The Importance of Committee Assignments for Legislative Effectiveness♠

Darrian Stacy, Vanderbilt University
Craig Volden, University of Virginia
Alan E. Wiseman, Vanderbilt University

March 2019

Abstract

How crucial is a lawmaker's committee assignment for the advancement of her proposed bills through the legislative process? We leverage incidents of committee exile, meaning the involuntary removal from a committee by a committee member after her party suffers significant electoral losses, to explore whether legislators are more or less successful at advancing their agenda items, depending on the committees on which they serve. Our analysis reveals that exiled lawmakers are significantly less successful at advancing their policy agendas in subsequent Congresses than their closest non-exiled co-partisans, effects that slowly fade over succeeding Congresses. Moreover, those exiled from specific committees perform much worse on the issue areas that serve as the focus of those committees. Hence, it appears that being exiled from a committee can have lasting consequences for a legislator's trajectory as an effective lawmaker and the issue areas on which she experiences the greatest success. More broadly considered, our findings suggest that a legislator's committee assignments do indeed have a profound influence over her effectiveness as a lawmaker.

Congressional committee assignments have long been seen as facilitating

Representatives' reelection goals, enhancing their power within the chamber, and aiding their

advancement of "good" public policy (*i.e.*, Fenno 1973). Exactly how these benefits arise has

been much more difficult to establish. The challenge comes in attempting to disentangle the

committee-specific and Representative-specific effects of committee membership on the

lawmaking process, and legislative and electoral outcomes. Bluntly stated, if one observes

variations in a Representative's legislative success that correspond to her committee

membership, it is unclear whether these variations are due to the committee upon which a

Representative sits, or due to the Representative's latent drive and skill, which might be linked to

the committee portfolio that she is granted.

In this paper, we seek to engage with a very straightforward question: how important is

committee membership for the advancement of a Representative's legislative agenda items in the

contemporary Congress? We sidestep the methodological complications alluded to above by

employing a relatively novel empirical strategy that allows us to distinguish between the

Representative-specific and committee-specific effects of committee membership on the

lawmaking process. More specifically, we draw on data on committee exiles, meaning the

Representatives who involuntarily lose their committee seats when their party loses control of

the chamber, in order to assess the extent to which a Representative's lawmaking effectiveness is

directly attributable to her membership on committees.

Conventional wisdom would suggest that being exiled from a committee has a

detrimental effect on one's lawmaking effectiveness. After losing her seat on the Appropriations

Committee in the 104th Congress, for example, Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) described her decline in

policy influence as "substantively...a loss of areas and efforts that [she] had been working on"

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(Grimmer and Powell 2013). Even more recently, in the beginning of the 116th Congress, Republican leaders removed Rep. Steve King (R-IA) from all of his committee assignments, following his controversial statements in support of white nationalism. Many observers of Congress were quick to note that his removal from his committees, particularly the Agriculture and Judiciary committees, would provide him with notably fewer opportunities to engage with issues relevant to his Iowan constituents (Wootson 2019).

While these incidents of committee exile are somewhat uncommon, they occur in sufficiently large numbers so as to facilitate meaningful empirical tests regarding the lawmaking value of committee assignments. Specifically, we move beyond anecdotal evidence of the impact of exile by drawing on data of all committee exiles from the 104th and 112th Congresses, when the Democratic Party moved from the majority to the minority party in the House, to compare the legislative effectiveness of exiled Representatives to that of their most similar non-exiled co-partisans. Our results indicate that exiled members are significantly less effective in lawmaking than their non-exiled counterparts, and this decrease in legislative effectiveness is largely due to their proposed bills receiving less attention in committees (and being less successful in advancing out of committee) than the bills that are proposed by those who retained their seats. At a more granular level, we also find that exiled Representatives are generally less effective at advancing bills in those policy areas that fell under the jurisdictions of their previous committees.

While our relatively small sample size might limit the generality of our findings, our results do point to many potentially important lessons about the role of committee membership on the lawmaking process. First, as might be expected, committee assignments are profoundly related to a Representative's lawmaking effectiveness. Beyond this broad point, however, our

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results collectively suggest that committee assignments are closely linked to a Representative's access to a committee's policy agenda, such that Representatives will struggle to advance their initiatives through the committee stage if they do not hold seats on the committees that deal with their policies of interest. In addition, our results suggest that assignment to various committees (or lack thereof) ultimately influences a Representative's short-term and longer-term trajectory as an effective lawmaker in Congress. Taken together, these results highlight the importance of committee assignments to one's legislative effectiveness, which implies that Representatives (and newly-elected Representatives, in particular) should approach the committee request and assignment process with an eye to their lawmaking objectives as well as their other goals, such as reelection or prestige.

Theoretical Motivation

Early insights about the fundamental importance of committees to the lawmaking process can be found in Woodrow Wilson's (1885) seminal treatise on Congress, in which he argued that "Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition, while Congress in its committee rooms is Congress at work." Taken on its face, Wilson's quote (and the broader work from which it is drawn) would suggest that committees, and committee members by extension, have a disproportionate degree of influence over the legislation that falls under their jurisdictions. While Wilson's observation might seem to be a relatively innocuous point, the precise nature of committee influence over the lawmaking process has been the subject of a substantial scholarly debate.

Denzau and McKay (1983), as well as Maltzman (1997) and Snyder (1992), for example, have argued that committees are influential in the lawmaking process largely due to their abilities to control the legislative agenda, whereby only those bills that the committee decides to advance

further in the legislative process are ever considered by the chamber. Weingast and Marshall (1988), in advancing their distributive theory of legislative organization, argue that committees exist to facilitate gains from exchange among legislators, and by dividing up the policy realm into distinct subunits (committees), where each committee has monopoly control over the policy agenda in its issue space, legislators can achieve policy outcomes that are more desirable that would be obtained in the absence of the committee system. Gilligan and Krehbiel (1987, 1990) and Krehbiel (1991), in contrast, advance an informational theory of committees, whereby committees exist largely to produce a highly costly collective good—information about the policy consequences of different proposed bills. Through their creation of this valuable information, the chamber as a whole can obtain policies that yield more desirable outcomes compared to what would occur without such expertise.

