

Ideology and Its Consequences

Representation is not a simple matter of how close legislators hew to their constituents' preferences. Public officials consider the views of many different constituencies, from the full set of voters to their party faithful to party elites and fellow candidates. Once we include these other constituencies, there is little that is personal in personal ideology. If we had better information on which actors influence our legislators, we *might* account for the balance of pure personal ideology, leaving nothing to explain.

Yet, we can take this claim too far. We get carried away in looking for members' pure personal ideology as if each legislator were like a snowflake, with a unique configuration of preferences. And we can go too far the other way as well, looking for Senator X's clone somewhere in the electorate, what Weissberg (1972) calls "collective representation." A "complete" model of policy representation would include constituency preferences, elite attitudes, induced values, and a host of other considerations such as committee and subcommittee positions, leadership obligations, presidential influence, interest group pressures (including mail, telephone calls, faxes, e-mail), political action committee contributions, testimony at legislative hearings by experts, and the like. In a world of perfect information, we might fully account for every vote a legislator casts.

There is always something left over when we extricate both mass and elite views from legislators' own ideology. This error term, whether we get it from subtraction or as a residual, contains more than legislators' pure ideology. Gerald Wright (1994) argues that shirking residuals are just that, random error.¹ Kalt and Zupan (1984, 1990) offer two rejoinders (see also Carson and Oppenheimer 1984, on the first). First,

personal ideology predicts roll call behavior quite well (see also chapter 2). Second, when senators go against public views, voters punish them (see also chaps. 3–5 and 7). If these numbers were merely noise, they wouldn't predict either legislative voting or vote shares (in both the primary and general elections).

Yet residuals impose a simplistic model of representation. All voting reflects either constituency or pure personal ideology. This is a Weight Watchers utility function. The residual contains too much fat. We can trim it by estimating a more direct method of simple ideology and then teasing induced values out. Our final residuals, pure personal ideology and partisanship, are leaner but gentler. Personal ideology seems more ephemeral. It doesn't affect roll call voting as systematically. The big impacts on voting come from the part of simple ideology that we can squeeze back into the utility function. Have we pummeled personal ideology back into randomness? Alas, no. It may not be the unmoved mover of roll call voting, but voters seem sufficiently attuned to values in Senate campaigns to punish deviations from their ideal points. There is something left and both helps and hurts senators in elections. Most of the good news comes in primaries, and most of the bad news comes in November.

There are exceptions, and they largely occur where we might expect them: Liberal senators do better in liberal states and conservatives fare well in November where the right dominates. The candidates who are most severely punished for their personal ideologies (as I call them) are *challengers*. These not-so-great pretenders often enter Senate (or other) races to prove Downs wrong. They run because they are committed to issues. Minority parties and their candidates often have no other rationale for plodding along. We can't expect candidates to run for office simply to provide the public good of a second candidate on the ballot. So challengers fighting the good fight feel free to go further left—or right—than their partisans might wish. They emulate former Alabama governor George Wallace, who sought to “send them a message” in his 1968 presidential campaign. And the voters send a message back to the challengers *and their core supporters*: You're too extreme. Incumbents are more mainstream—which probably explains why they win office in the first place.

Perhaps we can make sense out of larger challenger errors compared to incumbent residuals. Why do voters punish challenger noise more than incumbent randomness? After all, random is random. Yet, voters

pay closer attention to the core supporters (induced ideology or partisanship) of incumbents than those of challengers. When citizens punish or reward incumbents, they express their support for or opposition to the fellow travelers of the sitting senator. Since challengers often go far beyond even their primary and personal constituencies, it makes sense for voters to reject these strong ideologues (see chapter 5).

Will the Center Hold, or Will the Center Fold?

Legislators have their own values, but they need to hide them from voters much as I covered myself under the blanket at summer camp to keep counselors from seeing me reading *The Catcher in the Rye*. Sometimes I was caught—you can't hide flashlights very well—and paid the consequences. I survived, since camps are loathe to punish paying customers too severely. Legislators have more to fear, at least in principle. If they indulge their own ideologies too often, they will be expelled and sent back to being just another voter in the unidimensional issue space.

