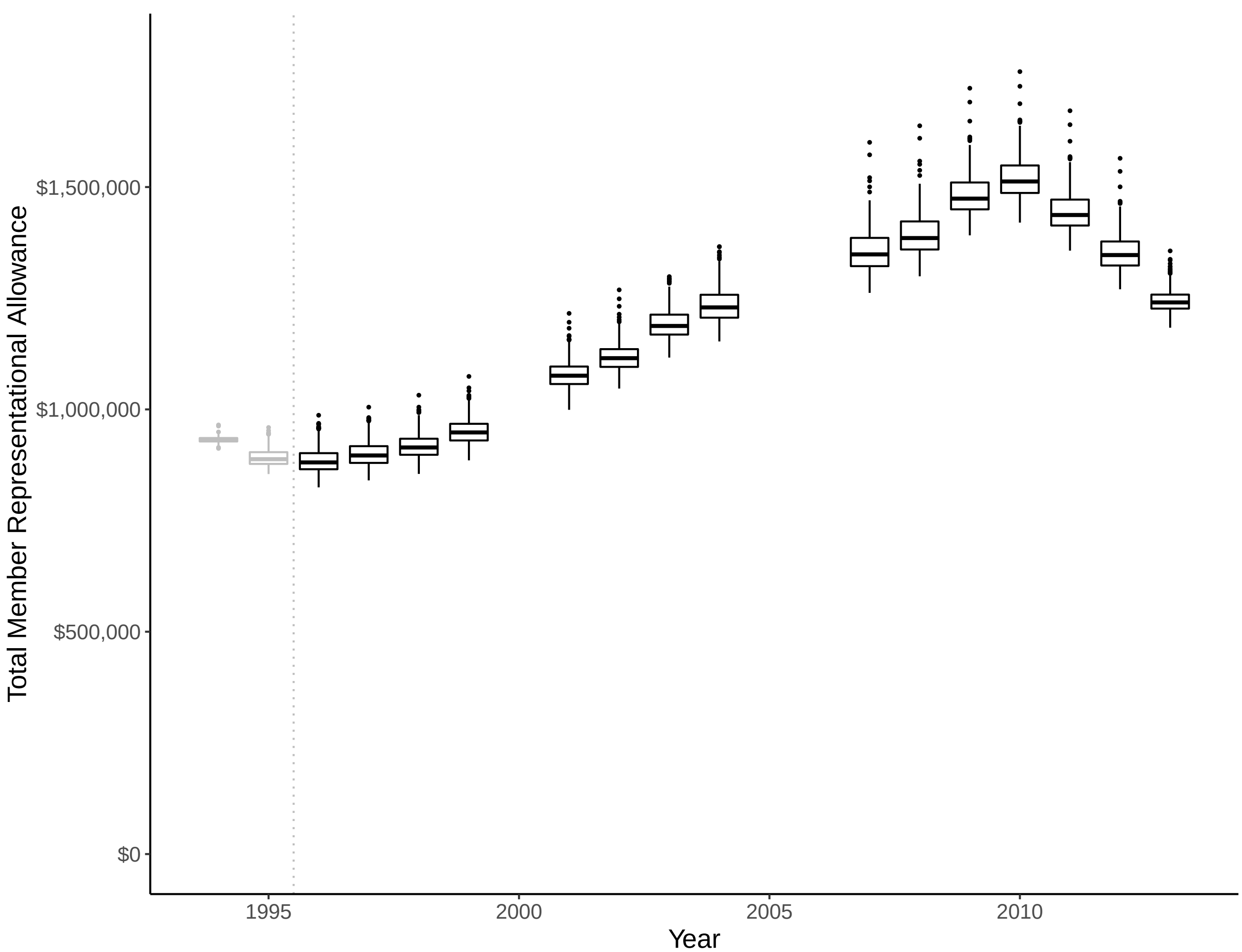


Fig 2: The rise and fall of Member Representational Allowances. Distributions for 1994 and 1995 in gray are imputed MRA estimates.

It is important to reiterate that these data account only for staff in members' personal offices, compensated with funds allocated by the MRA formula. Therefore, it is plausible that the legislative workload has simply been picked up by the standing committees, ideological caucuses, and legislative support agencies. There is little evidence to support this notion, as the new Republican majority under Speaker Newt Gingrich followed through on its promises to cut 1/3rd of committee staff, reduce civil service personnel in the Library of Congress, and eliminate the Office of Technology Assessment (*Vital Statistics on Congress* 2018). These cuts have persisted through present day. In fact, the only type of committee staff to see an overall increase in spending has been communication staff, which are primarily oriented toward public relations, not legislative operations.[4] Legislative staff levels in committees have remained relatively stable since 2001, rather than increasing to compensate for individual member divestment.[5]

How Insecure Majorities Altered Members' Transaction Cost Allocations

Why have members of Congress spent less on legislative staff in recent years? We argue that changes in political context—namely, the rise in insecure majorities (Lee 2016) and concomitant centralization of legislating power in Congress (Curry 2015)—have altered the specificity associated with the average legislative staffer in Congress.

As (Lee 2016) argues, today's era of alternating majorities and partisan anxiety—especially in the House—has increased Congress's collective focus on reelection. Indeed, given the privileges associated with majority status, members realize the value of their co-partisans winning across the country. As a consequence, individual members have delegated more policy development responsibilities to party leaders, who use their asymmetric informational advantages (Aldrich 2011, Curry 2015, Koger & Lebo 2017, Lee 2016) and parliamen-

[4]See Online Appendix D, Figure A3, page 9.

[5]It is unlikely that declining legislative capacity is being augmented by the use of staff whose salaries are shared by committee offices. For one, few committees' rules authorize shared staff for all but committee leaders, and for those the House Committee on Administration limits shared cost amounts between offices. Our data reveal that percentage of salaries paid to shared employees represents only 1.3% of all payments. It is, therefore, extremely unlikely for such a small subpopulation of shared staffers to make up for the declines in personal offices legislative staff, because the absolute magnitude of spending on all shared staff is *smaller than* the magnitude of the decrease in resources devoted legislative staff.

tary agenda powers (Cox & McCubbins 1993, 2005, Sinclair 1998, 2011) to manage party-differentiated policy agendas and reallocate reelection resources, such as campaign funds. The result is a legislature with minimal independent contributions from rank-and-file members.

Given the centralization of this decision-making process, we argue that the human asset specificity associated with legislative staff in personal offices has decreased over time. Traditionally, legislative work has required that staff understand the intricacies not only of a policy area, but also of parliamentary procedure, the preferences of the member, and information relevant to bargaining decisions. Given that parties retain firm control of the floor agenda, knowledge of parliamentary procedure has become comparatively less useful to member-offices in recent years, simplifying this aspect of legislative staffers' workload. Likewise, as policy-making has become increasingly centralized within leadership offices, individual members increasingly lack the clout to demand policy concessions from leadership. Thus, staffers need not be equipped to engage in sophisticated bargaining on behalf of their members. Instead, they need to track issues and translate leadership recommendations to their bosses. This marks a transition of legislative work from high-specificity labor to low-specificity labor. As such, we argue that legislative staffers in personal offices are more interchangeable than they once were. We should expect a commensurate decline in the compensation and retention of these staffers.

Taken together, these changes have led members to spend less of their MRAs on legislative staff. Indeed, with the centralization of the legislative process, members have face fewer incentives to expend high salaries to maintain long-term employment relations with experienced legislative staffers. By the same token, though, the value of individual members retaining seats in Congress has increased, as majority control in Congress has grown more insecure.

According to a former Republican member of Congress—a senior appropriator closely aligned with Newt Gingrich—the decline in Congress's capacity was indeed an effort by party leaders centralize legislative control and maximize members' reelection chances:

> [Before the 1994 Republican victory] the schedule was that the average member probably had his family here, Republican or Democrat. For those that went back to the district, they would have Monday mornings to come back. There would actually be floor action on Monday afternoon.
>
> At Newt Gingrich's insistence when he was Speaker, you leave your families at home because you're more likely to get reelected. Politically, it was probably a wise move. Legislatively—for the good of Congress—it was a disaster, an absolute frigging [sic] disaster, because now their families, the spouses, the kids are back home. They go home to politick, presumably do that [Friday through Monday]. They're politicking at home, but their spouses don't want them to come to Washington so...they come back on Tuesday. Business doesn't really start for anybody until Tuesday afternoon and all the committees...the caucuses and stuff, meet on Wednesday morning.
>
> And a [member] might today be assigned to more committees and more subcommittees than...back then, in which case [she/he] has more responsibilities but less time with which to fulfill them, which means that unless you're [chair] of a particular sub-committee or full committee, you're not spending your time on any substance...and you're not learning in the hearings, if there are any hearings. The work product, I think, has shown that it's not nearly what it used to be.

Although a long-standing member who held office both before and after the Contract with America, this member highlights that the decline in legislative focus was true for both "Republican or Democrat." This position was a common one among the nearly 60 senior staffers and former members interviewed. For example, this observation is corroborated by the senior Democratic leadership staffer, who had previously been Chief of Staff to a member in the mid-2000s:

> For years, my old boss had one of the highest retention rates of staff in Congress. Then, all of a sudden, we lost a bunch of staffers [...] We had that tension where we lost two people, one in DC, one in the district. I could only replace one because I wanted to move some money around and actually help shore some other people up. It became a tension of do I hire in the district, where they needed a staffer, or do I hire here?

Ultimately, the office hired only a district staff replacement, despite the fact that this member—a New England Democrat whose first dimension DW-NOMINATE score is well left of the party median, and who still holds a safe blue seat in the House—was comfortably ensconced in the latter stages of his career. A generation ago, Fenno (1973) suggested a member in this position ought to focus on his legislative work.

Still, the member and his Chief of Staff concluded that there was little reason to pay a Washington-based legislative staffer, since they knew his committees would not be achieving much in the coming year or two, even into the next Congress.

These accounts underscore the fact the specificity of legislative staff have changed, but also that party leaders have encouraged members to focus on constituent relations and reelection efforts specifically. In fact, some evidence suggests that party leaders have directly rewarded those who have shown special skill in obtaining valuable resources for reelection (Heberlig et al. 2006, Heberlig & Larson 2007, Kanthak 2007, Powell 2015). Thus, beyond the changes in the specificity of legislative staff, we argue that partisan competition has increased the human asset specificity associated with representational staff in a congressional office. Indeed, rather than simply connecting the member with media appearances or performing casework, representational staff today face greater pressure to strengthen the member's ties with key interests, fundraisers, and constituencies within their districts (Bawn et al. 2012, Fenno 1978). We suspect that increases in specificity should drive payments to representational staff upward as Congress has grown more competitive.

Both parties have improved their ability to develop a personal vote through constituent service (Cain et al. 1987), developed sophisticated public relations efforts Grimmer (2013), and prioritized messaging bills written largely by party leaders (Curry 2015, Lee 2016). Partisan warriors in both parties have increasingly and universally de-prioritized their legislative responsibilities as competition over majority control in both chambers of Congress has increased (Bernhard & Sulkin 2018, Theriault 2013). Given that competition for the majority has remained tight, both parties remain focused on representational goals to the detriment of legislative goals.

"Ideological Sabotage" as an Alternative Explanation

As we detail, staffing incentives created by heightened partisan competition offer a compelling explanation for the coinciding downward and upward trends in share of resources devoted to legislative and representational staff, respectively, observed in Figure 1. Nevertheless, given that partisan competition is frequently associated with the rise of the Gingrich speakership and Contract With America, a reasonable alternative explanation for the observed changes in staffing may derive from simple ideological calculations. That is, rather than a strategic allocation calibrated by transaction costs, perhaps members allocate staff *symbolically*, signalling their commitment to larger or smaller government, and *instrumentally*, growing or shrinking legislative capacity in line with their expansionary or contractionary preferences.

As a consequence of gaining majority status in 1995, it is possible that Republican members of Congress unilaterally divested in legislative operations as a matter of ideological commitment. Under this interpretation, GOP partisans' divestment in policy-oriented legislative enterprises is driven exclusively by the "that which governs least" ethos of the conservative coalition. That these institutional changes were achieved by the *de jure* adoption of the Contract with America when Newt Gingrich became Speaker is the key piece of evidence to support this claim.