While these (and other) perspectives on the role and function of congressional committees differ in their underlying assumptions and conclusions, they all embrace the fundamental importance of committees, as institutions, to the lawmaking process. What is less clear, however, is whether individual Representatives, in their capacity as rank-and-file committee members, can exhibit agency over the lawmaking process in ways that are not possible for non-committee members. Recent work by Berry and Fowler (2018) suggests that holding a seat on any given committee does not influence a Representative's legislative effectiveness, *per se*. Instead, what matters is whether a Representative holds a committee chair (or subcommittee chair), as these—and not rank-and-file—legislators can meaningfully influence the progression of different bills through the legislative process.

While Berry and Fowler's analysis is compelling from a methodological perspective, the substantive implications of their work fail to comport with other perspectives in the extant

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literature that are equally compelling. Krozner and Stratmann (2005), for example, argue that the committee structure in Congress provides clear incentives for legislators to invest in their committee service and specialize, so as to develop long-term reputations for being able to advance legislation in the areas of their committees' jurisdictions. Moreover, corporate campaign contributions appear to follow a pattern consistent with the logic of their argument. More recent work by Powell and Grimmer (2016) likewise demonstrates that those members who are involuntarily exiled from committees experience a decrease in contributions from Political Action Committees (PACs) that have interests related to the committees on which they formerly sat. In addition, Powell and Grimmer show that these PACs likewise redirect their contributions to newly-seated committee members, who presumably have greater influence over legislation that affects the industries that these PACs represent. Taken together, these findings suggest that those who have a material interest in understanding who is influential in congressional lawmaking (i.e., industry PACs) seem to believe that rank-and-file lawmakers can exhibit influence over the bills that are being considered by their committees.

From a more qualitative perspective, Volden and Wiseman (2014, 178-182) point to several cases in which "highly effective rank-and-file lawmakers" leveraged their committee positions in ways that enhanced their legislative effectiveness. In recognizing the substantive areas that fell under the jurisdictions of their committees and subcommittees, these Representatives proposed bills that disproportionately fell under their committees' jurisdictions, and experienced greater success in advancing their bills in comparison to some other legislators who pursued a less committee-focused bill introduction strategy. While Volden and Wiseman's analysis focuses on a handful of cases, they suggest that these cases are representative of a broader pattern of activity wherein Representatives do, in fact, exhibit agency over the course

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that their bills take within their own committees. Hence, we expect that Representatives who retain their committee seats across Congresses will experience greater legislative effectiveness than those Representatives who are involuntarily removed from their committees, thereby losing a direct channel for political influence over the legislative process. Taken together, these insights motivate the following research hypothesis:

> **H1: Exile and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis:** *Representatives who involuntarily lose a committee assignment will be less effective in advancing their legislative agendas than their co-partisan colleagues who retain their committee seats.*

The null hypothesis that we seek to reject in testing H1 is that there is essentially no difference in the legislative effectiveness between exiled and non-exiled members of Congress; a perspective that would be entirely consistent with Berry and Fowler's recent analysis.

Moving beyond the aggregate effects of committee exile on legislative effectiveness, a consideration of the extant literature suggests that exiled legislators should especially feel the effects of their exile in their efforts to advance legislation in those policy areas that are most closely related to the committees from which they were exiled. Whether it is because committees act as the monopoly suppliers of policy that fall under their jurisdictions (*i.e.*, Weingast and Marshall 1988), or simply because committee members enjoy advantages, in terms of information, staff, and lines of political communication that subsidize the high costs that come with advancing legislation in a particular area (*i.e.*, Hall 1998), we would expect that exiled committee members should be notably less successful at advancing bills in the substantive areas of the committees from which they have been exiled (in comparison to those legislators who remain on the committee). This logic motivates our second research hypothesis.

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H2: Exile and Specialization Hypothesis: *Representatives who involuntarily lose a preferred committee assignment will be less effective in advancing their legislative agendas in policy areas that fall under the jurisdictions of their previous committees, in comparison to their co-partisans who retain their seats.*

Similar to H1 above, the null hypothesis that we seek to reject in testing H2 is that there is no difference between the legislative effectiveness of an exiled Representative in advancing bills in the areas that are most closely related to the jurisdiction of the committee from which he was exiled (in comparison to the rank-and-file Representatives who remain). Such a finding would be entirely consistent with the argument that rank-and-file Representatives have very little influence over a bill's fate in committee; such that being a member of a given committee does not yield any clear advantages to a Representative who seeks to advance a new policy in that area.

Data and Research Design

One major challenge in estimating the effects of sitting on a particular committee is the need to account for all of the variables that influence the committee assignment process in the first place. Some characteristics, such as seniority or party loyalty, are easily observable. Other variables, however, such as a Representative's latent political skill, her areas of greatest interest, or her personal relationship with party leaders, are not easily observed; yet they could plausibly influence the committee assignment process. To engage with these challenges in order to test our hypotheses, we adopt a similar methodology to that employed by Grimmer and Powell (2013) and Powell and Grimmer (2016), who use the incidence of legislators being exiled from committees to estimate the effect of committee assignments on lawmaker behavior in a variety of contexts. Grimmer and Powell identify exiles as Representatives who involuntarily lose a committee assignment at the beginning of a new Congress, due to a shortage of seats for

returning members of the affected party. To the extent that exiled members are likely similar on unmeasured characteristics to their co-partisans who remain on the same committee in the same Congress, comparing the legislative effectiveness of exiles to their non-exiled co-partisans allows us to assess the value of holding onto one's committee portfolio on the ability to advance one's legislative agenda.