The big problem with Downsian models is that American politics are not centrist. It is tough to explain absolute deviations from geographic or reelection constituency opinions. Absolute differences don't make a difference in elections. It is *how* you misrepresent your constituents that counts, both in primaries and general elections. Voters don't want legislators to be *near* them. They want their solons to answer the old labor question, "Which side are you on?" (cf. Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989).

Ideology matters. First, legislators' values more closely reflect state party preferences than statewide views. Second, senators pay attention to the views of party elites and other core supporters. And third, ideological voting often boosts vote shares in primaries. *Ideology is not an aberration, a realm left for politicians who are hiding under the covers. It is central to contemporary American politics.* When we look for convergence to the median voter and fail to find it, we presume either that politicians are not strategic or that they are trying to outfox their constituents. If the two parties represent distinct constituencies, there is less reason to expect that their elected leaders would "shirk" one master to serve another. Politicians need to shore up their base first, gaining enough support to get the nomination and garner sufficient resources for the fall election.

The ideological-equilibrium folks get the ideological nature of

American politics right. They get it wrong when they presume that values are more of a help than a hindrance. Challengers often find ideologies an albatross that they can't shake. Incumbents stake out a claim. They pay a bigger price for inconsistency than for being too far afield (Downs 1957, 103–10; Glazer and Grofman 1989). Incumbents have a cushion that challengers don't. They represent a coalition that at some point has secured a majority in the state. Often that coalition comprises the majority party.

Perhaps we can split the difference between ideological-equilibrium and Downsian models. Legislators see party activists and other core supporters as their inner circle. They share deep-seated values with their personal and primary constituents. Fenno (1978, 66) quoted a member of the House: "My strongest supporters are the people who know me and whom I have known and with whom I have communicated over the years. . . . in the oldest counties, that means thirty to forty years." These ties to fellow partisans help boost the member's primary vote share. Sticking with one's closest allies will alienate some potential supporters in the general election. So the legislators who bolt too far in the direction of their induced constituencies will lose votes in November.

There is considerable support for this hybrid model (see chapter 3). Voters are more likely to respond to induced ideology or partisanship than to personal ideology (chapter 4). When I bring challenger ideology into the picture, *both* pure and induced values matter. Induced partisanship is more critical for challengers, pure ideology for incumbents (chapter 5). Republicans running in 1982 were well advised to bolt rightward, since they gain substantially in the primaries and don't lose anything in November by this strategy. Liberalism doesn't help Northern Democrats in primaries, but it does cost them votes in the general election. In a conservative country, Northern Democrats need to converge more than Republicans. Yet, ideology doesn't matter everywhere. It counts most in low-key races where candidates take distinct stands (chapter 5).

Values and Voting

Political culture helps us understand this jumble of results. The traditionalistic culture is conservative, the individualistic progressive. In each environment, it helps to go with the flow. Southern Democrats in traditionalistic cultures are pressured to bolt leftward, and this helps them in the primary but hurts in November. Republicans in individualistic cul-

tures are impelled to vote conservatively. This helps in the primary and imposes no toll in November.² *Ideology is either a costly force or has no impact in the general elections for partisan blocs that are out of sync with statewide and state party public opinion.* When you tilt against prevailing winds, you can gain votes in the primary but may have to pay a price in the general election. Republicans in traditionalistic states and Northern Democrats in individualistic cultures benefit in both primaries and general elections from being “too” conservative and “too” liberal, respectively. *Legislators representing the dominant ideology in their states benefit from going “too far.”* This is a quasi-Downsian world. Ideology helps senators who are in touch with their fellow partisans in both the spring and the fall. It may lull out-of-step legislators into a false sense of security. Personal ideology might bring extra votes in the primary by shirking, but cost ballots in the general election.

The hybrid model works best in moralistic cultures, where parties are polarized and candidates are less likely to converge.³ Northern Democrats do best in primaries when they tilt leftward; Republicans prosper when they are most conservative. The opposite holds in general elections. Extremists gain the primary votes of loyalists in primaries but pay a price in November. This ideological division draws legislators away from the median voter and toward their core supporters. But the bimodal distribution of voters creates fault lines in the general election.⁴ Neither party has sufficient strength to prevail in November.⁵ So legislators left out on either pole fare worse.

