

Policy Choice as an Electoral Investment *

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Abstract. Traditional approaches to policy choice typically simplify their analysis by ignoring the question of internal constituency politics: constituencies are modelled simply as a single "generic" voter. We explicitly take into account how differential rates of participation and support by various groups in a legislator's constituency will influence the legislator's choice of policy. Viewing the choice of policy as essentially a question of redistribution of welfare, we argue that risk-averse politicians will attempt, not to be evenhanded toward all groups in their constituency, as some scholars have suggested, nor to direct benefits chiefly to swing groups, as has also been hypothesized, but rather, first and foremost, to maintain their current electoral coalition, and in particular, their "primary constituency".

In modelling the consequences of the "electoral connection", most theories have held a rather simplified notion of the electorate: models of legislative policy choice have implicitly assumed the electorate to be composed of like-minded uniform voters [11, 14, 15, 21, 29, 31, 32; for an exception, see 12]. In this paper, an attempt is made to draw out more explicitly some of the politics implicit in the electoral connection. As in Fenno [10], we assume that constituencies are not politically homogeneous, but rather comprise many politically distinct groups. The reelection-seeking legislator is viewed as appealing, by his policy choices, not to a uniform population of politically neutral voters, but rather to a constituency consisting of inveterate opponents, core supporters, independents, and so forth. Implicit in this approach is an intriguing proposition: that risk-averse reelection-seeking legislators will tend to make policy choices to benefit their primary constituency first, rather than be evenhanded to all groups or seek the support of swing groups.

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Reelection Incentives and Policy Choice

A significant difference between this model and previous efforts concerns our conception of policy choice. Most formal models have defined a policy or policy platform as a point in a Euclidean space of one or more dimensions, where each dimension was thought of as representing a particular issue of public policy (e.g., defense expenditures, acid rain) and positions on each dimension then corresponded to positions on each issue (the most natural correspondence being in terms of the dollars budgeted – e.g., for defense, or for investigation of acid rain). Electoral competition was then studied using the tools of game theory to describe equilibrium strategies in the policy space [5].

Alternatively, since the effect of any policy, viewed abstractly, is simply to impose costs or confer benefits on the various groups in the legislator's constituency; and since much of a Congressman's time may be spent on distributive or pork barrel legislation, or on "project facilitation" in the district, we shall view policies simply as targeted redistributions of welfare among the groups in the legislator's constituency. Let there be G distinct groups in the legislator's district, indexed $g = 1, \dots, G$; and let the number of members (or size) of the g th group be denoted n_g . We then have the following assumption:

Assumption 1: Legislators seek to maximize their expected vote tally, EV , through their choice of policy $w \in W \subseteq R^G$. For a particular policy w in W , w_g can be interpreted as the net change in the g th group's welfare that the policy will bring about.

Policy choice is, of course, a group choice and will reflect the structure of the collective choice institutions involved in the policy process. In Congress, the committee system provides the institutional agenda by which legislative policies are developed. The decentralized system of semiautonomous committees and subcommittees, on which membership is largely self-selected, establishes a framework in which much of the available power over a given policy issue is held by just a few congressmen who care the most about it and who share similar preferences concerning its outcome [see 3, 9, 28, 32, 34]. This near monopoly power granted subcommittees provides their members individually with extraordinary influence over the choice and implementation of policy. This tendency toward decentralized policy control is further strengthened through widely accepted norms of universalism and reciprocity, whereby members of different committees, interested in different policies, implicitly logroll across issues in order to guarantee majority support for their respective proposals [13, 30, 33]. Thus, though policy choice is a group decision, we will focus on the actions which a reelection-seeking legislator would take if he possessed decentralized policy control:

Assumption 2: Legislators possess decentralized policy control over the choice of policy, w , which affects their districts.