To test our hypotheses, we estimate a series of Ordinary Least Squares regressions, where the dependent variable is a Representative's Legislative Effectiveness Score (Volden and Wiseman 2014) in Congress t, and the indicator of interest is whether a legislator was exiled from a committee on which she served in the previous Congress. As described in Volden and Wiseman (2014, 18), a Representative's Legislative Effectiveness Score (LES) is a parsimonious indicator that captures "the proven ability to advance a member's agenda items through the legislative process and into law." Our data on exiles is drawn from Grimmer and Powell (2013) with a few modifications. Specifically, we only analyze data from the two Congresses with the largest number of exiled lawmakers: the Congress following the Republican Revolution of the 1994 elections (104th Congress, $n = 45$), and the Congress following the heavy Democratic losses in the 2010 elections (112th Congress, $n = 78$).[1] We present the total number of exiles, by committee, for both Congresses that are used in our analysis in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

We choose to focus only on these two Congresses for several reasons. First, we examine the effects of committee exile among Democrats because employing the exile data to gain causal leverage over outcomes is most appropriate if Grimmer and Powell's (2013) identification

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[1] We also remove one observation of Rep. Rosa DeLauro from the original Grimmer and Powell data, as she lost her seat on the Budget committee due to term limits after the 111th Congress, not due to exile, *per se*. House Rule X, clause 5(a)(2)(B) states: "a member of the Committee on the Budget may not serve on the committee during more than four congresses in a period of six successive congresses."

assumption that committee exile is determined by committee seniority holds. While they point to interviews and statements from members and Democratic Party leaders (as well as difference-in-means tests) to support the assumption that both parties exile their most-junior committee members when committee adjustments are necessary, our analysis suggests that only Democrats strictly adhere to this seniority norm when determining which members will be exiled. More specifically, across the Grimmer and Powell data, Democratic exiles have significantly less committee seniority, as well as chamber seniority, than their counterparts who remain on their committees.

The same findings are not obtained, however, for Republican exiles. In the 110th Congress, for example, nearly 70% of Republican exiles came from committees where a more junior member should have been exiled instead, had the Republican Party been following the seniority norm. Violation of the seniority norm assumption suggests that we are uncertain about what criteria were employed to select exiles; and for Republicans, it is plausible that whatever selection mechanism was employed was also related to these Republicans' lawmaking effectiveness. Given the ambiguity regarding the relationship between the selection mechanism and lawmaking effectiveness for Republicans, we choose to focus solely on Democrats in our analysis.

Second, while exile mainly occurs among minority parties, there are a very few instances of majority-party committee exile. In our analysis we focus on committee exile among minority parties where the effects are most likely observable, given the total number of exiled lawmakers and the diversity of committees that had exiles.

As alluded to above, our research design leverages committee exile to estimate how committee assignments affect legislative effectiveness. In doing so, we essentially use non-exiled

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co-partisan lawmakers as the "control" group. In their paper, Grimmer and Powell (2013) show that their treatment (*i.e.*, exile) and control groups are very similar along pre-treatment covariates; and for the main parts of our analysis we mitigate further potential bias by limiting the size of the control group through matching. That is, instead of including every co-partisan who remains on a committee (up to the former committee chair) in the control group, we compare exiles with the legislators who they are most similar to, in relative rank on the committee and seniority in the chamber, who remain on the committee. Our findings are consistent for many different matched samples, but here we focus on two particular samples: nearest-neighbor 1:1 matching with no dropped observations, and nearest-neighbor 1:1 matching with dropped unmatched observations. The former represents our preferred sample, given that it retains every identifiable exile in our data while only modestly reducing the imbalance in the relative rank and seniority among exiled and non-exiled members on the same committee, within the same congress.

We present the covariate balance of our sample in Figure 1 before (unadjusted) and after (adjusted) nearest-neighbor 1:1 matching, with no dropped unmatched observations.

[Figure 1 about here]

As is evident in the figure, this method improves the balance in the variables that are otherwise imbalanced by design (seniority and relative rank), thereby making comparisons between exiles and non-exiles more appropriate (Rosenbaum and Rubin 1985). In addition, we also demonstrate that the LES of exiles and non-exiles on the same committee, within the same Congress, are similar before exile occurs (average mean difference < 30%), and that they are almost indistinguishable after matching, thereby demonstrating further that exiled and non-exiled lawmakers are similar on dimensions that would likely contribute to lawmaking success.

To account for committees that have a greater ratio of exiled lawmakers than those who remain, the matching algorithm duplicates and adds observations (based on relative rank and seniority) to the group of lawmakers who remain—our control group. This procedure essentially allows us to compare every exiled lawmaker in our sample with her closest co-partisan who remains, even if there is no close match available. In reality, however, some exiled lawmakers, particularly those more junior legislators from committees with few returning members, have no close co-partisans remaining on their committee. Hence, to address this potential bias in our previous models, we also use 1:1 nearest-neighbor matched sample, but we drop all unmatched exiled lawmakers (n = 17). This coding choice further improves balance on relative rank and seniority between those exiles with unique matches in the data (n = 106), but it also has the smallest sample size of any of our models.

In addition to these data, we also control for a Representative's *Relative rank* on the committee, which is closely related to the selection process of committee exiles, in addition to a Representative's *Seniority* in the chamber (and its squared value), as measured by the number of terms that a member has served in Congress. In some of the analyses that follow, we also control for several variables that are known to be correlated with a Representative's LES, including various demographic variables, the scope of a Representative's prior state legislative experience, and other institutional and personal considerations.[2] All of these data are drawn from Volden and Wiseman (2018). Finally, in many of our models, we also include committee and Congress fixed effects.

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[2] More specifically, we control for whether a Representative is female, African-American, or Latino. We control for whether a Representative served in a state legislature, as well as an interaction variable, state legislative experience x legislative professionalism (as measured by the Squire 1992 index), and the size of the Representative's congressional delegation. We also control for the Representative's ideological distance from the chamber median (as measured in DW-NOMINATE scores), whether she sat on a power committee, and the Representative's vote-share and vote-share squared, from her previous election.