In a recent interview, a senior Democratic leadership staffer—a veteran House aide who has worked in member, committee, and party leadership offices since the 1990s—characterizes the rhetoric of conservative members elected in both the 1994 Contract with America class and the 2010 Tea Party members as the primary cause:

> I think [Republicans'] internal and external posture on [reducing legislative operations] was probably the same. "We need to cut ourselves if we're going to make sure we're cutting other things too." I really do think it was Tea Party-driven. I think it was the mood of, "We're spending too much. If we don't cut ourselves, we're no better than the Democrats." I think it was that simple. [...]
>
> It was very similar to '94, too...it was the same idea. "We're going to cut the Office of Technology Assessment, we're going to get rid of all these member service organizations," and so on. Instead, "You can do them on your own, but we're not going to pay for them."
>
> There were a lot of staffers that went through this, that were in the room when the decisions were being made. One person told me that they knew it was a bad idea, but they're doing it because of the [Tea Party] members...I don't know if you'll ever get any of them on the record, or even off the record, to say that. I mean, I think a lot of the long term, dedicated Republican

> staff look at the cuts that were made in '94 and '95 and then again in 2011 and say, "We're not doing ourselves any favors. We know that."

Similar rhetoric is unheard of among Democrats, and certainly cannot be attributed to them since the Contract was a Republican initiative. According to this explanation, the sharp decline in legislative resources inexorably stems from conservative partisan dogma. Despite understanding the ramifications of cuts to legislative operations staff—or perhaps because of it—members of the Republican Party purposely viewed the cost in its own ability to legislate as far below the electoral advantage it would gain from cultivating an image of fiscal frugality.

Hypotheses and Tests

While both the "partisan competition" and "ideological sabotage" explanations for the decline in legislative staff investments are supported by popular narratives we document in our interviews, we can use our staff allocation data to more systematically adjudicate between these two explanations. On balance, we believe that partisan competition—and the changes in the human asset specificity of staffers in different roles it induces—best explain why members of Congress have appeared to divest in legislative staff. Here, we articulate three sets of tests to adjudicate between these two theories for staff allocation and change, ultimately finding the most support for the partisan competition explanation.

Perhaps most importantly, according to the ideological sabotage theory, we should observe asymmetric divestment from legislative staffing between Republican and Democratic personal offices, as a consequence of ideological differences between the parties. More specifically, divestment should occur in the post-Contract era and only among Republicans. Conversely, partisan competition suggests symmetric divestment, as members respond to the concentration of legislative power in leadership offices and the increasing representational demands of electoral competition.

This primary difference leads to several testable hypotheses about the timing and partisan differences in legislative staffing trends. Our first set of such hypotheses concern the *decline* in legislative staff resources over time, and potential partisan differences in this decline.

H1: All legislators entering Congress in the post-Contract with America period devote a smaller share of their MRAs to legislative staff than legislators that first entered Congress before the Contract.

H1$_A$: Among legislators entering Congress in the post-Contract with America period, Republicans devote a smaller share of their MRAs to legislative staff than Democrats.

We test H1 by interacting legislator party with 1) a dummy variable for whether the legislator was *first* elected pre/post Contract with America, and 2) a linear time trend for the year the legislator was *first* elected. We focus on when legislators first entered Congress to capture the era in which they were socialized into norms of legislating. Freshman members are often given guidance by leadership, CRS, and others which include model budgets and staffing allocations. These sorts of guides inform members about the institutional arrangements and incentives that shape the transaction costs associated with office staffing. As a result, we expect that staff allocations are somewhat sticky and subject to members' pre-existing conceptions about their legislative roles and responsibilities. As such, we expect divestment — either due to increased partisan competition or ideological sabotage — to be particularly pronounced among legislators that are first elected under these new institutional conditions.

In both cases, a significant interaction would support H1 and the "ideological sabotage" theory—indicating that divestment patterns differ significantly between the two parties.

Next, we investigate whether the incentive to divest from legislative staff is driven by whether or not a member's party is the majority—rather than by political changes influencing transaction costs. Given power asymmetries between majority and minority members in the House, investing heavily in legislative endeavors may make little sense for members of the minority party. However, if the ideological sabotage hypothesis is correct, the 2006 Democratic wave election should reverse the divestment trend among Democrats. That is, now in a position to legislate a broad, progressive policy agenda — including what would become the Affordable Care Act — the asymmetric hypothesis implies post-2006 Democrats should re-invest in legislative staff. Conversely, the influence of partisan competition on transaction costs should not be sensitive to which party actually holds the majority at a given point in time.

H2: Minority party members should divest more extensively from legislative staff than do majority party members, under both Republican and Democratic control..

If the ideological sabotage theory were correct but clear partisan differences are obscured by majority control of the chamber, we should instead expect the following:

$H2_A$: When Democrats are the party of the majority, Democratic members should re-invest in legislative staff.

We test H2 and H2A by subsetting the panel according to the party of the majority and again estimating models which interact legislator party and year of first election. If divestment were in fact ideologically motivated — meaning that Democrats were only divesting while Republicans were in control because of low expected returns to legislative work when in the minority — we should expect to see Democrats reinvest in legislative staff once they are in control. In this case, the absence of a partisan difference in divestment trends when Democrats are in power would lend support to the partisan competition theory.

Our first several tests focus on legislative divestment among members, based on when they are first elected to Congress. This operationalization captures how members are socialized into the Congress under particular institutional circumstances and transaction cost patterns. However, we also expect that long-serving members will be somewhat responsive to the same contextual factors that shape transaction costs faced by newly elected members. We therefore turn to a within-member panel design to investigate how legislative investment patterns have fluctuated over time and between the two parties. Here again, persistent legislative divestment over time would be consistent with the partisan competition theory, while partisan differences in divestment would be consistent with ideological sabotage:

H3: Members of Congress invest a smaller share of their MRAs in legislative staffing in later Congresses, regardless of party.

We test this hypothesis by leveraging within-member variation in staff investments, modeling the share of MRAs directed towards legislative staff with member-level fixed effects. The primary independent variable of interest is a linear time trend for the Congress (e.g. 103-113) in our panel. A significant negative coefficient on this parameter indicates that individual members have shifted their MRA away from legislative staff during our period of observation, supporting the partisan competition theory. In other words, legislative divestments over time are not simply a "replacement" effect brought about by large influxes of new members to Congress.

By contrast, ideological sabotage implies that we should observe within-member declines primarily among Republican members of Congress. Thus:

$H3_A$: Republican members of Congress invest a smaller share of their MRAs in legislative staffing in later Congresses than Democratic members do.

In order to asses $H3_A$, we interact the Congress trend used to test H3 with a variable for legislator party.

Finally, we examine the extent to which overall institutional divestment is driven by the choices of freshman members entering Congress. Here, we subset our panel to include only the first terms in office for each member first elected between 1992 and 2012. We use these cross-sectional data to assess whether *freshman* members elected before the Contract with America allocated more of their MRAs to legislative staff than did those elected afterward. Given the changes in transaction costs associated with the rise in partisan competition, we expect:

H4: Freshman members in later Congresses devote a smaller share of their MRAs to legislative staff than freshman members in earlier Congresses.

Conversely, according to the ideological sabotage logic, we should observe this effect primarily among Republican members of Congress:

$H4_A$: Among Freshman members Congress in the post-Contract with America period, Republicans devote a smaller share of their MRAs to legislative staff than Democrats.

We test H4 using both a linear trend for the year in which the freshman member was first elected, and using a binary variable for whether the freshman member was first elected before or after the Contract with America. We then test $H4_A$ by interacting both of these measures with a dummy variable for legislator party.

Data

As briefly introduced in the descriptive secular trends above, our Congressional staff allocation panel covers the 103rd-113th Congresses. The data exclude the 109th Congress for reasons beyond our control.[6] Data for the 103rd-106th Congresses were drawn directly from archived Statements of Disbursement of the U.S. House, while data from the 107th-113th Congresses is provided by disbursement records digitized by LegiStorm.

To categorize individual staffers' responsibilities, a large team of research assistants used individual staffer entries in quarterly *Congressional Yellow Book* directories to investigate staffers' primary work functions. The *Congressional Yellow Book* is a longstanding and trusted commercial director used by Washington elites, such as lobbyists and congressional staff, since at least the 1970s. These volumes provide a wealth of information that are useful to render accurate responsibility classifications, particularly as they pertain to legislative responsibility. First, for each member, the books detail which staff serve as "key aides," in both Washington and district offices. Not only is the staffer's physical location highly useful for inferring staffer responsibilities, but a staffers' presence in the volume itself provides context for the staffer's office responsibilities. In addition, the volumes detail the legislative issue portfolios for relevant staff. The accuracy

[6] Due to well-established data quality issues in House disbursement records, there are no informative staff titles included in 2005 or 2006 House records. This made categorizing staffers in the 109th Congress impossible.

of this information is crucial for the creators of the volume, because lobbyists and other major consumers use the books to carefully target staff within congressional offices. Finally, the volumes occasionally list more informative job titles compared to what is reported in disbursement records. This information is especially useful for classifying staff whose payroll titles are uninformative [7]

It is important to underscore here that these data seek to capture a staffer's *primary* responsibilities, and not her *exclusive* responsibilities, as staff undoubtedly take on multiple roles within their offices. However, we seek to classify staff according to the office function that best describes their role. In cases where no such function appears to predominate, we take steps to split a staffer's salary between competing responsibility categories. However, we do so only when original archive sources provide clear evidence of multiple office functions, or of job title changes or promotions within the office.[8]

The detailed work responsibility information in these directories is incorporated systematically into our coding protocol, found in Appendix B.[9] The protocol ensures that our data provide not only precise information about office responsibilities, but also consistent information across offices and throughout the covered time period. Combining this material with staffers' job titles is markedly more accurate than relying solely on job titles for classification, as such titles are not consistently operationalized across offices, personnel, and historical time period. As we highlight in greater length in Appendix B pages 3 to 5, projects relying on fully automated coding procedures is likely to yield inaccurate and biased staff allocation measures for congressional offices. First, as Petersen (2011) notes in the largest survey of staff titles and responsibilities conducted to date, job titles are quite variable across member offices. Staff assistants in one office may serve as low-level office administrators, for example, while similarly titled staffers in other offices serve as the lead

[7] For example, some members like Rep. Dave Camp list all staff as "Staff Assistants."

[8] We argue that interns do not present a problem for our ultimate analysis. First, interns are rarely assigned to policy responsibilities. Second, on the rare occasions they might be assigned to legislative duties, they should be captured in the Yellow Book. Finally, during our period of observation most interns earn no compensation; the total intern compensation is just 0.4% of all staff compensation.

[9] Supplemantal Information, pages 6 and 7.

policy analysts.[10] In fact, even *within* an office, similar titles do not always indicate similar responsibilities. Our coding process captures this kind of nuance, particularly as it pertains to legislative staff, as the *Yellow Books* record legislative responsibilities for staffers *regardless of staffer title or time period.* This kind of consistency is especially important when attempting to explain allocation patterns over time. Consequently, this coding scheme is both more externally valid since job titles may be inflated for idiosyncratic reasons and internally reliable over time.

Were such errors randomly distributed across offices and Congresses, they may simply introduce measurement noise, rather than systematic bias. However, this is unlikely to be the case. In informal interviews conducted for this data collection effort, staff have insisted that titling conventions have changed appreciably over our period of observation. For example, the title "Chief of Staff" did not grow in popularity until the 1970s and did not reach its present usage level until well into the 2000s. Instead, members titled such individuals as "Administrative Assistants." Under modern-day naming patterns in the House, such a title is far more commonly associated with low-pay administrative work than the political management responsibilities of a Chief of Staff. Throughout the 1990s, however, the use of this title in place of Chief of Staff was common. Idiosyncrasies like this example introduce at least two different kinds of systematic bias. First, when high-seniority members choose not to adopt new naming conventions, these differences in title conventions will introduce systematic cross-sectional bias between senior and junior members of Congress. Second, members who *do* adopt evolving job titling conventions introduce systematic temporal bias between earlier and more recent congressional offices. These biases are not the only potential biases introduced by automated procedures; but, given that we purport to uncover an over-time decline in member-level legislative investment, they underscore the importance of our careful, granular operationalization of staffer responsi-

[10]This ambiguity is particularly crucial in coding Chief of Staff. In some offices, the Chief of Staff serves as lead legislative counsel, effectively assuming the role of Legislative Director. In others, the Chief of Staff focuses primary on maintaining good relationships in the district or serving as the primary gatekeeper for access to the member. Ensuring accurate coding of chiefs of staff is of first-order importance, as the salaries of these individuals commonly occupy a large portion of a member's total spending on staff.

bilities. Here again, the *Yellow Books* are invaluable to the accuracy of our coding procedure, as they record staffers' legislative responsibilities over the period of observation. We maintain a high level of confidence in the accuracy of the information provided by the volumes, as this information is marketed commercially to well-connected policy advocates and other government relations personnel who rely upon its veracity.