Obviously, this is a strong assumption. We defend it not so much on grounds of realism, as because it serves a useful analytic purpose in focusing attention on a purely motivational theory of policy choice. Our current objective is not to investigate the constraints which collective choice institutions put upon the strategies of legislators,

but rather to examine the behavior of legislators whose choice of strategy is unconstrained. It might be noted that a similar assumption is used in spatial models when parties are assumed able to promise or deliver any policy vector in the policy space.

The Link Between Policy Choice and Voting Behavior

A formal link between the legislator's choice of w and the voting behavior of groups can now be established. The simplest assumption would be that the proportion of a group's membership expected to vote for the legislator – denoted P_g – is a nondecreasing function of the net change in a group's welfare incident to the policy:

Assumption 3: $P_g = P_g(w_g)$ and $P_g' \geq 0$.

It should be noted at this point, however, that ours is not a game theoretic model of electoral strategy during a campaign. Rather, it is a decision theoretic analysis of policy decisions made by an incumbent in "midterm". We assume that there are a finite number of potential (sets of) candidates who may run against the incumbent at the next election. Each possible opponent or set of opponents constitutes a state of the world in the decision theoretic sense. For any given state of the world, s , the P_g functions are well-defined; that is, given s , a unique value of the proportion of the g th group voting for the congressman is determined for each value of w_g (or for each value of the arguments to be introduced below): $P_g = P_g(w_g, s)$. It is assumed that the congressman has subjective probability beliefs about which opponents will face him which can be modelled as a probability distribution function defined over the states of the world.

Assumption 4: There are $S < \infty$ states of nature, indexed by $s \in [1, S]$. For each state of the world, s , the congressman assigns a probability $z(s)$. $z(s)$ lies between zero and one and the sum over s of $z(s)$ is unity.¹

For a given w_g , the expected proportion of the g th group which will support the congressman can then be written

$$P_g(w_g) = \sum_s z(s) P_g(w_g, s).$$

It is this "expected proportion" function which will be used below.

We wish also to explicitly decompose the P_g function into a rate of turnout, and a rate of support, given turnout. Specifically, we assume that each group has a characteristic turnout rate, q_g . This turnout rate depends not just on the welfare impact produced by the legislator's particular policy choice – an essentially short-term consideration – but also, and perhaps more importantly, on certain stable socio-economic characteristics of the group.

¹ It might be thought that the probability of a particular set of opponents appearing ought to depend on the legislator's choice of w . This, however, introduces a sequentially to the model which we wish to avoid. If the legislator chooses w and then challengers appear later who are able to optimize against this choice, one has essentially the model of Kramer (1983). Here, we wish to view the choice of the incumbent as implicitly simultaneous with the choice of his opponent(s), as in Cox and McCubbins' game theoretic model. See Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, "Electoral Politics as a Redistributive Game", presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 11–14, 1984.

Definition: $q_g = q_g(w_g, SE_g)$, where w_g is the change in net welfare from the legislator's choice of policy and SE_g is a vector of socio-economic characteristics of the group.

Given the turnout rate, q_g , and the total number of eligible voters, n_g , one can consider the behavior of the voting membership of the g th group. There are $q_g n_g$ members of group g expected to vote, and a certain proportion v_g of these members can be expected to vote for the legislator. The proportion v_g depends on the legislator's choice of w and on the group's long-term relationship with the legislator.

The notion of a long-term group/legislator relationship, while akin to the familiar notion of party identification, is distinct. For our purposes, we do not wish groups to be arrayed along a dimension from strong Republican to strong Democrat, but rather along an "adherence dimension" which ranges from what Fenno [10] calls a legislator's "primary constituency" on one end, through his somewhat less dedicated electoral supporters, to independent or swing groups, and on to inveterate opponents at the other end. There are several points to make about the adherence dimension. First, the position of a group on the adherence dimension is exogenous to the model. It is determined by the past actions and reactions of the group and legislator. Second, while it may be positively related to party identification, the correlation need not be perfect. For example, a moderate Democrat like Lyndon Johnson may find that his most bitter and consistent opponents comprise both liberal Democrats like Eugene McCarthy and conservative Republicans like Barry Goldwater; these groups, while far apart in terms of party identification, are in close proximity on the adherence dimension, both opposing the politician. Third, the adherence dimension is otherwise similar in conception to party identification. It represents the long-term propensity of groups to support the legislator, based on past political experience. For a first-termer, these "long-term" propensities may be determined chiefly by party identification. But, as the legislator compiles a track record, groups get an increasingly firm idea of what kind of a Republican or Democrat he is, and attitudes toward him are based more on his past actions and less on initial expectations derived from his party affiliation.