The full range of results suggests that senators representing dominant ideologies in *both their geographic and reelection constituencies* are the prototypical ideological-equilibrium legislators. All other legislators, be they from the minority ideology in a state where one value system prevails or from a system with polarized parties, reflect the hybrid model. They don’t quite conform to Downsian expectations, but they do pay a price when they stray too far from their geographic constituents.

Voters punish representatives who misrepresent. Yet most legislators don’t wander too far from public opinion (see chapter 2). When I break personal ideology into its induced and pure personal components, personal values account for a minuscule share of roll call behavior compared to constituency preferences and core partisan supporter ideology (chapter 4). The initial results indicate that induced values matter more in elections than personal ideologies (chapter 4). When I break the analyses down by party (chaps. 5 and 6), the picture becomes

more complicated. For senators up in 1982, personal values seem to matter more. For the full range of legislators, both induced and personal ideologies count.

Issues matter most for Republicans in primaries and Northern Democrats in general elections. In all three cultures, a conservative induced ideology brings GOP incumbents more votes. Republicans also benefit from going beyond their core partisan supporters in individualistic and moralistic cultures. (Southern Democrats benefit from *liberal* induced ideologies in primaries).⁶ For Republicans, bolting rightward can help only in primaries—and the further to the right one gets, the better off one is. Conservatism brings votes in the spring for Republicans *but has no impact in November* in any model (in either chapter 5 or chapter 6). The only exceptions (for both induced and personal ideology) occur in moralistic states. Republicans benefit from taking strongly conservative stands: They win extra votes in the primary and don't lose anything in the general election.⁷

Are Northern Democrats Downsians? Yes and no. They gain little, particularly in individualistic states, by their personal partisanship in primaries. In moralistic states they can lose a lot in general elections if their own values are too liberal, just as their Southern colleagues will be punished if their personal values tilt too far leftward. Voters react primarily to legislators' own beliefs in November and are more likely to take out their frustrations on Democrats.⁸ The impact of these values on their roll call voting is *smaller* than that for Southern Democrats and Republicans (chaps. 2 and 4). Democrats seem to get the worst of both worlds: They don't deviate very much, but face the wrath of the electorate anyway. Republicans fear ideology only in moralistic states with polarized parties.

Northern Democrats bear the brunt of ideology because they are more likely to be out of sync with their statewide electorates. Conservatism is the dominant ideology in American politics. Even though Northern Democrats have personal-partisanship scores no greater than their Republican colleagues, ideology costs them more votes. Voters don't take out their frustrations out on all Democrats. In individualistic states, Northern Democrats are very much in touch with their constituents. Their personal ideology is .007 on a standardized scale. They seem to be unreconstructed Downsians. So their personal values don't hurt them in November. In moralistic states, they are considerably to the left of even their reelection and primary/personal constituencies (a standardized

score of .189). Nor is it surprising that the only Republicans who face the wrath of an electorate are from moralistic states. GOP senators from individualistic states have personal ideologies that are slightly more liberal (relative to their core constituents and fellow partisans) than Democratic senators (with a standardized score of .086). They are also Downsians. But in moralistic states, they shirk to the right (with a score of $-.130$). What mutes the impact of values for Republicans is the tilt of this culture toward conservatism.

If elites push public officials beyond their constituents, who pushes elites? Much of the time, there is no conflict between the mass public and activists. Democratic party elite attitudes are strongly correlated with reelection constituency ideology (.570) and moderately related to geographic constituents' views (.490). Republican primary/personal constituency views have a moderate relationship with reelection constituency ideology (.441), but a more powerful correlation (.576) with geographic constituency attitudes.⁹ But sometimes elites will push legislators beyond where voters want them to go. For both Northern Democrats and Republicans, elite ideology is only partially shaped by their fellow partisans' views. (See tables 30 and 31.)

TABLE 30. Determinants of Northern Democratic Elite Ideology

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Ratio
Constant	-4.968	1.135	-4.377***
Democratic identifier ideology	.016	.008	1.921**
Moralistic culture	.992	.119	8.303****
Fundamentalists	-.017	.003	-5.013****
Population diversity	7.725	1.683	4.589****
Democratic party identification	.025	.010	2.518***
Republican party identification	.026	.009	2.981***

$R^2 = .740$	Adjusted $R^2 = .716$	SEE = .442	$N = 72$
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** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .0001$.