Findings

In testing our first Hypothesis, the *Exile and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis*, we seek to identify whether legislators who are involuntarily removed from their committees following the previous Congress are less successful at advancing their agendas in the current Congress. We present a direct test of this hypothesis in the analysis in Table 2, where the dependent variable in all three models is Representative *i*'s LES in Congress *t*, and the crucial indicator variable is an indicator that equals "1" if a Representative was exiled from a committee upon which she sat in the preceding Congress. We pool together data from the 104th and 112th Congresses in all specifications, which vary depending on the particular sample being analyzed. More specifically, in Model 1, we compare all exiled Representatives with all non-exiled co-partisan Representatives who sat on the same committee within the same Congress (without matching), while also controlling for a Representative's seniority (*i.e.*, the number of terms that a Representative served in the House), seniority squared, and a Representative's relative rank on a committee. We also control for several additional covariates that were identified by Volden and Wiseman (2014, 2018) to be correlated with the LES.

[Table 2 about here]

Our results in Model 1 suggest that the average exiled Representative lawmaker is less effective in advancing her agenda than the average non-exiled co-partisan counterpart, and this result is on the cusp of statistical significance (*t-stat= 1.47*). In Models 2 and 3, when we employ the matching processes that we describe above, we see that the effect becomes more pronounced in the data. More specifically, when we estimate our model on a 1:1 nearest neighbor matched sample in which exiled lawmakers are compared solely with their most similar co-partisan colleagues (Model 2), we find that exiled lawmakers are approximately 22% less

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effective than their closest non-exiled co-partisans ($p < 0.1$).[3] Likewise, when we estimate our

model on our most balanced sample in Model 3, in which we remove the potential bias that could

be caused by including exiles who have no similar co-partisans remaining on the same

committee, we see that the negative coefficient on exile is larger in magnitude than the preceding

specifications, and obtains statistical significance by conventional standards ($p < 0.05$). These

results suggest that exiled Representatives have LES scores that are 29% lower than their closest

co-partisans who were not exiled.[4] Taken together, these results support H1 and suggest that

retaining one's committee assignments benefits Representatives in their efforts to advance their

legislative agenda items.

Having demonstrated that being exiled from a committee contributes to a decrease in a

Representative's legislative effectiveness, a natural follow-up question that emerges is: why? Do

these exiled members decide to introduce fewer bills, in response to being removed from a

committee? Alternatively, do they continue to introduce the same number of bills, compared to

non-exiles, but their bills are met with different fates at later stages in the legislative process? To

engage with these questions, we conduct five separate Ordinary Least Squares regressions on the

1:1 nearest-neighbor matched sample with no dropped observations, where the dependent

variables in each of the models are the number of bills that a Representative has in each of the

five stages of the lawmaking process that serve as components of Volden and Wiseman's LES:

the number of bills that a Representative introduces (BILLS), the number of those bills that

receive any sort of Action in Committee (AIC), the number of her bills that receive any sort of

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[3] The average LES of the non-exiled Representatives in model (2) is 0.431. Hence, $100 \times (0.093/0.4305) = 21.58$; which implies that exiled Representatives have Legislative Effectiveness Scores that are approximately 22% less than their non-exiled counterparts.
[4] The average LES of the non-exiled Representatives in model (3) is 0.481. Hence, $100 \times (0.140/0.481) = 29.10$; which implies that exiled Representatives have Legislative Effectiveness Scores that are approximately 29% less than their non-exiled counterparts.

Action Beyond Committee (ABC), the number of her bills that pass the House (PASS), and the

number of her bills that become Law (LAW).[5]

As was the case with the models in Table 2, the crucial independent variable is an

indicator for whether a Representative was exiled from committee. We interpret the coefficient

on *Exile* in each of these regressions to be the marginal impact of being exiled on the number of

bills a Representative introduces in a Congress, the number of her bills that receive any sort of

action in committee, and the like. For the purposes of illustration, we also conduct separate

regressions on the total number of bills that are introduced "All Bills" as well as the number of

bills in each of the substantive categories that are used by Volden and Wiseman in their coding

protocol: commemorative, substantive, and substantive and significant bills.

[Figure 2 about here]

We present the regression coefficients on *Exile* from each of these models in Figure 2;

and one finding that clearly emerges from this analysis is that it does not appear to be the case

that exiled lawmakers generally introduce fewer bills than their closest co-partisans who stay on

their committees. One exception to this finding is that exiled lawmakers do appear to introduce

fewer substantive and significant bills compared to non-exiled lawmakers; but the magnitude of

this effect is quite small. In contrast, we do find that despite introducing (essentially) the same

number of bills as those co-partisan legislators who retained their committee seats, exiled

Representatives experience less success in advancing their bills through committee. In

comparison to non-exiled co-partisans, exiled Representatives see approximately 0.3 fewer bills

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[5] More specifically, a Representative is in the sample for the AIC and ABC models if she introduced at least one bill (i.e., BILLS > 0); a Representative is in the sample for the PASS model if she had at least one bill receive Action Beyond Committee (i.e., ABC > 0), and a Representative is in the sample for the LAW model if she had at least one bill pass the House (i.e., PASS > 0). Our results are substantively unchanged if we analyze samples that consist of all Representatives, regardless of whether they had bills that were potentially viable for advancing further in the given stage being analyzed in each model's specification (e.g., estimating the AIC specification and including Representatives for which BILLS = 0).

receive any action in committee (AIC) and receive action beyond committee (ABC). While these findings appear to be quite small in magnitude, it is important to remember that it is extremely challenging for a minority party member to advance her bills through the legislative process. More specifically, the average minority party member in our sample sees 0.764 of her bills receive any action in committee, and 0.534 bills receive any action beyond committee. Hence, a reduction of 0.3 bills receiving action in committee and/or action beyond committee, as a result of being exiled from a committee, represents a substantial (approximately 50%) decrease in the scope of a minority party member's success in advancing her bills through the committee deliberation process.