Using these resources, staffers were initially sorted into one of five functional categories: *legislative staff*, *political management staff*, *office management staff*, *communications staff*, and *constituency service staff*. *Legislative Staff* are staff whose primary responsibilities are to advise the member of Congress on matters pertaining to policymaking and the legislative process. Responsibilities may include drafting new bills, deciphering legislative language, offering voting or co-sponsorship advice, providing legislative procedure expertise, or interacting with stakeholders on behalf of the member. *Political Management Staff* are staff whose primary responsibilities are to manage the member's relationships with other elites in Washington, such as leaders of political parties and issue caucuses, lobbyists, and major donors. *Political Management Staff* deal in clerical responsibilities, such as coordinating office space, materials, and information technology, bookkeeping, arranging member travel, and reserving meeting space for constituent visitors.

Communications Staff interact with the media on the member's behalf, including managing social media, writing press releases, scheduling television appearances, drafting speeches, and submitting op-eds to newspapers. Finally, *Constituency Service Staff* deal primarily in relations with the member's constituents. Most often located in district offices, their responsibilities include handling bureaucratic casework, answering constituents' phone calls and mail, and alerting the member to public events in the district.

While some conceptual overlap between these categories undoubtedly exists, they are designed to capture Mayhew's (1974) primary member activities for reelection (advertising, credit-claiming, and position-taking) and Fenno's (1973) member goals (reelection, influence in the chamber, and good public policy). Note that, on occasion, a staffers may have more than one title associated with their names. In those cases, after consultation with the *Congressional Yellowbooks*, this staffer's responsibilities are split evenly between two (or more) categories. These data represent the most complete and detailed accounting of individual staffer functions ever compiled.

We connect individually categorized staff with their salary disbursements to create aggregate, office-level measures of staff allocation over time. For each Representatives' office, we calculate the share of their MRA spent on each of the five staffing categories in each year.[11,12] The result of this aggregation is an unbalanced panel dataset of 1,090 members over nine Congresses, for a total of 4,256 observations, based on 236,000 quarterly individual staffer responsibility coding decisions. In the analyses to come, we use as our main dependent variable the percentage of a representative's MRA spent on salaries for staffers coded as having primarily legislative responsibilities. We treat salary allocations across work responsibilities as members' revealed preferences for organizational priorities.

To account for well-known institutional features and personal characteristics that may impact members' behavior, we include a variety of independent variables from Volden & Wiseman (2014). First, research on the "political life cycles" of members of Congress suggests that members' may emphasize the pursuit of policy goals later in their career as they feel safe in their seats, and seek a legislative legacy (Fenno 1978, Hibbing 1991). To account for this we include *Seniority*—number of Congresses served at a given point in time—as an independent variable in our models. We also include the square of seniority to capture the decreasing marginal effect of seniority. Second, we include binary variables for serving as a *Committee Chair*, a *Subcommittee Chair*, or as a member of *Power Committee*, as these members may be especially well-situated to substitute their personal office legislative staff with committee resources (Fenno 1973, Patterson 1970, Salisbury & Shepsle 1981*a*). Third, we use a folded 1st-dimension of DW-NOMINATE to account

[11] Because of missing data, spending for some years are estimated with projections based on quarterly disbursements for one, two, or three quarters.

[12] Additional information about the collection, cleaning and backwards projection of MRA totals is available in Appendix A, pages 1 and 2.

for member *Extremism*, as Volden & Wiseman (2014) suggest that members farther from the chamber median are less legislatively effective, implying they invest less in legislative staff. Fourth, because Volden et al. (2013) suggest that female legislators engage in legislative activity differently than their male counterparts, we include a binary variable for a member's gender.[13] Finally, because members in more competitive districts may face differential electoral incentives that induce them to invest more in communications or constituent service over legislative staff, we include variables for *Vote Share* and its square. [14]

Results

We develop three relevant tests to discriminate between the ideological sabotage and partisan competition hypotheses. First, we examine whether pre- and post-Contract members from both parties, or only the Republican party, exhibit a reduction in legislative staff investment following the 1994 Republican takeover. Second, we investigate whether members elected more recently invest less in legislative staff, and whether this trend is unique to Republicans. Finally, we examine whether Democrats reinvest in legislative capacity once they regain control of the House—or whether they continue the trend of divestment. After demonstrating that the partisan competition hypothesis appears to best explain the observed trends in the data, we show that freshmen elected more recently invest far less in legislative staff than freshmen in earlier Congresses, suggesting that Congress's perpetual campaign has attracted members who are more inclined to cede legislative endeavors to other actors in Congress. This is consistent with our theory the contemporary congressional context requires legislative staffers with less human asset specificity, which has induced members to divest from legislative staff.

[13] Due to the potential for collinearity between race and party in the House, we have excluded race variables in these models. However the results presented here are robust to the inclusion of indicator variables for Latinx and African-American ethnicities.

[14] Electorally safe and ideologically extreme members may represent the same basic group of individuals, though standard tests for collinearity indicate that the variables are not unduly inflating variance. In fact, the coefficients point in the same directions in the Volden et al. (2013) analysis of gender and legislative effectiveness.

Legislative Investment and the Contract with America

In our first series of tests, we examine whether members elected after the Republican Contract with America takeover systematically invest less in legislative staff than members initially elected and professionally socialized to legislative productivity norms in earlier Congresses. According to the ideological sabotage hypothesis, members elected under Gingrich's Contract with America agenda were committed to cuts in legislative capacity. However, because these ideological commitments were held only by Republicans, election during the Newt Gingrich era should decrease legislative investment only among Republicans. Conversely, the partisan competition hypothesis suggests that both parties should exhibit declines legislative investment over time.

We test these competing predictions directly in Models 1 and 2 of Table 1. In these models, we regress a member's share of MRA allocated to legislative staff on a binary variable, indicating whether a member entered Congress before or after the Contract with America. To examine whether or not election post-Contract was particularly consequential for Republicans, we interact a partisan indicator (with Democrat = 1) with the post-Contract variable. If the asymmetric hypothesis is correct, we should observe a significant, positive coefficient on this variable (large enough to overcome negative main effects)—indicating that election post-Contract matters differentially for Republicans and Democrats. In both Models 1 and 2, as well as all remaining models presented hereafter, we employ beta regression estimated via MLE, as our outcome variable is a proportion that cannot take a negative value or a value greater than 1.

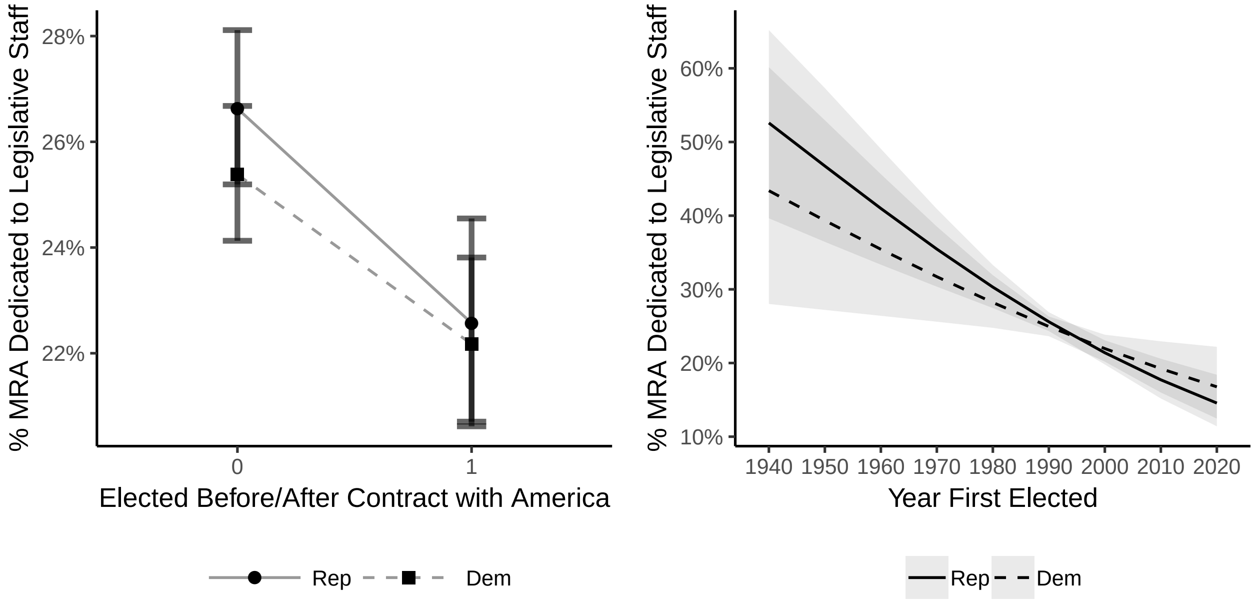
As Table 1 illustrates, an election during the post-Contract era is negatively associated with member-level investment in legislative staff. Holding all other variables at their means or optimal values, estimates from Model 1 predict that the typical pre-Contract members spent 26 percent of their MRA on legislative staff, compared to the predicted 22.4 percent for post-Contract members. The difference of 3.6 percent amounts to a reduction in spending of $41669[15]—roughly equivalent to the salary of a one additional full-time

[15] Using the average MRA ($1,157,460) in the dataset

Table 1: Legislative Investment Before and After Contract with America

	Percentage of MRA Spent on Legislative Staff			
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Elected Post-Contract	-0.197^{**}	-0.221^{**}		
	(0.048)	(0.042)		
Year of Election			-0.019^{**}	-0.023^{**}
			(0.005)	(0.004)
Democrat	-0.048	-0.068^{*}	-0.028	-13.848^{**}
	(0.033)	(0.030)	(0.037)	(5.669)
Post Contract ∗ Democrat		0.044		
		(0.055)		
Year of Election ∗ Democrat				0.007^{**}
				(0.003)
Seniority	0.025^{*}	0.025^{*}	0.012	0.009
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Seniority^2	-0.002^{*}	-0.002^{*}	-0.003^{**}	-0.002^{**}
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Committee Chair	-0.192^{**}	-0.196^{**}	-0.218^{**}	-0.229^{**}
	(0.064)	(0.063)	(0.068)	(0.066)
Subcommittee Chair	-0.044^{+}	-0.046	-0.038	-0.035
	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.037)	(0.031)
Power Committee	-0.037	-0.036	-0.047	-0.043
	(0.032)	(0.030)	(0.034)	(0.031)
Extremism	-0.273^{**}	-0.255^{**}	-0.133^{*}	-0.057
	(0.068)	(0.072)	(0.055)	(0.062)
Female	-0.047^{*}	-0.048^{*}	-0.026	-0.036^{*}
	(0.021)	(0.019)	(0.016)	(0.018)
Vote Share	0.028^{**}	0.028^{**}	0.029^{**}	0.028^{**}
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Vote Share^2	-0.0002^{**}	-0.0002^{**}	-0.0002^{**}	-0.0002^{**}
	(0.00004)	(0.00004)	(0.00004)	(0.00004)
Constant	-1.930^{**}	-1.914^{**}	36.504^{**}	44.753^{**}
	(0.300)	(0.292)	(10.103)	(9.503)
Observations	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256
R^2	0.066	0.066	0.094	0.098
Log Likelihood	4,312.121	4,313.111	4,389.562	4,399.188

$^{**}p < .01$; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{+}p < .1$



(a) Binary Independent Variable: Model 2

(b) Continuous Independent Variable: Model 4

Fig 3: Interactions between Member Party and Recent Election

legislative assistant.

These differences notwithstanding, Republicans do not appear to be noteworthy in their divestment in legislative staff. Figure 3 depicts the interaction between post-Contract status and partisanship. As the figure clearly illustrates, there are no significant differences between Republicans and Democrats with respect to the relationship between post-Contract status and legislative investment.