We introduce a variable A_g to indicate the g th group's relative position on the adherence dimension for the legislator. It is assumed that larger values of A_g correspond to more supportive groups. We then have

Definition: The proportion v_g of a group's voting membership expected to vote for the legislator depends on the legislator's choice of w and on the group's long-term relationship with the legislator: $v_g = v_g(w_g, A_g)$.

With these formulations of the turnout rate and of the rate of support, given turnout, it is easy to give a more detailed description of the way in which P_g – the proportion of group g supporting the legislator – varies with w and the other variables; the simpler notation used earlier can be considered a shorthand derived as follows:

$$P_g(w_g) = q_g(w_g, SE_g) v_g(w_g, A_g).$$

The Legislator's Decision

In Assumption 1 we assumed that the legislator, cognizant of the relevant demographic and political characteristics of the groups in his constituency, chooses a policy

objective, w , in order to maximize his expected votes, $EV(w)$:

$$\text{Maximize } EV(w) = \sum_{g=1}^G n_g P_g(w_g).$$

This maximization of expected votes, however, is subject to the constraint that the welfare impact of the legislator's policy choices is bounded: No matter what choice the legislator makes, the change in a group's welfare cannot be infinitely negative. Formally, for all g there is a lower bound $-m_g \leq 0$ such that $-m_g \leq w_g$. Further, there is an aggregate upper bound expressed as

$$\sum w_g \leq B.$$

It is assumed that

Assumption 5: The policy space, or set of redistributions of welfare from which the legislator can choose, is $W = \{w \in R^G: -m_g \leq w_g \text{ for all } g \text{ and } \sum w_g \leq B\}$, where $-m_g \leq 0$ for all g .

Assume also that

Assumption 6: P_g is twice continuously differentiable and the second partial derivative of P_g with respect to w_g is non-positive for all g .

This assumption can be interpreted as saying that groups are not risk-acceptant.

Consequences

With the assumption of decentralized policy control, we can view the legislator as directly choosing the welfare levels of groups in order to maximize expected votes subject only to the constraints just noted. If welfare increases linearly with wealth, this model can be interpreted as follows: the legislator has $\$B$ which he may distribute amongst the groups in his constituency; he may also transfer funds from one group to another subject to the obvious constraint that he cannot deprive any group of more than its net wealth (m_g).

Some insight into how a legislator will choose can be gained by considering the analogy to investment. Each group can be considered an investment paying off in expected votes. The instantaneous rate of return of the g th group, r_g , is simply

$$r_g = r_g(w_g) = n_g \frac{\partial P_g}{\partial w_g}(w_g).$$

Before any funds have been distributed, the relevant rate of return is $r_g(0)$. If the legislator had only a very small amount to invest, he might well give it all to that group, say g_1 , with the largest initial rate of return. As the amount to invest grew, however, enough might be given to g_1 so that its rate of return fell (since $dr_g/dw_g \leq 0$) to equality with the second best original investment, in which case the legislator would invest in both these groups. In general, it can be shown that

Consequence 1: Given decentralized control over policy, legislators will choose policies which provide benefits to those groups in their constituencies with the highest electoral rates of return, and impose costs on those with the lowest rates of return.

