



The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Appropriations Process. by D. Roderick Kiewiet; Mathew D. McCubbins

Review by: Joseph White

Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 107, No. 1 (Spring, 1992), pp. 168-169

Published by: [The Academy of Political Science](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152152>

Accessed: 14/12/2011 04:48

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Academy of Political Science is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Political Science Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

(p. 297) testified, perhaps unexpectedly, to the strength of Chile's democratic traditions.

Members of Chile's political class have had years to meditate on the defects of the pre-1973 political game and to deplore the demagogic excesses and ideological extremism of that time. The inclusion of more of their self-critical assessments would have greatly added to the value of this work for political scientists (although it probably would have bored the general reader). For it is on the depth of the ideological and institutional transformations since 1973 that the fulfillment of Patricio Aylwin's promise to the Chilean people depends: "Never again will our differences convert us into enemies" (p. 316).

RHODA RABKIN
Cornell University

The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Appropriations Process
by D. Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew D. McCubbins. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991. 286 pp. Cloth, \$34.00; paper, \$12.95.

Kiewiet and McCubbins have written a wise and witty essay that will be useful to many political scientists. Its substantive concerns are the role of congressional parties and, somewhat tangentially, the appropriations process. Its analytic concern, the logic of delegation, gives it another dimension of interest, yet diminishes its usefulness on substance.

The authors identify the frequently supposed weakness of congressional parties with abdication of power to committees, the president, or the bureaucracy. Defining abdication as a principal-agent problem, they argue that delegation need not be abdication. They test the abdication hypothesis on the appropriations process, especially the House Appropriations Committee, arguing that who gets money for what is both partisan and measurable. They refine the test as whether the "guardian of the treasury" model of appropriations fits the process worse than a model that posits the majority party as agent. Finally, they discuss other aspects of delegation: are delegations of a budget-preparation role to the budget bureau and of budget execution to agencies evidence of party weakness? They think not.

One can cite only a few of the many valuable points Kiewiet and McCubbins make about authority in federal budgeting, the influence of parties in congressional procedure and policy outcomes, and delegation. Parties delegate because it can serve their interests. The guardian model was always flawed, and the party is a more plausible principal than the House. Partisan concerns pervaded historical battles over appropriations jurisdiction. Chapter 5, on committee and subcommittee assignments, is a superb piece of data analysis—though it mostly shows that neither guardianship nor party-control explain much. Chapter 6, on

conferences, is one of the best refutations yet of Kenneth Shepsle and Barry Weingast. Chapter 7 demonstrates partisan impact on spending decisions and provides grist for other arguments, such as the political-business cycle debate. The impoundment provisions of the 1974 Act *are* a net loss for Congress, which found a form of delegation that once fit its needs no longer did.

Yet some arguments seem forced. To say “the key rationale” (p. 39) for party organization in Congress is members’ investment in the party label contradicts the fact that much of what they do through their party organs is try to smudge the label. The guardian model did not predict self-selection of conservatives to the committee. Nor is it so current as they claim, and I do not think my dissertation (which the authors cite) supports it. The data in Chapter 6 hardly shows that the majority party is the beneficiary of conference committees (though it’s an interesting thought).

Because of the way they pose questions, the answers Kiewiet and McCubbins find might not have the implications they suggest. If the guardian model is wrong, a partisan model still might not be right. Parties might be weak because of difficulty forming, not enforcing, preferences. Power over committees need not be understood in principal-agent form; the full House could be just as important as the party, simply because the need to pass legislation constrains committee entrepreneurship. Since “agent” appropriators are paid by control over district benefits, they have incentives to satisfy both party and chamber on policy matters.

These objections mean only that this book is not, and is not meant to be, a basic text. Its significant data and arguments, fine writing, and original analysis should enlighten and engage any professor or graduate student interested in American politics, legislatures, budgeting, or formal theory.

JOSEPH WHITE
The Brookings Institution

The Feminization of Poverty: Only in America? edited by Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg and Eleanor Kremen. New York, Praeger, 1990. 231 pp. Cloth, \$45.00; paper, \$15.95.

This important and informative cross-national study begins with what might seem to be a paradox: as the women’s movement flourished in the 1960s and 1970s and American women entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, millions of women were falling into poverty. Goldberg, Kremen, and their coauthors examine the causes of what has come to be known as the feminization of poverty and raise the question of whether this phenomenon is unique to the United States or whether it exists in other industrialized countries. In each society—the United States, Canada, Japan, France, Sweden, Poland, and European Russia—the authors examine labor market factors; policies to promote the labor market