None of these findings are fully consistent with the asymmetric sabotage narrative, though relying on an interaction between two binary variables is difficult test to interpret. Thus, we introduce an alternative test in Models 3 and 4 that replace the post-Contract indicator with a nominal variable representing a member's first year of election to Congress. Unlike the binary indicator, this variable allows for the possibility that members elected just before the 1994 wave may not have been substantially different from those elected immediately after it. Moreover, it allows us to interrogate whether the over-time relationship between the election of new members and legislative investment differs between Republicans and Democrats.

As with Models 1 and 2, Models 3 and 4 exhibit a strong, negative relationship between recent election and legislative investment: each two-year election cycle is associated with a 0.7 percent decrease ($8,102, predicted at average MRA) in legislative staff spending compared to the previous year.[16] Unlike in Models 1 and 2, however, Models 3 and 4 initially appear to provide some modest support for the ideological sabotage hypothesis: while *Year of Election* is negatively and significantly associated with legislative investment, this association is less strongly negative among Democrats. Nevertheless, this difference is substantively small. In fact, as predicted values in Figure 3 indicate, *Year of Election* remains negative for both and differences between Republicans and Democrats are substantively small. In these models, Democrats may be slightly less committed to divestment than Republicans, but hardly enough to substantiate claims of asymmetric sabotage.

Legislative Investment and Majority Control

Next, we leverage Democrats' return to power in 2006 as a means for discriminating between the asymmetric sabotage and party competition hypotheses. One possible objection to the above analysis is that Democratic members between 1995 and 2006 may simply have divested due to their minority status. Given power asymmetries between majority and minority members in the House, investing heavily in legislative endeavors may make little sense for members of the minority party. However, if the ideological sabotage hypothesis is correct, the 2006 Democratic wave election should reverse the divestment trend among Democrats. That is, now in a position to legislate a broad policy agenda—including what would become the Affordable Care Act—the asymmetric hypothesis implies post-2006 Democrats should re-invest in legislative staff.

In Table 2, Models 5 and 6 fit similar specifications on data drawn only from Congresses for which Republicans controlled the House majority, while Models 7 and 8 focus on those with Democratic majority. Sub-setting the data in this fashion allows us to assess whether members differentially invest in legislative staff based on their party, holding majority control constant. Alternatively, if Democrats did in fact reinvest in

[16]Note that, while the coefficient on *Democrat* appears inordinately large in Model 4 (and in Models 8 and 10, below) this is only due to the fact that *Democrat* is interacted with a year (e.g. 2002), which is much larger than the 0,1 dummy variable.

legislative staff after regaining the majority, then Republican members should now remain the only members who continue to divest in legislative staff.

Table 2: Majority Control and Legislative Investment

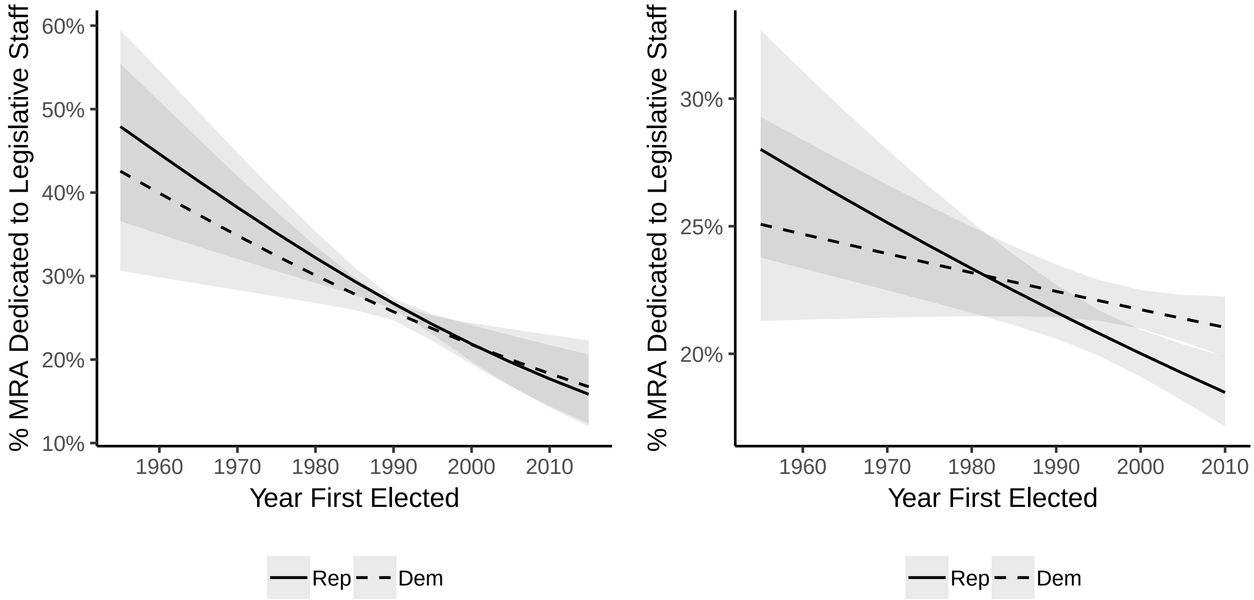
	Percentage of MRA Spent on Legislative Staff					
	Model 5	**Model 6**	**Model 7**	**Model 8**	**Model 9**	**Model 10**
Year of Election	-0.024^{***}	-0.026^{***}	-0.007^{***}	-0.010^{***}		
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.001)	(0.002)		
Democrat	-0.036	-9.412	0.091^{***}	-11.232^{***}	-0.003	-0.140
	(0.049)	(5.887)	(0.028)	(3.528)	(0.004)	(0.091)
Year of Election Democrat*		0.005		0.006^{***}		
		(0.003)		(0.002)		
Congress Trend					-0.007^{***}	-0.008^{***}
					(0.0004)	(0.001)
Congress Democrat*						0.001
						(0.001)
Seniority	0.002	0.002			0.007^{***}	0.007^{***}
	(0.009)	(0.013)			(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority^2	-0.002^{***}	-0.002^{***}			-0.0003^{***}	-0.0003^{***}
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)			(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Committee Chair	-0.169^{***}	-0.205^{***}	-0.160^{***}	-0.116^{***}	-0.027^{***}	-0.026^{***}
	(0.029)	(0.046)	(0.010)	(0.002)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Subcommittee Chair	-0.010	-0.024	-0.026	-0.008	-0.004	-0.004
	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.025)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Power Committee	-0.007	-0.007	-0.025^{*}	-0.023	-0.003	-0.003
	(0.009)	(0.018)	(0.014)	(0.016)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Extremity	-0.152^{**}	-0.105^{*}	0.026	0.057^{***}	-0.024^{**}	-0.017
	(0.067)	(0.059)	(0.019)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.011)
Female	-0.048^{**}	-0.055^{***}	0.024	0.022	-0.001	-0.001
	(0.019)	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Vote Share	0.018^{***}	0.017^{***}	0.034^{***}	0.033^{***}	0.004^{***}	0.004^{***}
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Vote Share^2	-0.0001^{***}	-0.0001^{***}	-0.0002^{***}	-0.0002^{***}	-0.00003^{***}	-0.00003^{***}
	(0.00003)	(0.00002)	(0.00001)	(0.00001)	(0.00001)	(0.00001)
Constant	46.089^{***}	51.169^{***}	10.810^{***}	17.017^{***}	0.863^{***}	0.944^{***}
	(11.039)	(13.362)	(2.007)	(4.259)	(0.057)	(0.078)
Member-Level FE?	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
Majority Restriction	R	R	D	D	All	All
Observations	2,974	2,974	861	861	4,256	4,256
R^2	0.128	0.129	0.049	0.052	0.554	0.554
Log Likelihood	3,046.756	3,049.511	1,134.396	1,135.698		

$^{+}$p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01

$_{k}ip$

Note: Models 7 and 8 drop *Seniority* and *Seniority*^{2}, due to collinearity problems with *Year of Election*; these models also do not feature clustered standard errors, due to estimation issues

When Republicans control Congress, *Year of Election* shows similar relationships as it does in the full regressions. As shown in Figure 4, when Democrats control Congress, *Year of Election* still negatively and



(a) Republican Controlled Congresses

(b) Democratic Controlled Congresses

Fig 4: Legislative Investment by Congress for Republicans and Democrats

significantly predicts legislative investment. More importantly, the association between *Year of Election* and legislative investment is not significantly different between Democrats and Republicans. Again, the evidence points toward the partisan competition hypothesis, as each new cohort from both parties continue the divestment trends initiated by their post-Contract colleagues.

We introduce member-level fixed effects in Models 9 and 10 to illustrate this point, leveraging only within-member variance. In place of *Year of Election*, we include a simple *Congress* time trend. Doing so tests whether majority-party Democrats invested in legislative endeavors more than majority-party Republicans. Doing so also allows the model to hold constant district-level factors that may influence a member's decision to invest in legislative staff. Previous research has suggested that different types of constituencies generate demand for different types of representation (Butler 2014, Foster-Molina 2018, Harden 2013), and inclusion of member-level fixed effects allows the model to hold such factors relatively constant (with the exception of redistricting years).

Figure 5 shows that the time trend is strongly negative, and is not statistically distinguishable between