Proof: We shall consider the special case in which there is strict inequality between the groups' electoral rates of return:

$$r_1(0) > r_2(0) > \dots > r_G(0).$$

From the Kuhn-Tucker theorem, we know that

- (1) $r_g(w_g^*) = r_h(w_h^*) = t$ for all g, h such that $-m_g < w_g^*$ and $-m_h < w_h^*$.
 (2) $r_g(w_g^*) \leq t$ for all g such that $w_g^* = -m_g$.

Consequently, $w_g^* > 0$ and $h < g$ implies $w_h^* > 0$. For, suppose not. Then $w_g^* > 0$ and, for some $h < g$, $w_h^* \leq 0$. Since $w_g^* > 0$, from (1) we know $r_g(w_g^*) = t$. It is also the case that $r_h(w_h^*) \leq t$, implying $r_g(w_g^*) \geq r_h(w_h^*)$. But $r_g(w_g^*) \leq r_g(0) < r_h(0) \leq r_h(w_h^*)$, a contradiction. A similar argument shows that $w_g^* < 0$ and $h > g$ implies $w_h^* < 0$. Q.E.D.

Hence, the optimal redistribution of welfare w^* is such that a class of "high return" groups receive benefits ($w_g^* > 0$), and a class of "low return" groups bear costs ($w_g^* < 0$) (the possibility also exists that a class of "intermediate return" groups will receive a zero net benefit, but mathematically this is a rare occurrence).

It should be noted that this result does not necessarily say anything about the absolute amounts which various groups receive. It is possible, for example, that $w_g^* < w_h^*$ for some $g < h$. That is, a given group does not necessarily benefit more than all less responsive groups. On the other hand, a given group is assured that, if any less responsive group benefits, then so will it. In this sense, it can be said that the most responsive groups are taken care of "first".

It is worth reiterating at this point that a group's electoral rate of return depends not only on its responsiveness to the legislator's choice of policy - i.e., on $\partial P_g / \partial w_g$ - but also on its size, n_g . As between two equally responsive groups, the legislator will obviously invest first in the larger.

It should also be recognized that responsiveness is a subjective perception of the legislator. It is his forecast of how a group will react to his actions. While this forecast may reflect what the group says it will do, it need not be completely determined by group declarations. Legislators, in other words, recognize that talk is cheap, and attempt to assess a group's potential for real electoral action when estimating its responsiveness.

Another characteristic of groups with obvious impact on their responsiveness is their rate of turnout. Other things equal, groups with lower turnout rates have lower electoral rates of return. Hence, it follows that:

Turnout Corollary: *Ceteris paribus*, legislators will choose policies which provide benefits to groups with high turnout rates and impose costs on groups with low turnout rates.

Proof: Note that $r_g = n_g [v_g(\partial q_g / \partial w_g) + q_g(\partial v_g / \partial w_g)]$. Hence, if we consider r_g as a function of n_g , v_g , q_g , $\partial v_g / \partial w_g$, $\partial q_g / \partial w_g$, we have $\partial r_g / \partial n_g = n_g [\partial v_g / \partial w_g] > 0$ since $n_g > 0$ and $\partial v_g / \partial w_g > 0$ by assumption. Q.E.D.

Political institutions are created in order to channel the interests of groups into meaningful, authoritative decisions. Our electoral system is one such institution which links the ambitions of policy makers with the desires of groups in society. But, elections link these political actors together in a specific way - through turnout and support at the polls. A group which seeks authoritative action favoring its interests must act decisively in the voting both in order to generate a recognizable signal. It has long been recognized that those groups which do not participate will not be heard (cf. 2, 22, 27). That, in effect, is the substance of this corollary.