Putting these differences aside, it is also worth noting that conditional on getting their bills through committee, the proposals of exiles and non-exiles are essentially treated the same by the House, in regards to prospects for passage, and in later stages that could culminate in the bill becoming law. Taken together, these findings suggest that a Representative's decrease in legislative effectiveness likely stem not from them strategically choosing their agenda in response to being exiled (whereby they might introduce fewer bills following exile), but rather from their bills receiving less attention in the intermediate stages of lawmaking—those stages for which committee membership is particularly important, as Representatives seek to build coalitions to move their proposals through different committee-level gatekeepers.

Having demonstrated that exiles are less effective than non-exiles in the Congress following exile, a natural question to ask is whether this decrease in legislative effectiveness is essentially a one-time blip that Representatives adjust to in subsequent Congresses, or whether committee exile has longer-term effects over a Representative's lawmaking career. To engage with this question, we present regression analysis in Table 3 where the dependent variable is

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Representative *i*'s LES in Congress *t*, and the sample consists of all exiles and their closest co-partisans in a 1:1 matched sample in the Congress that they were exiled, as well as the two following Congresses. Our main variables of interest are the coefficients on *Exiled Two Congresses Ago* and *Exiled Three Congresses Ago*, which identify the marginal effect of being exiled from a committee she served on two and three Congresses prior, respectively, on a Representative's LES in the current Congress. If exile has long-lasting (detrimental) effects on one's lawmaking effectiveness, we would expect that both of these coefficients would be negative. In contrast, a null finding would suggest that Representatives are able to bounce back from a one-time shock to their lawmaking effectiveness following committee exile, such that they are indistinguishable from their closest co-partisans in subsequent Congresses.

[Table 3 about here]

Consistent with our earlier analysis, we see that the coefficient on *Exiled Last Congress* is negative and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). We also see that the coefficients on our other independent variables of interest are both negative, yet they fail to obtain statistical significance by conventional standards. That said, it is worth noting that the coefficient on *Exiled Two Congresses Ago* is on the cusp of statistical significance (t-stat of 1.44), which suggests that, while committee exile might not have long-term consequences for a Representative's legislative effectiveness, it takes some time (*i.e.*, a couple of Congresses) for an exiled lawmaker to adjust to her new committee portfolio as she strives to advance her legislative initiatives.

Turning to Hypothesis 2, the *Exile and Specialization Hypothesis*, we seek to identify whether there is a clear relationship between being exiled from a committee and a Representative's success in advancing bills that are most clearly related to the jurisdiction from which she was exiled. To engage with this question, we employ the Interest and Legislative

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Effectiveness Scores (ILES) that were developed and employed by Volden and Wiseman (2011, 2014, 2016) in their analysis of Representatives' legislative effectiveness in particular substantive areas. More specifically, drawing on the Congressional Bills Project coding protocol (Adler and Wilkerson 2013), which categorizes all public bills into one of nineteen policy areas, Volden and Wiseman employ the same methodology that they use to generate Legislative Effectiveness Scores within each of the nineteen different issue areas. Hence, a Representative's Banking ILES, for example, is a parsimonious indicator of how successful a Representative was in a given Congress at advancing those bills that she introduced that engaged with banking and finance matters (as coded by the Congressional Bills Project), in comparison to all other members of the House, where each bill is likewise coded for relative substantive significance.

Drawing on these data, we begin by identifying those ILES areas that are most clearly relevant to the jurisdictions of the authorizing committees from which Democratic Representatives were exiled in the 104th and 112th Congresses. While not every committee that is identified in Table 1 clearly maps onto the Congressional Bills Project coding protocol, we argue that nine of these fifteen committees map quite closely onto the ILES areas. More specifically, we match the House Committee on Financial Services with Banking ILES, the House Committee on Education and Labor with Education ILES, the House Committee on Natural Resources with Public Lands ILES, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce with Energy ILES, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs with International Affairs ILES, the House Committee on Government Operations with Government Operations ILES, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence with Defense ILES, the House Budget Committee with the Macroeconomics ILES, and the House Judiciary Committee with the Law and Crime ILES.

Having identified the ILES areas that correspond most closely to the jurisdictions of the

relevant committees in our sample, we pool together the data from all Representatives' ILES

scores in the 104th and 112th Congresses, and we estimate a series of Ordinary Least Squares

regressions, where the dependent variable is Representative *i*'s ILES for a particular policy area,

and the crucial independent variables of interest are a dummy for *Exile*, and an interaction

variable, *Exile × Committee_name*, which takes on a value of "1" if the Representative was

exiled from the committee that corresponds to the dependent variable, and "0" otherwise.

Turning to Table 4, Model 1, for example, the dependent variable of analysis is Representative

i's BankLES in Congress *t* (where *t* = 104, 112), *exile* takes on a value of "1" if Representative *i*

was exiled from any committee in Congress *t*, and *exile x financial services* takes on a value of

"1" if Representative *i* was exiled from the financial services committee in Congress *t*.

Rather than employ matching analysis, we estimate our model on the full sample of all

Representatives in each Congress. We choose to engage in more conventional regression

analyses due to data limitations that follow from the small number of legislators who are exiled

from each particular committee in our sample, and the fact that ILES scores, while still

normalized to take an average value of "1" within each Congress, exhibit significant variation, in

comparison to LES scores. Hence, if we chose to employ the same type of matching analysis

that we presented in Tables 2 and 3, we would be slicing the data extremely thin; and we would

not be entirely confident with the inferences that could be drawn from such analysis.[6] While

estimating an Ordinary Least Squares regression on the complete sample of legislators might

limit the extent to which we can draw inferences regarding the causal mechanisms underlying

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[6] Indeed, estimating a series of Ordinary Least Squares regressions on a 1:1 nearest neighbor matched sample (with
no dropped observations) for each committee yields largely inconclusive findings due (at least in part) to small
sample sizes.

changes in legislative effectiveness following committee exile, we would hope that by controlling for the usual covariates of legislative effectiveness, we can (at least) uncover a robust empirical relationship that is consistent, in spirit, to the analysis that we conduct above.[7]

Turning to our analysis, if H2 holds, then we would expect that the coefficient on *Exile* in each of our specifications should be indistinguishable from zero, while the coefficient on *Exile* × *Committee_name* should be negative and statistically significant across all specifications. Such findings would be consistent with the argument that being exiled from a committee does not harm one's ability to advance legislation in any particular substantive area, *per se*, unless a Representative has been exiled from a committee that has direct jurisdiction over that policy space.