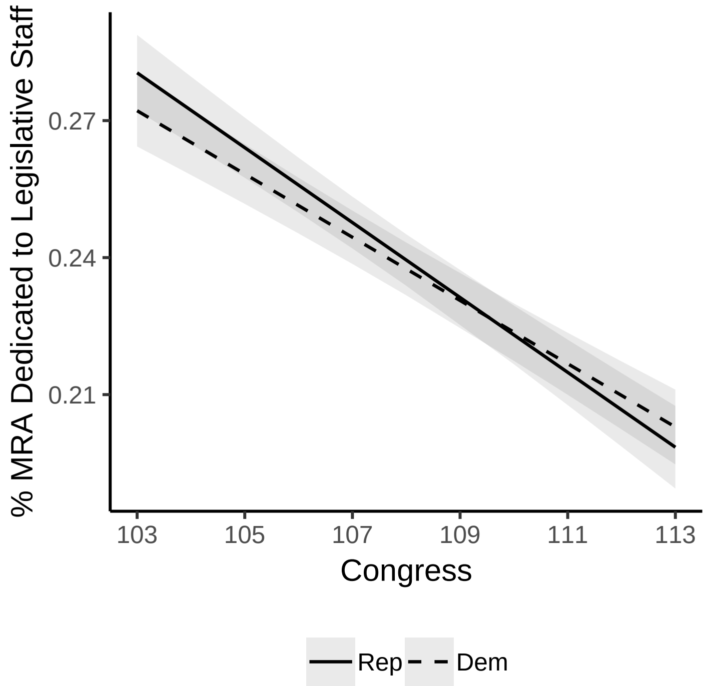


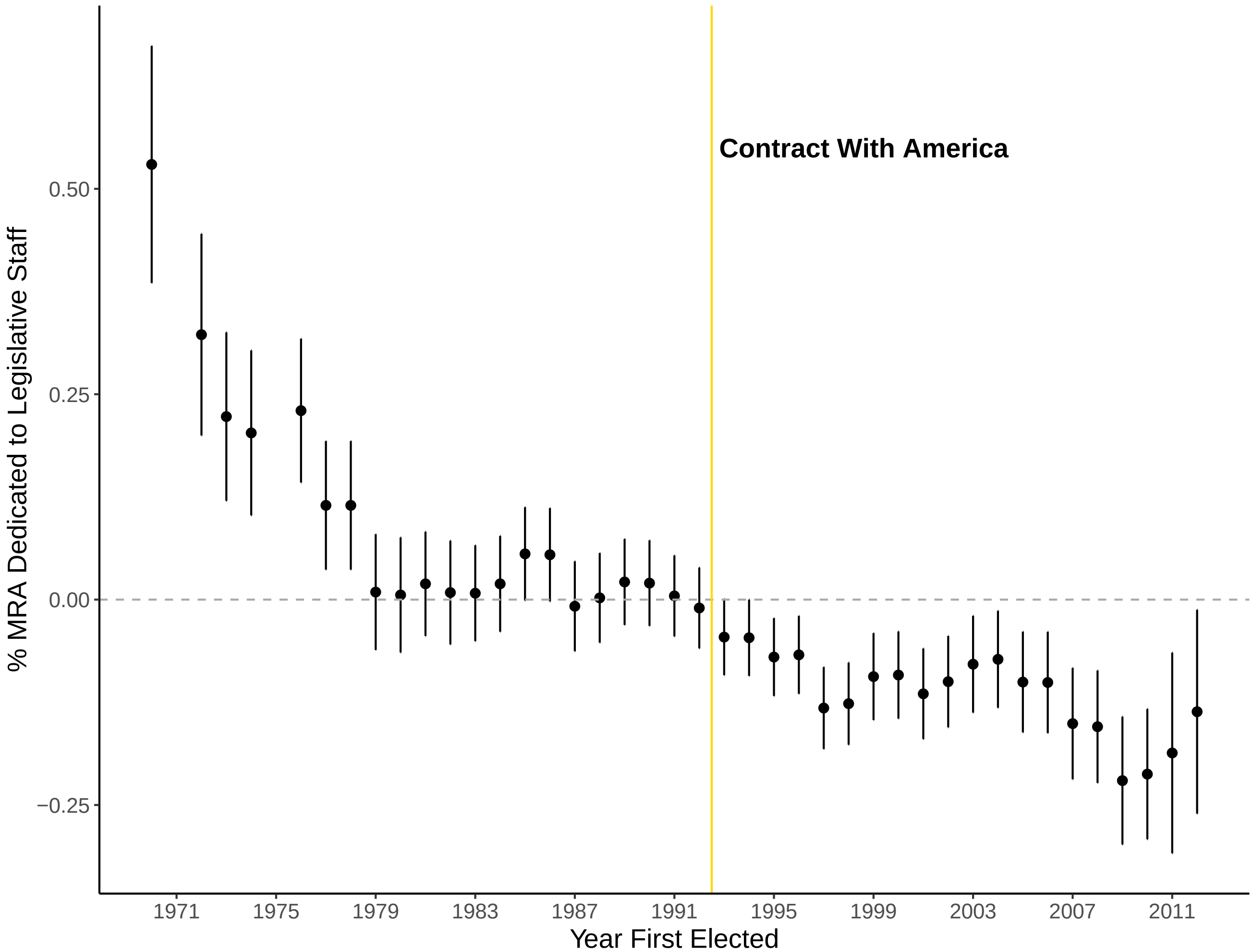
Fig 5: Member-level fixed effects

Republicans and Democrats, even when such effects are included. That is, even if we hold the individual member—and, to some extent, district—constant, investment in legislative staff decreased over time, regardless of party. This finding is consistent with the symmetrical partisan competition view.

These analyses reveal that divestment in legislative operations are not unique to Republicans. The implication is that Speaker Gingrich was most likely not as instrumental for broader divestment trends in Congress as some assume. Instead, we infer that Gingrich coincidentally came to power at a time when broader electoral conditions empowered party leaders, making individual legislative enterprises less important.

Even still, it is possible that the Republican takeover in 1995 accelerated the divestment process. Moreover, we recognize these results may imply that Gingrich indeed aggressively encouraged divestment in legislative enterprises, as suggested by his long-time ally that we interviewed. In Figure 6, we report the results of a series of regressions that use the basic specification found in Model 1, as well as Congress-level fixed effects to more accurately observe replacement effects as new members are elected to the House over time. Across the models, we replace the binary pre-/post-Contract variable with a pre-/post-binary variable for each year

Fig 6: Estimated Coefficients for Electoral Cutoff Variables



of the first election listed in the x-axis. The coefficient and its corresponding 95% confidence interval are reported in the figure, with a reference line for 1994.

As the figure demonstrates, not all cutoff variables take on a negative value. In fact, it is not until coefficients reported for members elected in 1992 that the cutoff variable takes on a negative, albeit insignificant, sign. The following two years, 1993[17] and 1994, however, are not only negatively associated with legislative investment but approach statistical significance ($p \approx 0.0503$ and 0.0501). That is, legislators elected during and after Gingrich's speakership do appear to have differed from members first elected to earlier Congresses in terms of legislative investment. Coincidence is not causation, of course. The 1995 Republican takeover merely coincides with the beginning of a long-term, bipartisan divestment trend.

[17] There were five special elections in 1993.

Legislative Investment Among Freshman Legislators

Despite the consistency of our findings, the mechanics of this divestment remain unclear: do these findings represent actual changes in resource allocation preferences among incumbent members of Congress, or are they an artifact of a new kind of lawmaker who has never experienced a Congress primarily oriented toward making laws? In other words, have a new crop of electoral "showhorses" replaced dyed-in-the-wool legislative "workhorses" (Hall 1996)? We test a series of models on freshman members of Congress alone to explore whether institution-wide divestment in legislative staffing is driven by newly elected members, shown in Table 3.

Models 11 and 13 mirror Models 1 and 3, testing the direct association between the year in which members were first elected and their investment in legislative staff. Model 11 tests this association using a dichotomous variable for whether freshmen were first elected after the Contract with America, while Model 13 uses a nominal variable to account for a linear trend in the year of first election. Estimates from Model 11 indicate that freshman members entering Congress after the Contract with America spent, on average, 5.92 percentage points less of their MRAs on legislative staff than freshman from the 103rd Congress.[18] At the mean MRA value during our period of observation ($1,157,460.00), the substantive difference in allocation of $68,603.35 is enough money for one senior legislative staffer or two junior staffers. Model 13 indicates that for each additional 2-year election cycle after that freshman is elected is associated with 1.07 percentage points less of their MRAs on legislative staff spending, which is $12,426 at the average MRA level.

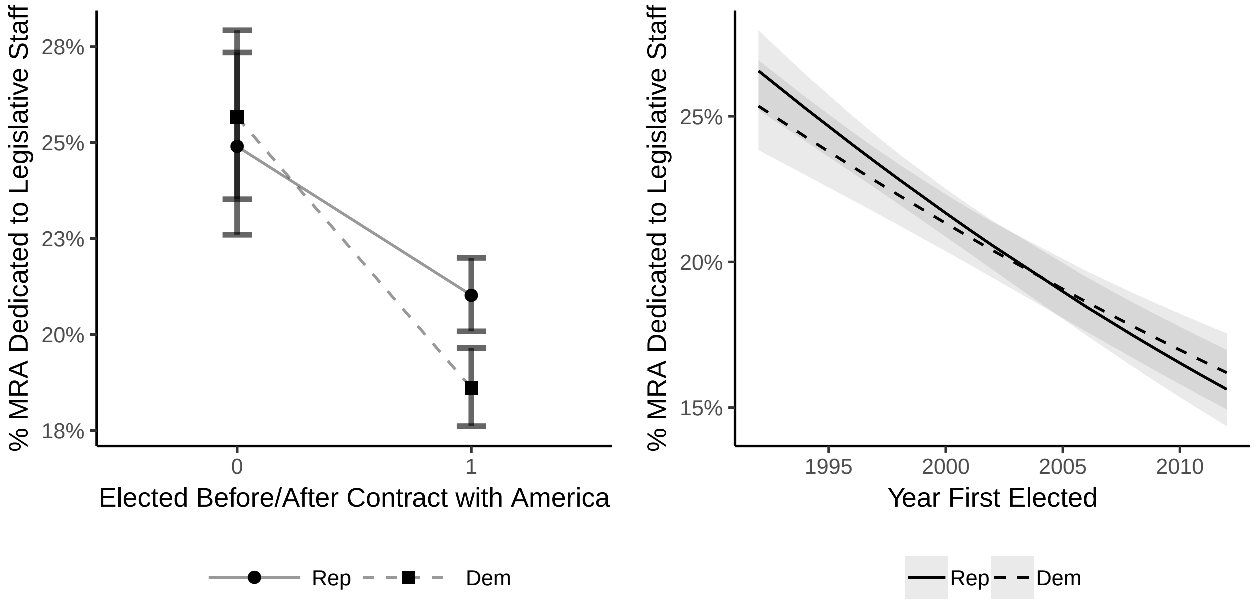
Models 12 and 14 examine whether the main effects of post-Contract entrance and year of first election differ, depending on the party of the freshman member. Results from both models are consistent with the results from Models 11 and 13. However, the interactions with party are not significant, as Figure 7 shows. The significant and substantively large negative relationship between when freshman members are

[18] The model produces estimates of 27.1 percent vs. 21.2 percent spent on legislative staffers with all other variables held at the medians.

Table 3: Legislative Investment Among Freshmen, Before and After Contract with America

	Percentage of MRA Spent on Legislative Staff				
	Model 11	**Model 12**	**Model 13**	**Model 14**	**Model 15**
Elected Post-Contract	-0.325^{**}	-0.220^{**}			
	(0.048)	(0.072)			
Year of Election			-0.031^{**}	-0.033^{**}	
			(0.002)	(0.004)	
Democrat	-0.106^{*}	0.041	-0.027	-10.607	0.007
	(0.045)	(0.087)	(0.042)	(10.028)	(0.043)
Post Contract ∗ Democrat		-0.193^{*}			
		(0.098)			
Year of Election ∗ Democrat				0.005	
				(0.005)	
Committee Chair	-0.184	-0.205	-0.369	-0.375	-0.387
	(0.489)	(0.488)	(0.458)	(0.458)	(0.443)
Subcommittee Chair	-0.108	-0.113	0.021	0.028	0.053
	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.077)
Power Committee	-0.057	-0.064	-0.081	-0.082	-0.076
	(0.079)	(0.079)	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.072)
Extremism	-0.426^{**}	-0.484^{**}	-0.160	-0.110	-0.135
	(0.108)	(0.111)	(0.104)	(0.115)	(0.102)
Female	-0.083^{+}	-0.088^{+}	-0.062	-0.064	-0.051
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.043)
Vote Share	-0.003	-0.004	-0.00005	-0.001	0.001
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Vote Share^2	0.00004	0.0001	0.00002	0.00002	0.00001
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
104th Congress					0.049
					(0.058)
105th Congress					-0.088
					(0.061)
106th Congress					-0.651^{**}
					(0.079)
107th Congress					-0.149^{*}
					(0.074)
108th Congress					-0.201^{**}
					(0.068)
110th Congress					-0.423^{**}
					(0.072)
111th Congress					-0.466^{**}
					(0.065)
112th Congress					-0.593^{**}
					(0.065)
113th Congress					-0.597^{**}
					(0.063)
Constant	-0.775	-0.783	60.340^{**}	65.745^{**}	-1.080^{*}
	(0.498)	(0.497)	(4.798)	(7.044)	(0.453)
N	721	721	721	721	721
R-squared	0.085	0.089	0.196	0.197	0.251
Log Likelihood	834.834	836.777	888.716	889.270	920.058

$^{**}p < .01$; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{+}p < .1$



(a) Binary Independent Variable: Model 12

(b) Continuous Independent Variable: Model 14

Fig 7: Interactions between Member Party and Recent Election among freshman members

elected and the share of MRAs spent on legislative staff, coupled with the insignificant interaction with party, again lend support for the symmetrical party competition hypothesis. The robustness of these relationships is particularly notable given that freshmen legislators generally have not fully settled on a specific "home style" or approach to lawmaking. For example, given that most freshmen worry about electoral vulnerability following their first term in office, vote share is not associated with legislative investment as it was in Tables 1 and 2. In spite of this behavioral "noise," recently elected freshmen clearly have invested less in legislative endeavors than have previous freshmen.

We estimate one final model on freshman members using the Congress fixed effects in Model 15. If the ideological sabotage hypothesis is correct, we should observe the Democratic Party reversing the trend when they regain the House majority in the 2006 wave election. If true, then incoming freshman members in the 110th Congress should have invested significantly more in legislative staff than incoming members in previous Congresses. This is evidently not the case. The Congress effects shown in Table 3 show negative and significant differences between the 103rd Congress and all Congresses after the 105th. Freshman entering the 110th and 111th Congresses led by Speaker Nancy Pelosi are not meaningfully different from those that came before or after.