Northern Democratic elites are pushed slightly leftward by their fellow partisans (see table 30). The regression coefficient is small and it is significant only at $p < .05$. Far more potent in pushing Northern Democratic elites to the left are an ethnically diverse population ($p < .0001$) and a large share of either Democratic *or* Republican identifiers in a state's population (both $p < .01$). A more diverse population base makes Northern Democratic elites responsive to calls for redistribution. A big base of fellow Democrats provides a cushion for elites. It lets them tilt leftward. But so does a large GOP foundation. Northern Democratic elites fight fire with fire. When there are many Republican identifiers, Northern Democratic party activists become polarized. Elites in moralistic states are even more liberal than we would otherwise predict ($p < .0001$). This culture has the strongest effects of any variable that accounts for elite ideology. The only factor that systematically brings Northern Democrats back to the center is the share of fundamentalists in a state's population. Neither statewide public opinion or the union share affects Northern Democratic elite ideology. Each would be a temporizing force, but neither reaches significance.

TABLE 31. Determinants of Republican Elite Ideology

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	<i>t</i> -Ratio
Constant	-.537	1.155	-.465
Republican identifier ideology	.066	.012	5.337****
Fundamentalists	-.020	.010	-1.982**
Environmentalists	39.606	23.953	1.653**
Population diversity	5.032	1.498	3.359***
Manufacturing share	2.776e-002	6.837e-003	4.060***
Democratic party identifiers	-.004	.010	-.430
Republican party identifiers	.007	.010	.759

$R^2 = .774$ Adjusted $R^2 = .755$ SEE = .486 $N = 92$

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$. **** $p < .0001$.

Republican party identifiers have a much stronger impact on their elites (see table 31).¹⁰ The regression coefficient is more than four times as great (.066) as we find for Northern Democrats; the *t*-ratio is almost three times as powerful. It is easier for Republican identifiers to push their elites, since GOP voters have more consensus. Their mean ideology is far to the right, while Northern Democrats are virtually centrists.¹¹ As with Northern Democrats, a more diverse ethnic base pushes senators to the left ($p < .01$), as does a large share of the state's economy devoted to manufacturing ($p < .0001$). A manufacturing state will have a large blue-collar population and should push elites toward a more favorable view of governmental programs. The larger the percentage of environmentalists in a state, the more progressive elites will be, though the impact is not strong ($p < .05$). Fundamentalists help push GOP activists to the right, though again not by much ($p < .05$). Neither Democratic nor Republican party identification—nor statewide ideology—affects GOP activist attitudes.

Northern Democratic opinion plays a less central role in elite ideology than GOP attitudes because party identifiers are more centrist. For both parties, there are systematic forces in their state environments that push activists toward more extreme positions. And they are somewhat similar in each case. Minority groups make elites more progressive, fundamentalists make them more conservative. Groups at the fringes of a party often have powerful effects on elite attitudes. Fundamentalists are a small share of the population of individualistic states, about 8 percent (compared to 14 percent for moralistic states and 25 percent in traditionalistic states). Yet their impact on elite attitudes is at least as great in this culture ($r = -.608$ for Northern Democrats and $-.914$ for Republicans) as anywhere else. Environmentalists are a smaller share of the population of traditionalistic states than elsewhere.¹² But their impact is greater on elite attitudes there ($r = .489$ for Northern Democrats and $.621$ for Republicans) than elsewhere. These groups push senators away from their partisan identifiers.

Elites help make politics ideological. Sometimes they help and sometimes they hinder the search for votes. Yet, legislators can't simply ignore them. They are too central to officeholders' world. Party elite ideologies are at least as close to legislators' own voting records as those of their fellow partisans or their full geographic constituency for every party group in each culture.¹³ Elites and officeholders are more than just support networks. They are ideological soul-mates. They

push legislators toward their base, but often away from the prize in November.