[Table 4 about here]

Consistent with this argument, we see that across each of the nine specifications in Table 4, the coefficient on *Exile* is, indeed, statistically indistinguishable from zero. In contrast, we see that for eight of the nine specifications, the coefficient on the relevant interaction variable is negative as hypothesized; and statistically significant by conventional standards in four cases: education, natural resources, foreign affairs, and judiciary. While not conclusive, the analysis in Table 4 suggests that Representatives who are exiled from committees are less successful at advancing bills that fall precisely under the jurisdiction of their prior committees. In light of our earlier analysis in which we demonstrated that exiles and non-exiles are not systematically introducing different numbers of bills, the findings in Table 4 suggest that committees represent a crucial gateway for legislators in the lawmaking process; and legislators who do not sit on

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[7] More specifically, in addition to controlling for the covariates that were employed in Table 2, we also control for whether a Representative is in the majority party, whether she holds a committee or subcommittee chair, whether she is the Speaker, whether she is a majority party leader, and whether she is in her Freshman term, in a manner analogous to Volden and Wiseman (2014).

various committees are going to be relatively less successful at advancing their agendas, because they lack access to that gateway.

Discussion and Conclusion

While all scholars (and more casual observers) of Congress would agree that committees are central to the lawmaking process, it is less clear how much membership on any particular committee helps rank-and-file lawmakers advance their legislative agendas. Which committee a Representative requests a seat on, as well as which committees she is ultimately appointed to, is a strategic decision on the part of the Representative, her party leaders, and (technically speaking) the chamber as a whole. Hence, simply observing that a Representative sits on a given committee, and is more or less effective than another Representative who sits on a different committee, might be reflective of the Representative's relative legislative effectiveness, her committee assignments, and/or the opportunities that are presented to (or withheld from) her by party leaders who choose to assign her to particular committees, given her underlying legislative effectiveness. All said, disentangling these different effects can be extremely challenging for anyone who seeks to understand the relationship between committee membership and legislative effectiveness.

By focusing on those cases where Representatives are involuntarily removed from their committee assignments, as a function of a straightforward seniority rule—being exiled from committee—we are able to assess whether there is a direct relationship between a Representative's committee assignment(s) and her legislative effectiveness in a way that is lacking in the extant literature. Our findings suggest that those Representatives who are exiled from a committees are between 22-29% less effective, as measured by their Legislative Effectiveness Scores, at advancing their agendas, in comparison to their co-partisans who retain

their seats on their former committees. These effects are substantively meaningful, and they transcend the initial congress of exile, such that exiled Representatives continue to be less effective than their non-exiled co-partisans in subsequent congresses. In addition to these aggregate findings, we also see that those Representatives who are exiled from committees perform notably worse on advancing bills in those issue areas that fall under the jurisdiction of their former committees. Hence, regardless of what expertise they might have cultivated over their previous term as a committee member, it appears that their lack of direct access to committee proceedings, following their exile, compromises their ability to be a successful policy entrepreneur in these areas.

While these findings are instructive in their own right, they likewise point to further avenues for future research. For example, one wonders whether committee assignments matter due to the agenda-setting power of being on a committee, the opportunity to become (and the resources that facilitate becoming) a policy expert, or something else? While our results speak to some of these possibilities over others, further research would be constructive. Likewise, it would be interesting to explore how an exiled Representative's legislative agenda across different policy issues changes after being exiled. Does she continue to introduce the same types of bills, substantively speaking, as she did prior to exile? Does she, instead, diversify her issue portfolio to comport with her new committee portfolio? What steps does she take, such that she is (essentially, according to our results in Table 3) identical to her non-exiled co-partisans, two congresses post-exile? The answers to these questions will provide us with further guidance about the ways in which Representatives can, and do, leverage their committee assignments to advance their agendas and become effective lawmakers.

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Table 1: Exiles across Committees and Congresses

Committee	Congress 104th	Congress 112th	*Total*
Appropriations	6	5	11
Financial Services	5	0	5
Budget	8	11	19
Economic	1	0	1
Education	2	6	8
Ethics	1	0	1
Energy and Commerce	0	6	6
Foreign Affairs	6	12	18
Government Operations	0	4	4
House Admin	8	2	10
Intelligence	2	6	8
Judiciary	0	5	5
Natural Resources	0	8	8
Rules	3	7	10
Ways and Means	3	6	9
Total	45	78	123