Discussion

Our assessment of legislative enterprises in the era of the perpetual campaign has yielded new insights for both political scientists and political reformers. The evidence of a post-Contract with America decline in members' legislative capacity sheds light on a troubling and unappreciated institutional redesign in Congress in the last quarter century, wherein members have individually divested in legislative capacity in response to a centralized battle for majority control of Congress. We suggest that the centralization of legislative work within leadership offices has disincentivized staffers from investing in their own legislative team with highly specific human assets. Instead, they hire legislative staffers with more generalizable skills and do not have to pay the premiums for retention that more irreplacable staffers would demand. What has followed is widespread member level re-allocation of resources away from legislative staff, and towards staff that serve representation goals. This decline implies that the legislators' effectiveness also suffers, as corroborated by Crosson et al. (forthcoming). Nevertheless, the results suggest that simply increasing member budgets and adding more bodies to congressional offices will not address the broader trend of legislative divestment; in fact, it is likely to exacerbate it. Indeed, members continue to divest in legislative staff, during both periods of MRA increases and cuts. Moreover, members more recently elected to Congress exhibit far less commitment to legislative operations than their predecessors, suggesting that such members face broad institutional incentives that are significantly different from previous eras—and/or that such legislators themselves are simply less committed to legislating. Individual members are unlikely to invest in employing and retaining highly skilled, asset specific legislative staffers unless the institution provides opportunities for these staffers to accrue advantages to their bosses. As long as legislating remains so centralized, this is unlikely.

The general patterns we uncover here are substantiated in an interview with a Legislative Director for a Democrat, who serves as a senior staffer responsible for the office's legislative matters and manages three junior colleagues. The staffer observed that the decline in legislative resources we document here is associated with increased turnover and decreased policy experience in the House:

> The other piece is no one really knows how to legislate anymore. As someone who's been around a little while...there's not really the expertise, even among committee staff that there was a couple years ago because we're not doing it [legislating]...I was talking to a [committee legislative staff friend] last year. She was telling me that she had to bring all of [the legislative assistants working for members on] the subcommittee in to teach them how to do a markup because not one of the [legislative assistants] of this subcommittee had ever staffed their boss in a markup before. Ever.[...]
>
> We've got a great, smart team ... but two of my legislative assistants are 23 and 24...You need a little bit more experience in a place like this. [Congress] is always gonna be a young place, it's always gonna attract young people that are ambitious. But it's gone to an extreme...You can tell that people haven't gone through this before sometimes. Sometimes you can use that to your advantage, sometimes it's frustrating. But that's a real issue...It's hard when there aren't people that have been through quite a few markups, or been through a couple reauthorizations of a major bill.

These observations about the House are further substantiated in direct examinations of MRA expenditures on legislative staff and an office staff's experience. As summarized in Appendix E, member investments in legislative staff do help a member to retain a more experienced staff overall. However, as such investments have gone down, so too has experience among staffers.

For most observers of Congress, the most recognizable, systematic change in Congress over the past two to three decades has been the rise of ideological polarization between the parties. Polarization is undoubtedly crucial to our understanding of modern American politics: the hyper-partisanship and legislative gridlock associated with ideological polarization poses significant risk to Congress's ability to make laws and oversee the Executive, especially when key democratic principles and institutions may be threatened. But our evidence suggests that ideology and polarization are not the only forces systematically deteriorating members' productivity and legislative effectiveness. In their prosecution of the perpetual campaign to control Congress, the parties and its members have incrementally abdicated their capacity to legislate. Indeed, congressional leadership of both parties have disincentivised their members from investing in the requisite staff to actively participate in the legislative process.

If democratic theory suggests partisan differentiation and competition improves citizens' ability to hold political elites accountable, then the bipartisan decline in members' capacity to legislate is worrisome. A legislature supported by young, inexperienced aides, however capable, is not likely to be effective—regardless if one's objective is to move policy in a conservative or a liberal direction. If both parties are to be blamed equally, and both are less able today to carry out the agendas that define their brands, citizens have little more than campaign messages to retroactively assess the parties on Election Day.

There is room for optimism, though. If the decline in members' capacity was created by both parties, and impacts their policy goals equally, then it is conceivable to convince backbenchers in both parties that improving their own legislative operations will lift all boats. Moreover, doing so may counteract members in both parties feeling frustrated by party leaders who appear to dictate the legislative process from soup to nuts. The MRA, as it currently functions, gives members a great deal of leeway to allocate resources as they see fit. Rather than waiting for the rare window of opportunity to reform party and chamber institutional rules to counteract party leaders' and committee chairs' extraordinary agenda setting powers, members—especially those in relatively safe electoral positions—can rebuild their legislative enterprises to enhance their own legislative effectiveness and institutional influence. They need not wait for permission from the Speaker or Minority Leader of either party to do so. Of course, doing so may run counter to the political context that caused the decline to begin with, so we are not under the false illusion that incrementally expanding personal office legislative enterprises in the House will solve Congress's ills. But perhaps members who have strong legislative enterprises will make leaders more responsive to the policy interests among the rank-and-file.

Political reformers from across the ideological spectrum should welcome our discovery that the House's failure to fully resource its legislative operations is a bipartisan dilemma. The common assumption that the

Contract with America ushered in the “absolute frigging disaster” of a legislative capacity crisis seemingly absolves Democrats of blame and Republicans assume they can be credited with some good government accomplishment. Neither of these assumptions are true. Since Democrats and Republicans are equally to blame—and equally harmed—for the decline in legislative capacity, then they ought to be equally responsible for resolving it.

Additionally, we recognize that our observation is limited to the House, and concentrated exclusively on member’s personal offices. We have offered limited evidence here that the legislative slack has most likely not been picked up by committees. Further, there seems to be little evidence to suggest that members have outsourced these responsibilities to legislative support agencies or legislative service organizations, which have also witnessed declining budgets. Admittedly, our evidence cannot speak at all to whether Senators or Senate committees have made the same kinds of budget allocation decisions as their House counterparts. Future work ought to expand the scope of the analysis to include these additional institutions alongside House member offices. Additionally, future work that adopts a more granular assessment of legislative resources—as we do here—across a sufficiently long time to observe more than a handful of recent Congresses will offer valuable insight into legislative enterprises.

Conclusion

For scholars seeking to understand how Congress changes over time, this study offers an innovative way to comprehend the causes and consequences of legislators’ revealed preferences for the institution itself. Scholarly debates over how ideology and party affect legislative deliberation and political representation have tended to focus on roll call votes, which, although highly important, are necessarily constrained by negative and positive agenda powers. We show here that legislative scholars can observe strategic investments that are common among all members, and are therefore not so constrained by party leaders’ agendas: the *de facto* decision to reduce legislative capacity within their own official budget allotments. Just as the increasing ideological homogeneity within parties and growing gap between the parties has deeply influenced Congress's policymaking activities and outputs, we believe that the sometimes subtle and incremental changes to Congress's institutional make-up uncovered here have generated a legislature with important differences in power dynamics and capacity for policymaking, compared to Congresses of previous decades.

In sum, although the House may never have taken a vote to reduce its legislative operations—and has for the most part routinely appropriated *more* funding to the Legislative Branch during our period of observation—the reductions nevertheless occurred, particularly among incoming members of both parties. Our findings indicate that, despite the rhetoric from conservatives, the Contract did not unilaterally sabotage Congress's ability to function as a lean, efficient lawmaking institution. Rather, intense party competition has encouraged members themselves to invest less in their own legislative endeavors. In response to a new political environment consisting of nationalized elections, highly centralized policymaking processes, and increased competition for majority status, lawmakers have incrementally dispensed with legislative staff. At the same time, members have delegated more power to House party leaders, who responded by increasing their own staffing resources over 200 percent (Lee 2016, Figure 5-2, 114).[19] These related developments—centralized party leader management of the legislative process and reduced legislative operations by members of Congress in both parties—have stunted the ability of individual policy entrepreneurs to affect policy outputs within the chamber. As a result, highly skilled, long-serving legislative staffers are largely over-qualified for the more routine policy-monitoring work that occurs in members' personal offices. Members have chosen instead to maintain smaller policy shops with higher turnover, and to allocate more resources towards representational staff. These changes equip members to operate within the legislature to which they have been socialized—a legislature that values enterprises that engage in partisan warfare more than those that engage in effective lawmaking and meaningful oversight.

[19] Reproduced with the author's permission in Appendix D, page 10 of the Supplemental Information.

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Ideological Sabotage, Party Competition, and the Decline in Legislative Capacity in the US House

Supplemental Information

Contents

Appendix A: MRA Data

MRA data was gathered from year-end Statements of Disbursements of the House compiled by the chief administrative officer of the house and published by the Government Printing Office. These records were digitized using optical character recognition (OCR).

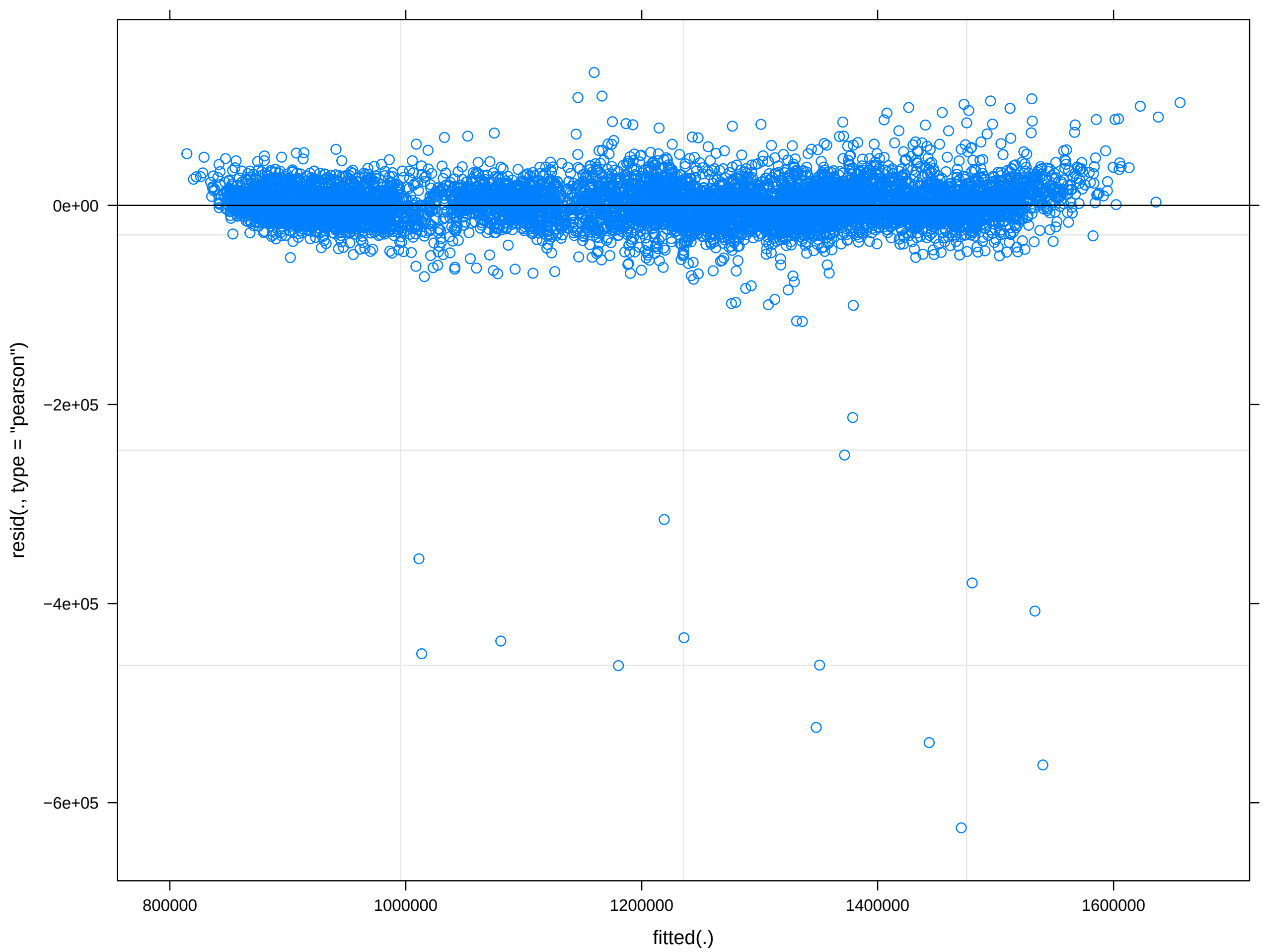

Fig A1: Detecting outlier MRAs

We adopted a simple procedure to detect outliers in the OCRed MRA data. We fit a simple mixed effects model of total MRA allocations using congress fixed effects and district level random effects. Any district*year entry with a residual from this model of more than 200,000 was classified as an outlier, replaced with missing, and replaced with an imputed value.