Traditional models of representation (including the diamond model), positing a legislator responding to an entire state or district, miss the tension between the geographic and reelection constituencies. Incorporating the views of the reelection constituency is but a first step. Most of simple party shirking stems from induced partisanship, shared values of party followers and activists. Once we do this, our understanding of representation is more complete, and the principal problem of principal-agent models dissipates.

Principals and Agents

Principal-agent models pose an attractive puzzle because principals find it difficult to monitor their proxies. If oversight were easy, agents wouldn't shirk. They couldn't get away with it. Legislators are tough to police. Voters face limited competition just once in six years. They have few reasons to become informed, and legislators face few pressures to keep campaign promises (Kalt and Zupan 1984, 283). Senators thus have ample opportunity to shirk. Yet few deviate from either their geographic or reelection constituencies. Those who do are pulled away by core supporters.¹⁴ Even in moralistic states, where parties are sharply polarized, the average scores are modest: Northern Democrats tilt somewhat to the left and Republicans slightly less to the right.¹⁵

Despite the predictions of principal-agent theory, voters are quite sophisticated. When there are scant differences, voters don't heed them. But even modest distinctions can produce a reaction from the electorate. The political arena works far better than critics imagine. And it works like a marketplace should: Consumers are most likely to pay a lot of attention to personal ideology when there are larger differences in values. During the era from which our data comes Senate (and House) elections were less referenda on national politics than on candidate traits, including issues (Ragsdale 1980).¹⁶ If voters pay more attention to candidates than parties, they should punish (or reward) senators for their *personal* beliefs, not for their core supporters' preferences.

If voters are so smart and can pass judgment on even moderately ideological candidates in polarized races, why does a conservative electorate continue to elect Democrats to office? In 1980 (and again in 1982) it didn't. These same people restored Democrats to majority status in

the Senate in 1986 and kept them in control until 1994. Ideology is but a part of the story of Senate elections (Abramowitz 1988). It is not always uppermost in voters' minds. When candidates don't take distinct issue positions, as in traditionalistic and—to a lesser extent—individualistic cultures, rational voters would waste their time focusing on ideology (Downs 1957, chap. 13).¹⁷ Polarized environments where candidates disagree with each other make voters stand up and pay attention (Wright and Berkman 1986).

Democrats have persevered against contrary ideological tides by downplaying issues, relying on their long-standing advantage in party identification, and having better candidates than the Republicans. The party adopted a strategy of “inclusive compromise,” being all things to all people. Reconciling interests was more critical than ideological purity (Mayhew 1966)—at least until the 1970s. The long-term advantage in party identification persisted well into the 1970s, even as many in the electorate had little connection to the progressive realignment of the 1930s that led the party out of the electoral wilderness. At least in the House, Democrats offer higher-quality challengers who are more strategic in deciding when to run for Congress (Jacobson 1989).¹⁸

The Democratic advantage was self-perpetuating for four decades. And it is easy to see why. Candidates' inner circles include party elites and activists. The dominant party elite will be more moderate because it has won, or helped to win, elections. Minority party activists are more likely to be ideological purists (McCloskey, Hoffman, and O'Hara 1960). Democrats established camaraderie with their large contingent of House incumbents and challengers, state legislators, and other activists. The Republican farm team was smaller and more ideologically homogenous. It pulled GOP legislators further to the right than the Democratic elites tugged their senators to the left. And then came the 1970s. The Democratic elite tilted as far to the left as the GOP did in the other direction (W. Miller 1988). The seesaw did not balance out. It still inclined toward the old majority party, which still had far more lower-level officeholders. By the late 1970s, the balance tipped for the Senate: Republicans offered better-quality challengers than Democrats.¹⁹

The increasing tilt to the left produced a drain in Democratic identification. By the early 1980s the Democrats were no longer the “normal” majority party (Petrocik 1987). I need not retell the familiar story of the travails of the Democrats, who made a habit of losing the presidency and

then gave up the Senate and ultimately the House as well. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, environmental activists played a key role in pushing moralistic Democrats to the left, just as fundamentalists jostled Republicans to the right. Without a supporting cast of elected officials that moderate the higher-ups, the majority party would likely have fallen farther and faster. Not until 1994 did the Democrats lose both the House and the Senate.