Table 1 shows all instances of exile that occurred across committees for the 104th Congress and 112th Congresses.
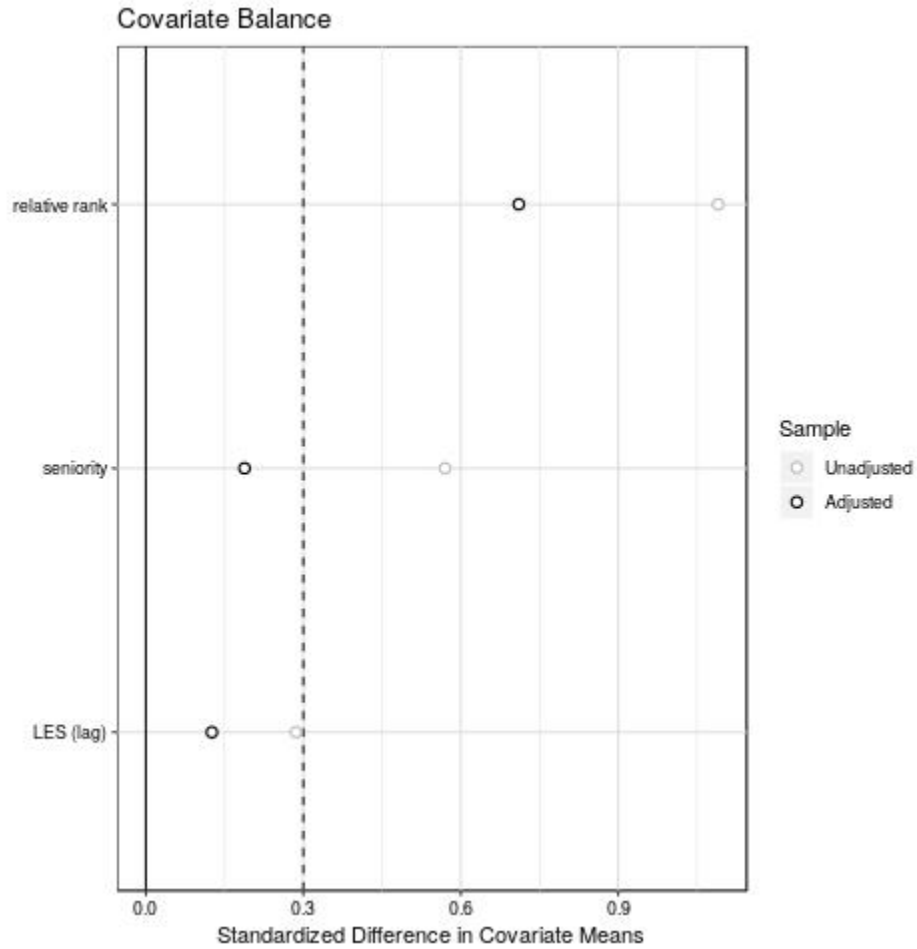
Figure 1: Covariate Balance

Figure 1 shows the absolute value of the difference between the average value for exiles minus the average value for non-exiles, standardized, for a given covariate before (unadjusted) and after (adjusted) nearest-neighbor 1:1 matching. We match exiles with their closest co-partisan members who remain on the same committee within the same Congress based on the relative rank and seniority of members, and this plot shows how matching improves balance on these variables that are imbalanced by design. While we do not match on lagged LES or include it in any of our analyses, we plot lagged LES here to show that matching also removes some of the imbalance of (pre-exile) LES between exiles and their non-exiled co-partisans.

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Table 2: The Consequences of Committee Exile for Lawmaker Effectiveness

	Dependent variable:		
	LES		
	Full Sample (1)	Nearest-neighbor 1:1 Matching (no dropped obs.) (2)	Nearest-neighbor 1:1 Matching (dropped unmatched obs.) (3)
Exile	-0.075	-0.093*	-0.140**
	(0.051)	(0.053)	(0.063)
Seniority	0.005	0.048	0.054
	(0.019)	(0.033)	(0.036)
Seniority^2	-0.0005	-0.003*	-0.004*
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Relative rank	0.042	0.212	0.148
	(0.128)	(0.157)	(0.180)
Constant	0.334	0.086	0.534
	(0.296)	(0.341)	(0.432)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	373	246	212
R^2	0.105	0.169	0.205

Note: $^*p < 0.1;$ $^{**}p < 0.05$.

Table 2 shows the effect of being exiled from a committee using Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis, where the dependent variable is a Representative's LES for (1) the full unmatched sample of exiles, (2) a matched sample that matches every exile with the single closest co-partisan who remained on the committee, and (3) a matched sample that excludes exiled members ($n = 17$) who have no close co-partisans remaining on the committee. For each model we include a vector of covariates to control for seniority (and seniority^2), relative rank, delegation size, state legislative experience (and its interaction with state legislature professionalism), minority leadership, distance from the median, previous vote share (and its squared value), membership on a power committee, female, African-American, Latino, and fixed effects for each committee and Congress. We find that, in general, exiled lawmakers are subsequently less effective in lawmaking than their co-partisans who remain on the same committee.

Figure 2: The Consequences of Committee Exile throughout the Lawmaking Process
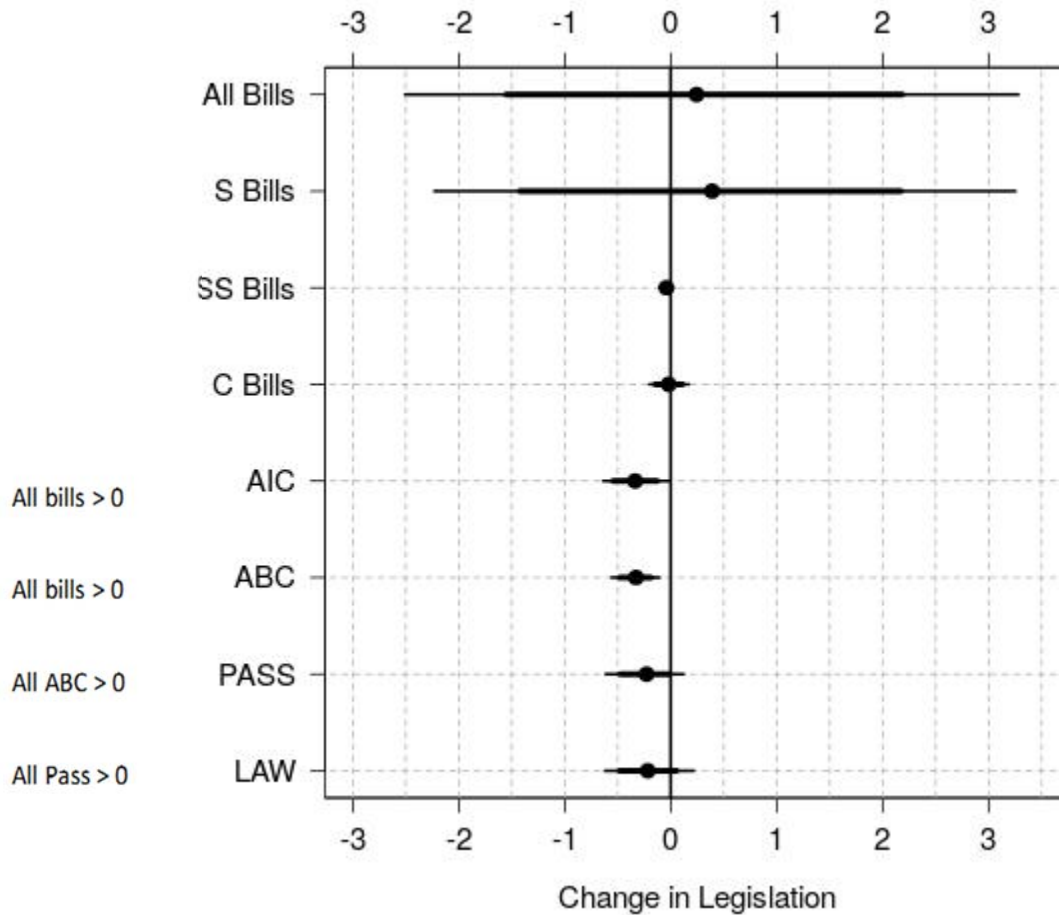