Missing MRA values for district*year entries (including removed outliers were imputed using the R package `Amelia`. Because we intended to use MRAs as a denominator to construct our primary dependent variable *Share of MRA Spend on Legislative Staff*, we needed MRA values for our full time-series from 1994-2013. MRAs, however, were not used in the house until 1996, so we backwards projected MRA values by including 1994 and 1995 in the imputation model.

We used a year level time series imputation model cross-sectionally indexed by district, and included estimated total staff spending as well as both leading and lagging variables for MRA totals and estimated total staff spending. We used third order polynomial effects to account for time. The imputed values used are the mean values of 100 imputations.

The results of the outlier imputation are shown in Figure A2.

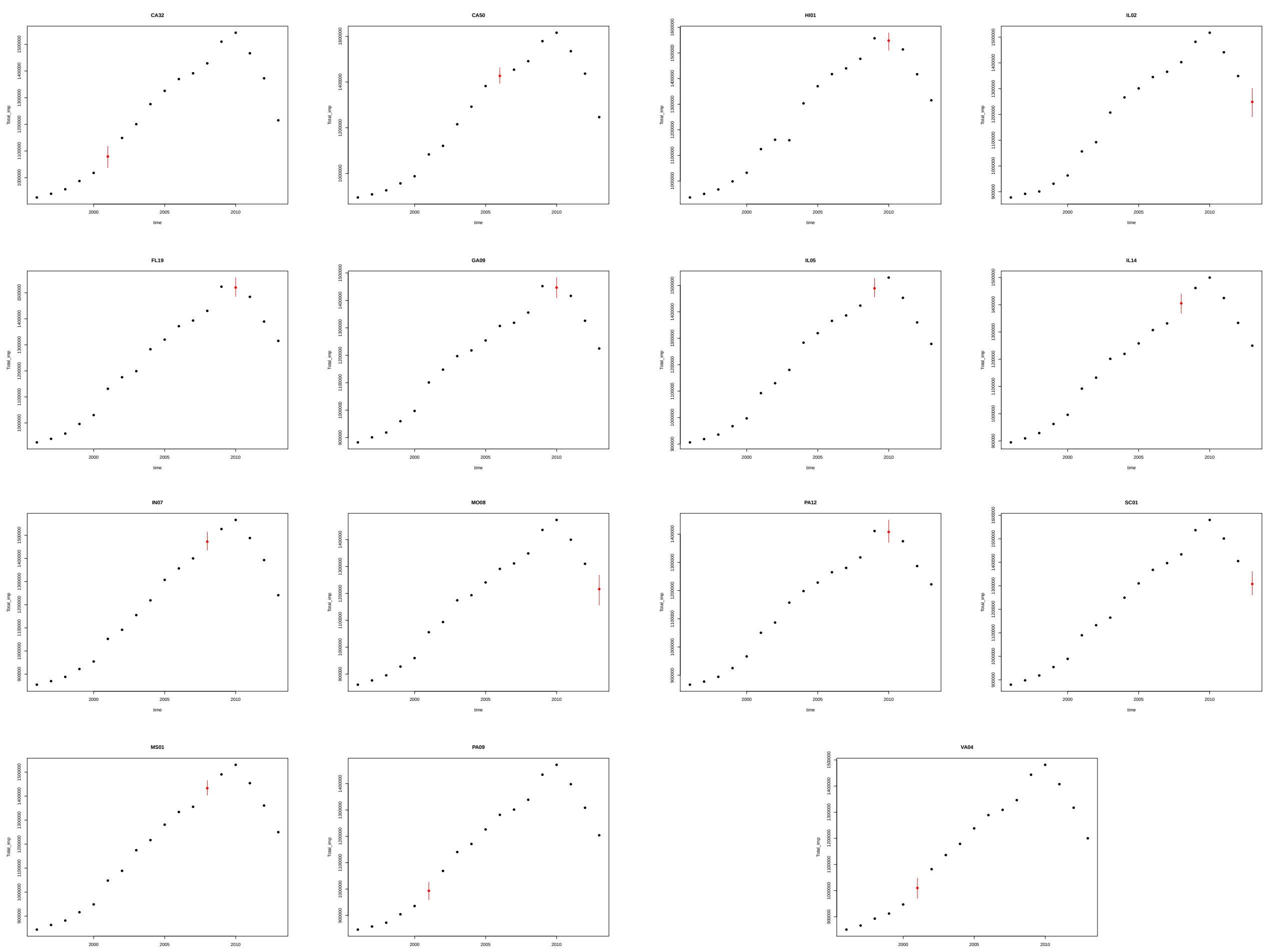

Fig A2: Imputed values for MRA outlier values

Appendix B: Staff Salary Coding

As noted throughout, our analyses rely upon a large dataset of staffer responsibility classifications. To develop these classifications, we employ a hybrid human- and machine-based coding algorithm. According to this protocol, certain job titles receive automatic coding decisions, which are assigned via a simple algorithm in Python. However, for more ambiguous job titles, research assistants investigated the staffer's responsibilities for the specified year and quarter in greater detail. This additional investigation involved searching for staffers in quarterly volumes of the *Congressional Yellow Books*,[1] where factors such as the staffer's office location (Washington versus the district), policy portfolio (if one exists), and (occasionally) more descriptive job titles are listed. This information was incorporated systematically into the assistants' coding decisions, as delineated in the coding protocol. We include a facsimile of that coding protocol below.

While some studies have opted to fully automate similar coding decisions, such automation is highly likely to encourage both measurement error and systematic bias. Careful human coding can capture cross-sectional differences and over-time changes in naming conventions and more accurately report staffers' responsibilities. Therefore, this study opts for a hybrid approach that harnesses the efficiency gains of automated coding without forfeiting the nuance provided by human coding.

Several design features of our protocol merit further discussion. Before providing such discussion, however, it is important to reiterate that our codes are meant to correspond with a staffer's *primary* office responsibilities. For example, if a Chief of Staff has legislative issues associated with her *Yellow Book* entry, we assume that a larger portion of her time is occupied by legislative matters than a Chief of Staff presenting no associated legislative issues. This is not to say that such a staffer does nothing but legislative work; rather, it is designed to capture the differences in Chief of Staff duties that is apparent between offices. Chiefs of Staff are particularly important, because they occupy a significant portion of a member's MRA. Other titles are

[1] See `https://www.leadershipdirectories.com/Products/LeadershipinPrint/Government/CongressionalYellowBook` for more information.

less consequential, but our process nevertheless treats them with equal care. Interns, for example, are known to perform multiple functions for the office, even though many focus primarily on answering phone calls or giving tours. As such, we instruct our coders to make certain that interns are not listed in the *Yellow Book*, before rendering their coding decision. In some cases, a staffer will exhibit conflicting responsibilities, and no single responsibility category appears to predominate. In this case, after careful consultation with the principal investigator, the coder would split the staffer's salary equally between the conflicting responsibility codes.

Another crucial feature of the coding process is that it is designed to minimize under-estimation of legislative investment. As the protocol indicates, any code may be overridden by the presence of legislative responsibilities within the *Yellow Book*. In practice, research assistants even assured that the "automatic" codes were not underestimating legislative responsibility (although it was exceedingly rare that a Caseworker exhibited legitimate legislative responsibilities). Thus, the protocol as written establishes a baseline procedure that helps coders navigate new or somewhat unique cases, ensuring that member offices are credited with the fullest possible measure of legislative investment. Constituency service is handled similarly. For years in which such information is available, presence in the district moves a staffer into the "Constituency Service" responsibility code, unless they exhibit legislative responsibility.

This coding procedure therefore renders the "Legislative", "Constituency Service," and "Communications" codes as the most precise coding categories available in the dataset. Each such code is associated with an informative, concrete coding rule, bolstered by qualitative evidence of the underlying responsibilities associated with that code. By contrast, "Political Management" and "Office Management" serve as residual categories. While the combination of salary information, absence of legislative responsibilities, and presence in Washington suggest that such staff are not legislative or constituency service, for example, we cannot be certain that staff coded as political managers are executing exactly the responsibilities associated with that coding category. Nevertheless, our coding scheme ensures that such members are not conflated with legislative staff (who have clearly delineated legislative responsibilities). It also ensures that we are not treating all residual codes similarly, based on pay. Still, users of these data should use these categories with caution, understanding that their presence serves primarily to ensure the accuracy of the legislative, constituency service, and communications investment measures.

In sum, the coding procedure provides a coherent framework for consistently and carefully coding staffer responsibilities. Additional information may be found at [URL redacted for review].

PROTOCOL FOR STAFFER CLASSIFICATION

2016 "Congress and Its Experts" Research Lab

PI: Jesse M. Crosson

STEP 1 – CLEANING THE DATA

1. We need these spreadsheets to be basically identical to those made by the RAs collecting the 90s data. Thus you'll need to do a couple of data-cleaning things.
2. First, clean the member's name. Instead of their full name, I want the member name to be the *last name only*. Fix it as such. Also, if it is not in all caps (it already should be), please change it accordingly.
3. Next, you're going to need to fill in the district name, since the data doesn't have it in the format I want it in. To do this, **wait until after you are at step 5.** Then, once you are in the Yellowbook, you can go ahead and fill in the district number.
    a. The format I would like is "STATEABBR#"—no spaces. In other words, California's 10th congressional district would be: CA10.

STEP 1 – CLASSIFICATION: THE EASY CASES

1. For all "easy cases," I want you to *leave the classification section blank*. I will fill those in with a computer program, which will save you some time in the long-run.
2. <u>A case is "easy" if the job title:</u>
    a. Contains the letters "legis"
    b. Contains the letters "constit"
    c. Contains the letters "casework"
    d. Contains the letters "district"
    e. Contains the letters "communic"
    f. Contains the letters "press"

STEP 2 – THE KINDA EASY CASES

1. There are a couple of "kinda easy" cases that are not as easy to automate with a computer program. So, instead of automating these, I am going to have you enter them.
2. For this, you'll need to know that category codes. Here they are:
    a. **Legislative staff = 1**
    b. **Political management = 2**
    c. **Communications = 3**
    d. **Office management = 4**
    e. **Constituency service = 5**
3. If a title reads **"field representative,"** you can mark this as constituency service.
4. If a title reads **"systems administrator,"** you can mark this as office management.
5. If a title reads **"grants coordinator,"** you can mark this as constituency service.
6. If a title reads **"intern" or "paid intern,"** you can mark this as constituency service.

SUMMARY: Step 3 Classifications	
Title	***Classification***
Systems Administrator	Office management
Field Representative	Constituency service

Grants Coordinator	Constituency service
Intern	Constituency service

STEP 4 – THE HARD CASES

1. If the title does not fall into any of the categories in Step 2 or Step 3, then it is a "hard case."
2. For all hard cases, please write "unc" into the classification cell and then highlight the cell blue.
3. Once you have a decent number of blue cells, turn to the corresponding edition of the *Congressional Yellowbooks*.
4. For each unclear case, look up the name of your staffer. Based on the information you see in the entry, you may be able to make a classification decision.
5. First and foremost, if the staffer has *legislative issues* listed under the name somewhere, **classify them as legislative staff.**
6. If there are not legislative issues, it gets a little complicated:
    a. If the person is a chief of staff or deputy chief of staff, mark them as *political management*.
    b. If the person is an administrative, staff, or executive assistant and is **paid more than $10,000**, mark them as *political management*.
        i. Similarly, if they are **paid less than $10,000,** mark them as *office management*.
    c. If the person is a shared employee, mark them as *political management*.
    d. If the person is marked as counsel, mark them as *political management*.
    e. If the person is marked as an office manager, mark them as *office management*.
    f. If the person is marked as a special projects coordinator, mark them as *constituency service*.
    g. If the person's title references veterans or veteran services, mark them as *constituency service*.

SUMMARY: Step 4 Classifications – (*assuming no legislative responsibility*)	
Title	***Classification***
Chief of Staff / Deputy Chief of Staff	Political management
Administrative/Staff/Executive Assistant – over $10k	Political management
Administrative/Staff/Executive Assistant – under $10k	Office management
Shared Employee	Political management
Counsel	Political management
Office Manager	Office management
Special Projects Coordinator	Constituency service
Includes veterans or veteran services	Constituency service

* $10,000 refers to a staffer's *quarterly* earnings, not yearly.
** Shared employees and part-time staff are removed from this analysis, so their associated coding procedures do not affect the results presented in the paper.