Was a Downsian model more appropriate in the 1950s through the early 1970s? Without better time series data (especially on ideology) we can't tell. But there were plenty of ideologues in the Senate (and the House) during this era. Many were conservative Southern Democrats, a breed that has become passé, just as many Southern voters have abandoned the Democrats for the GOP (Petrocik 1987). Heterogeneous parties may still be ideological.

The polarization of the 1970s can explain why the Democrats lost standing. Its effect on representation is not to introduce ideology to American politics, but to change its effects. It may be more difficult now for out-of-sync legislators to get elected (or, if they defy the odds, to get reelected). The positive effects for induced ideology in primaries may now extend to Northern Democrats as well as Republicans. And if more general-election races find candidates diverging, issues may become more important in November in a wider range of contexts — and for both parties. If there is greater ideological solidarity within state party elites, induced values might even supplant personal ideologies as determinants of November elections.

We might see a shrinking of shirking, or at least personal deviations. If you are out of touch with your state party, you will have a tougher time getting the nomination. Once nominated, you owe more to your base than you did before. So if you go against either statewide or state partisan attitudes, you need to heed the call of your activist core more than in the past. This sets up a battle in November of two candidates who are poles apart. Voters might use ideology as a more important cue. The 1994 elections, especially those for the House, suggest that induced partisanship may come to dominate representation. Many amateur candidates won Republican nominations and succeeded in general elections. Amateurs with little name recognition are more extreme once elected than “quality challengers” (Canon 1990, 146–49). Many claim that the contract's the thing, even if it causes them not to get reelected. They pledge to limit their terms even if they can't amend the Constitu-

tion to guarantee a minimal tenure. These members owe their souls to their constituency *party* and other party elites. They are not afraid to shirk their responsibilities to the full constituency.

When elected officials abjure the electoral connection, they grant themselves greater freedom. And they make voters judge their party, not just themselves.²⁰ The 73 Republican freshmen view themselves as messengers of a cause, even if they risk their electoral future (Gugliotta 1995). Yet, messengers perforce speak for someone. A key component of the electoral base of the new members is the Christian Right. New members secured votes from evangelical voters, and many legislators identify with the Christian Coalition (Green 1995). When we look at geographic constituencies, the new members' constituents are more conservative on religious and moral issues than people in other congressional districts. Their reelection constituencies are even more fundamentalist than the full geographic constituencies.²¹ Even members who flout the reelection motivation are good representatives of their strongest supporters.

Representing Whom?

Legislators are primarily faithful representatives, but not simply of their geographical constituencies. Yet they are not automatons. They respond to *different* constituencies. Their geographical constituencies don't always agree with their fellow partisans or with their core supporters. They often have to choose which constituency they represent. Sometimes they don't follow any of them terribly well. Yet, this "sometimes" is not often. Kingdon (1977, 586) finds that only 10 percent of the roll calls he studied showed conflict among either the actors a member consults or between Washington and constituency goals. He argues that members make voting decisions through a "consensus mode."

Legislators continually confront the dilemma of whether they wish to emphasize reelection, the pursuit of policy, or the inside-the-Beltway game of power (Fenno 1978, 218–23). The "powerful Washington legislator can actually get pretty far out of touch with his supportive constituents back home" (Fenno 1978, 218–19). In Washington, members face a wide range of temptations leading them away from *all of their home constituencies*. Party conferences and the president (Langbein 1993) and lobbyists and political action committees (Denzau and Munger 1986) are perhaps the most prominent suspects.

Why is there so little pure personal ideology, especially among leaders? Part — though not a great deal — of the reason is methodological. As I argued in chapter 1, pressures, especially from political action committees and lobbyists, are more likely to be successful on narrow legislation that cuts across the issues that normally divide Democrats from Republicans. Representation studies focus on the ideological match between legislators and their different constituencies. So we are looking for the impact of the Washington culture where we should least expect to find it.

Most constituents don't know that much about either their senators or Representatives. What they have is diffuse ideas about policy stands — or ideology. And this is what people care about. We don't hear much about legislators who are defeated because of their votes on trucking deregulation or similarly arcane issues (cf. Denzau and Munger 1986). Legislators have more wiggle room on such policies.