Figure 2 shows the effect of being exiled from a committee using Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis, where the dependent variables are: the number of bills that Representatives sponsor, including All bills, Substantive (S), Substantive and Significant (SS), or Commemorative (C); the number of their bills that receive action in committee (AIC); the number of their bills that make it beyond committee and to the floor of the House (ABC); the number of their bills that pass the House (PASS); and the number of their bills that become law (LAW). Here we use a nearest-neighbor 1:1 matched sample with no dropped observations, and our findings are robust to other specifications. For each model we include a vector of covariates to control for seniority (and seniority^2), relative rank, delegation size, state legislative experience (and its interaction with state legislature professionalism, minority leadership, distance from the median, previous vote share (and its squared value), membership on a power committee, female, African-American, Latino, and fixed effects for each committee and Congress. The point estimate and the 90 (thick) and 95 (thin) confidence intervals are presented. We find that proposals from exiled lawmakers are significantly less likely to receive action in committee or action beyond committee than their co-partisans who remain on the same committee.

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Table 3: The Consequences of Committee Exile on Lawmaker Effectiveness Over Time

	Dependent variable:
	LES
Exiled Last Congress	-0.102[**]
	(0.049)
Exiled Two Congresses Ago	-0.078
	(0.054)
Exiled Three Congresses Ago	-0.051
	(0.059)
Constant	0.449[**]
	(0.184)
Covariates	Yes
Committee Fixed Effects	Yes
Congress Fixed Effects	Yes
Observations	598
R^2	0.073

Note: [*]$p < 0.1;$ [**]$p < 0.05.$

Table 3 shows the effect of being exiled from a committee using Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis, where the dependent variable is a Representative's LES. We use a nearest-neighbor 1:1 matched sample, with no dropped observations, of all exiles and their closest remaining co-partisans in three congresses after the initial Congress when exile occurred, and we also include a vector of covariates to control for seniority (and seniority^2), relative rank, delegation size, state legislative experience (and its interaction with state legislature professionalism), minority leadership, distance from the median, previous vote share (and its squared value), membership on a power committee, female, African-American, Latino, and fixed effects for each committee and Congress. We also include indicator variables for whether members were exiled in the previous Congress, two Congresses ago, or three Congresses ago. We find that non-retired exiles are less effective at lawmaking in Congress directly following exile than their non-retired co-partisans who remain on the same committee, but our results fail to reach conventional levels of statistical significance for our variables that capture effectiveness in the subsequent Congresses.

Table 4: Authorizing Committee ILES

	Dependent variable: ILES								
	Banking	Education	Public Lands	Energy	International Affairs	Government Operations	Defense	Macro-economics	Law and Crime
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Exile	0.365	0.132	0.359	0.021	1.451	0.150	0.142	0.373	0.073
	(0.540)	(0.779)	(0.390)	(0.599)	(0.902)	(0.333)	(0.530)	(1.127)	(0.669)
Exile × *Financial Services*	-1.393 (1.318)								
Exile × *Education*		-3.847* (2.101)							
Exile × *Natural Resources*			-3.354*** (1.009)						
Exile × *Energy/Commerce*				-0.787 (1.342)					
Exile × *Foreign Affairs*					-7.802*** (2.166)				
Exile × *Gov Operations*						0.175 (1.215)			
Exile × *Intelligence*							-2.868 (2.001)		
Exile × *Budget*								-0.854 (2.908)	
Exile × *Judiciary*									-3.993* (1.830)
Constant	-0.768	-0.725	-0.447	0.302	-3.098	3.054***	1.839	-0.426	-0.830
	(1.236)	(1.805)	(0.897)	(1.353)	(2.048)	(0.794)	(1.266)	(2.602)	(1.617)
Covariates	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	881	881	881	881	881	881	881	881	881
R^2	0.097	0.082	0.161	0.049	0.144	0.181	0.178	0.111	0.035

Note: $^{*}p < 0.1$; $^{**}p < 0.05$; $^{***}p < 0.01$.

Table 4 shows the effect of being exiled from a committee using Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis, where the dependent variables are pooled measures of ILES for both the 104th and 112th Congresses. In these models, the pooled ILES is measured by pooling domain-specific ILES (BankingLES,

EducationLES, PublicLandsLES, EnergyLES, InternationalAffairsLES, DefenseLES, GovernmentOperationsLES, MacroeconomicsLES, and LawCrimeLES) that link to an authorizing committee in our data for every incumbent member in the House. We include a vector of covariates to control for seniority (and seniority^2), relative rank, majority status, delegation size, state legislative experience (and its interaction with state legislature professionalism), minority leadership, majority leadership, speaker, distance from the median, previous vote share (and its squared value), membership on a power committee, being a committee chair, being a subcommittee chair, freshman, female, African-American, and Latino. The interaction between *Exile* and each authorizing committee shows the marginal effect of being exiled from that committee on the Representative's ILES.