Appendix C: Alternative Model Specifications

Majority Control and Legislative Investment

	Percentage of MRA Spent on Legislative Staff						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Elected Post-Contract	−0.201***	−0.206***			−0.051**		
	(0.045)	(0.063)			(0.024)		
Year of Election			−0.020***	−0.021***		−0.034*	
			(0.005)	(0.005)		(0.018)	
Majority	0.060	0.055	0.055*	−3.956	0.059***	0.056***	0.002
	(0.038)	(0.040)	(0.031)	(7.215)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.003)
Post 1994 ∗ Majority		0.008					
		(0.051)					
Year of Election ∗ Majority				0.002			
				(0.004)			
Congress							−0.010***
							(0.002)
Seniority	0.029**	0.029**	0.016	0.015	0.047***	−0.015	0.007***
	(0.012)	(0.013)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.006)	(0.037)	(0.003)
Seniority^2	−0.002**	−0.002**	−0.003***	−0.003***	−0.003***	−0.003***	−0.0001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0001)
Committee Chair	−0.220***	−0.217***	−0.249***	−0.231***	−0.239***	−0.241***	−0.026***
	(0.061)	(0.069)	(0.067)	(0.061)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.007)
Subcommittee Chair	−0.072**	−0.071*	−0.068*	−0.060*	−0.062***	−0.059***	−0.005
	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.041)	(0.032)	(0.022)	(0.022)	(0.004)
Power Committee	−0.042	−0.042	−0.054*	−0.053	−0.048***	−0.050***	0.002
	(0.029)	(0.036)	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.006)
Extremism	−0.233***	−0.235***	−0.113***	−0.121***	−0.129***	−0.129***	−0.024
	(0.057)	(0.065)	(0.042)	(0.036)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.023)
Female	−0.053***	−0.053**	−0.028	−0.026	−0.026	−0.024	
	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.021)	(0.021)	
Vote Share	0.027***	0.027***	0.028***	0.028***	0.024***	0.025***	0.005***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.001)
Vote Share^2	−0.0002***	−0.0002***	−0.0002***	−0.0002***	−0.0002***	−0.0002***	−0.00003***
	(0.00004)	(0.00004)	(0.00004)	(0.00004)	(0.00004)	(0.00004)	(0.00001)
104th Congress					0.199***	0.259***	
					(0.032)	(0.048)	
105th Congress					0.142***	0.263***	
					(0.033)	(0.080)	
106th Congress					0.047	0.230**	
					(0.034)	(0.114)	
107th Congress					0.110***	0.356**	
					(0.035)	(0.150)	
108th Congress					0.130***	0.440**	
					(0.036)	(0.186)	
110th Congress					−0.138***	0.302	
					(0.038)	(0.258)	
111th Congress					−0.117***	0.391	
					(0.038)	(0.295)	
112th Congress					−0.117***	0.457	
					(0.039)	(0.332)	
113th Congress					−0.267***	0.371	
					(0.040)	(0.367)	
Constant	−1.949***	−1.947***	36.911***	39.081***	−2.062***	65.870*	0.770***
	(0.307)	(0.294)	(10.415)	(9.362)	(0.189)	(36.543)	(0.208)
Observations	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256
Member-Level FE?	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
R^2	0.066	0.066	0.095	0.095	0.118	0.118	0.554
Log Likelihood	4,313.237	4,313.272	4,392.532	4,393.361	4,458.096	4,457.791	
Note:							*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Appendix D: Extra Figures

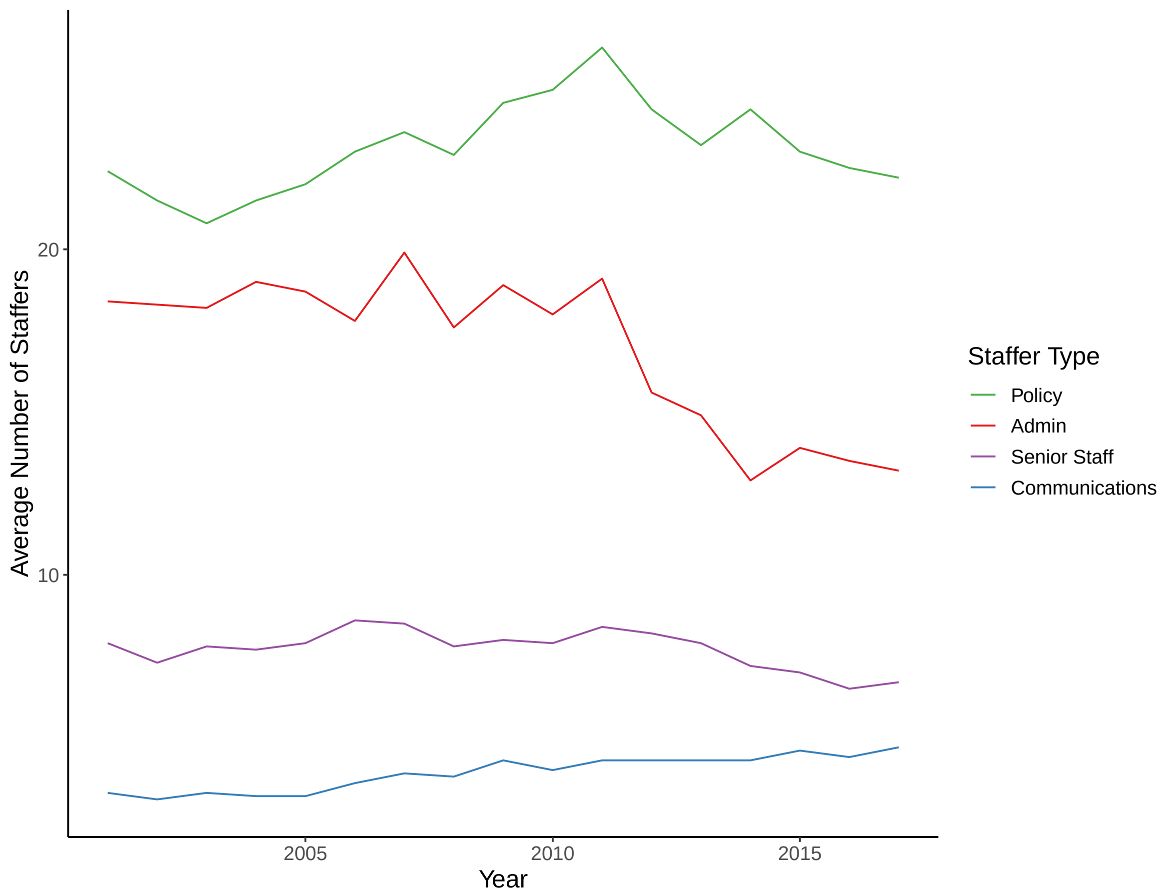

Fig A3: Average number of committee staff by type across all committees except for Appropriations.

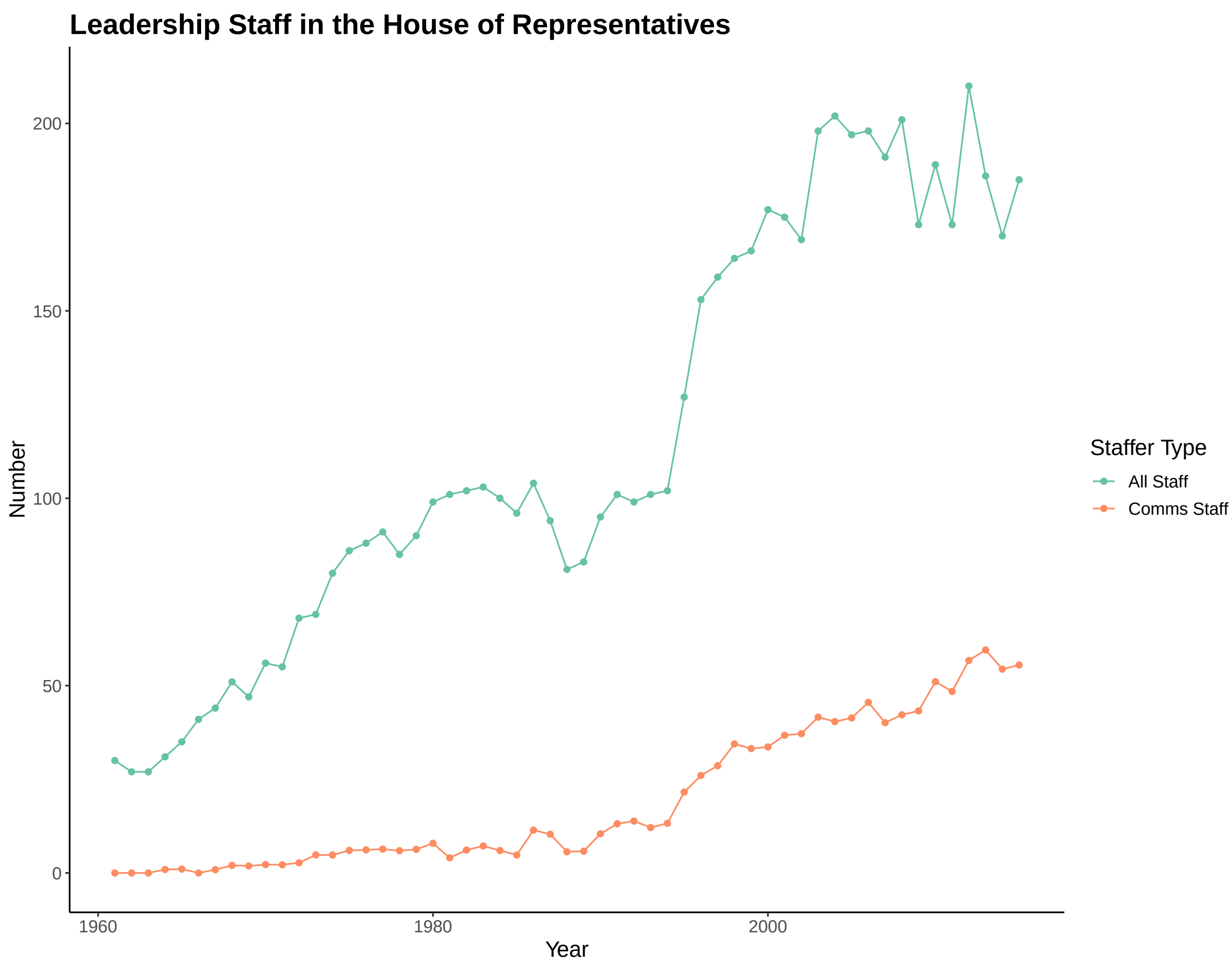

Fig A4: The Rise of Leadership Staff in House Committees, reproduced from Lee (2016, Figure 5-2, 114)

Appendix E: Staff Spending and Office Experience

To be clear, legislative divestment in Congress is crucially linked to members' unwillingness to dedicate MRA funds to the hiring of legislative staff. However, our interest in such spending derives not just from the decline in the *number* of legislative staff in Congress, but from the decline in experience and quality of those staff. Indeed, deinstitutionalization has led members, lobbyists, and other political elites to complain that present-day legislative lack the experience and skills necessary to "actually legislate."

Given the importance of staff experience to our account of deinstitutionalization, we confirm below that the percentage of a member's MRA dedicated to legislative staff is in fact correlated with the cumulative congressional experience of a member's staff.

As summarized in the table, spending on legislative staff appears able to help members retain more experienced staff, even when controlling for factors like member security and committee position, which themselves help members to attract more senior staff. This appears to be the case even when controlling for key factors like legislator seniority.

Table 1

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Staff Experience in Office	
	(1)	(2)
Spending on Legislative Staff	0.00000***	0.00000**
	(0.00000)	(0.00000)
Seniority	1.991***	1.988***
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Extremism		−0.032
		(0.022)
Committee Chair		0.047***
		(0.013)
Subcommittee Chair		0.037**
		(0.018)
Power Committee		0.046*
		(0.024)
Female		−0.014*
		(0.008)
Vote Percentage		−0.007**
		(0.003)
Vote Percentage^2		0.00004**
		(0.00002)
Democrat		−0.004
		(0.008)
Constant	−0.096	0.233
	(0.449)	(0.455)
Observations	4,338	4,256
Congress-Level FE?	Y	Y
R^2	0.998	0.998
Adjusted R^2	0.998	0.998
Residual Std. Error	0.397 (df = 4326)	0.391 (df = 4236)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01