If we expanded our domain, we might find more personal ideology, though less punishment for such malfeasance. Yet we still would not be too far off the mark. The left-right spectrum characterizes the overwhelming share of legislative votes in any one Congress and over time (Poole and Rosenthal 1997). Even studies designed to mix and match types of issues find few tensions when inside-Washington pressures conflict with constituency demands (Kingdon 1973, 1977). When I asked Michel how often he found it tough to meet both his leadership responsibilities and his constituency interests, he replied, "Not most of the time." Legislators don't let themselves get too far away from constituency opinion because they worry about the electoral consequences. If you stray too far from your public, no amount of explanation will save your soul. Explanations carry weight only when legislators are generally faithful to their publics (Fenno 1978, 152; Bianco 1994, 49–50, 154–55).

The electoral connection isn't the whole story either. If it were, we would find more straightforward Downsians than we do. Republicans are generally too conservative and Northern Democrats too liberal for their constituents. Yet they stay close enough, often with the help of more extreme challengers, so that most don't pay an electoral price. Legislators have to make strategic calculations about how far afield they can go. Yet, they are not cold calculators who play off one interest over another. They respond to their reelection, primary, and personal constituencies because they are comfortable with them. These partisan followers and close allies provide the support for the ideological stands that members take. Just as we regularly choose our friends

because of common interests, legislators surround themselves with cue-givers who have similar ideologies and constituencies (Matthews and Stimson 1975).

There are few loners in politics. In everyday life we see the occasional eccentric who marches to the tune of a different drummer. Such people are not likely to get elected to public office. The major electoral connection doesn't occur after two years (for the House) or six (for the Senate). It occurs *before the candidate is nominated and elected the first time*. The multiple levels of political evolution explain why there is so little shirking. An out-of-touch politician will sit on the sidelines. Politicians in sync with many constituencies will prosper.

If we look for shirking from constituents' views, we'll find it somewhere. Somewhere, sometime *every* legislator will vote against the district line. Maybe she'll need a campaign contribution from a political action committee. Maybe she'll respond to party or presidential pressures. Maybe she'll simply think that she knows more about an issue than her constituents do (see Bianco 1994). But this won't happen often enough to change a member's ideology.

What may seem like a legislator's personal ideology is likely to be an indicator of a member's agenda priorities. Senator Ernest Hollings (D-SC) is an ardent deficit hawk and opponent of free trade. Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) is a passionate defender of the institutional prerogatives of Congress, especially when there is a potential conflict with the White House. Are these issues central in the minds of their constituents? Most likely they are not. Yet, they do not go against the basic ideology of voters in their states. Senators can and do place different priorities on issues than their constituents do. But they rarely put strong emphasis on issues that they know will be unpopular back home. And when they do, as Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AR) did on the Vietnam War in the 1960s, they risk electoral retaliation. These are the profiles in courage of which Kennedy wrote. They are sufficiently rare to warrant a book (and many biographies) of their exceptionalism.

Some years ago *Nightline* host Ted Koppel asked celebrity lawyer and Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz: Are you bothered that such a large share of defendants in American criminal trials are found guilty? Dershowitz replied that he would be more worried if most defendants were actually innocent. So we might be more concerned if we had too many profiles in courage, for this would not speak well for our system of representative government.

No Plague on Either of Your Houses?

This is a study of the Senate. I cannot make direct comparisons with the House because there are no district-level data on public, much less partisan, preferences. Yet there are good grounds for speculation on the implications for the “other body.”

Principal-agent theory would expect less shirking in the House because it is easier to monitor representatives than senators. Elections are biennial, so representatives don’t have the ideological grace period of senators. Senators put aside electoral concerns in their second, third, and fourth years to concentrate on policymaking (Fenno 1982). Representatives always focus on the next election. House constituencies are smaller and more homogenous, making monitoring easier.

It may be easier in theory for voters to police their representatives rather than their senators, but practice suggests some difficulties. Information is much more widely available about both incumbents and challengers in Senate elections than in House races. Because House districts are more homogenous, it is riskier for challengers to stake out an ideological claim that is out of sync with the median voter. In a heterogenous constituency, it is easier to adopt a “home style” that appeals to only part of one’s district (Fenno 1978, 22). Diverse demands and easy information increase the opportunities for monitoring. And this is what we find. House elections are mostly referenda on incumbent performance, while Senate elections focus on challengers as well (Krasno 1994). Issues matter more in Senate elections than in House contests (Uslaner 1981).

So senators have more opportunity to shirk — and, as members of the “world’s greatest deliberative body,” lots of incentives to cast themselves as statesmen, even at the risk of electoral retribution. Yet most don’t deviate very much, at least from state partisan attitudes. Representatives might do a better job of representing their entire constituency. It is easier for them to do so. The distance between the state party median and the center for the geographical constituency should be smaller in more homogenous constituencies. House members have protection against a big impact of issues by the distribution of voter preferences. In homogenous constituencies, statewide attitudes, partisan opinions, and elite values are more strongly related than in heterogenous electorates.²² This consensus makes issues less critical in House elections. Voters aren’t robbed of critical information when the media turn away from House

contests — often for their own reasons (House districts often don't correspond with media markets).

To complete the story of constituency dynamics we need to make the leap from representation to elections. Legislators from heterogeneous constituencies should pay a greater electoral price for their deviations. They don't. The correlation between pure personal ideology and November vote share is virtually zero for heterogeneous electorates ($r = .069$) and modest for homogeneous constituencies ($r = -.242$). I resolve this puzzling pattern by looking at the partisan connections. Northern Democrats with homogeneous electorates pay a big price for being liberal ($r = -.669$), while their values don't hurt at all in heterogeneous constituencies ($r = -.021$). Republicans lose votes when they are too conservative in both environments but lose slightly more in heterogeneous states ($r = .365$, compared to $r = .276$). Homogeneous states are conservative. They are kinder to GOP legislators on the right than to Northern Democrats on the left. There are both liberal and conservative "safe" and homogeneous constituencies in the House, so we might expect that the overall correlation between pure personal ideology and electoral success would be higher in heterogeneous districts.

The Senate is an ideal laboratory for examining how the nature of constituencies shapes both representation and elections. Personal ideology should be more important in the Senate than in the House, given the six-year term and the professed independence of senators (at least compared to representatives). The 1978–82 election cycle also provides a fine test of representation. In 1978, almost a quarter of incumbents lost, but legislators' personal ideology had a negligible impact on vote shares. Two years later, with Reagan at the top of the GOP ticket, 35 percent of incumbents lost, with a somewhat greater impact for ideology. In 1982, 93 percent of incumbents won, largely deflecting the impact of issues.²³

Issues matter in elections because issues matter to politicians and to voters. Representation works. And it works at the beginning of the tie between legislators and constituents, where it counts most: Most incumbents don't need to converge to public opinion. They already agree with it. Almost all elected officials stay close to state party attitudes. When voters apply electoral sanctions, they correct their own "mistakes." They punish legislators who are out of step with their various electorates, from the geographical constituency to core partisan supporters. The legislators who pay the price may be "profiles in courage." They are neither liars nor turncoats. They did not campaign right and vote left (at

least most of the time). These members usually represent minority political coalitions in their states. And whatever we think of their courage or their ideologies, their electoral tenure was in jeopardy from the outset. If voters got their preferences right the first time, there would be no impact of roll call behavior on general-election outcomes. It speaks well of a rational electorate that the impacts are modest and selective and that senators reflect their constituencies well.

We can eat our cake and have it too: Politicians do care about issues. Competing candidates largely take different positions from each other. And yet victorious candidates are generally more in accord with public attitudes than the challengers who lose. Candidates don't converge, but they do.

This is precisely what we would expect if ideology were a *shared belief system*. If it weren't, our politics would have hundreds of dimensions, little coherence, and an awful lot of personal ideologies. In a less coherent world of multiple issue dimensions, politicians would find themselves constantly threatened. Any incumbent can always be defeated by a coalition of minorities (Downs 1957, 55–60), which almost inevitably results from multiple dimensions (McKelvey 1976). Ideological straight fights bring stability to politics (Black 1958). They also make political battles more fun. No wonder both voters and public officials don't run away from issues.