Discussion

There are a couple of common notions which bear on the question of which groups an elected official will or should appeal to. Several scholars have cited a tendency of presidents to undercut their electoral coalitions once in office (e.g., Carter and the blacks, Reagan and the New Right). Kramer [19] has provided (what can be construed as) a theoretical perspective on this phenomenon, developing a model which suggests that incumbents faced with a situation of "zero-sum" politics will tend to act evenhandedly toward all groups.² The only obvious sufficient condition for evenhandedness in our model is that all groups have identical functions, r_g . But would conservative groups in Massachusetts respond as much as would liberal groups to benefits that came their way through Ted Kennedy's good offices? Possibly, but they might also just chalk these benefits up to Kennedy's imperfect control of policy, which had not allowed him fine enough control over the distribution of benefits to exclude them. Indeed, many legislators develop an adversarial relationship with certain groups in their constituencies. These are his implacable opponents, those the legislator thinks of as "The people I can't reach with a ten-foot pole", or about whom he says, "They won't support me anyway and they'll find more reasons for it after they've heard me" [10]. In our model, opposition groups (if there are any) should rarely receive benefits and should often incur costs. Hence, we do not expect evenhandedness.

Another common notion, derived it would seem from the spatial model of voting, suggests that candidates for office will struggle to please independent or "swing" groups, those in neither electoral camp [6; for important exceptions, see 17, 18]. To the extent that candidates are bound by their pledges, this argument translates into an expectation that legislators will pay special attention to swing groups, perhaps even to the detriment of their primary constituency.

In our model, the terms "swing group" and "primary group" refer to positions on the adherence dimension, and such positions are determined by past, exogenous events. Thus, for example, a first-cut definition of a primary group might be "a group which has consistently supported the legislator at a high level in the past". It has been suggested to us that primary groups are those groups which will stick with the legislator through thick and thin. If it is understood that "thick and thin" refers to the electoral prospects of the legislator, and not to how much he gives the group, we can

² Note that, while incumbents are evenhanded in Kramer's model, challengers pursue a least cost or minimal winning coalition strategy. Formally, this follows from the sequentially which Kramer assumes. As we assume simultaneity, our incumbents act more like Kramer's challengers than his incumbents.

accept this characterization. But the view of a primary group as one so dedicated to the legislator as to vote for him regardless of the level of benefits he delivers removes the rational basis of the model. We doubt that such groups exist even in the short term. The kinds of groups in the real world which are sometimes pointed to as examples of groups which support a candidate yet receive little in return (e.g., Negroes vis-à-vis white Democrats) are, we suggest, *not* the candidate's closest supporters. Hence, we do not think there is any strong a priori reason to believe that swing groups, as a class, are more responsive than primary groups.

Indeed, on the whole we believe that the adherence dimension covaries fairly closely with electoral responsiveness, so that the primary constituency is the most responsive, less committed supporters and swing groups are the next most responsive, and so forth over to the hard core opposition.³ In other words, the rate of change of overall support, P_g , with respect to delivered benefits, w_g , covaries positively with the group's adherence; or, put more strongly, $\partial r_g/\partial A_g > 0$. This assumption does not preclude favorable attention to swing groups, but it does say, as a corollary to Consequence 1, that the primary constituency is first to receive benefits when there are benefits to be had, and that only after the legislator has seen to his primary constituency will he invest in other groups in the reelection constituency or in swing groups.

This corollary follows straightforwardly, given the above assumption. Assuming that an interior solution to the legislative choice problem exists, the first order conditions will be:

$$n_g[\partial P_g/\partial w_g] = t \quad g = 1, \dots, G. \quad (1)$$

Totally differentiating these (assuming that $dn_g = dSE_g = dt = 0$) yields

$$n_g[\partial^2 P_g/\partial w_g^2 + \partial^2 P_g/\partial w_g \partial A_g dA_g] = 0 \quad (2)$$

from which we get

$$dw_g/dA_g = -[\partial^2 P_g/\partial w_g \partial A_g]/[\partial^2 P_g/\partial w_g^2]. \quad (3)$$

Since $\partial^2 P_g/\partial w_g^2$ is negative,

$$\text{sign}[dw_g/dA_g] = \text{sign}[\partial^2 P_g/\partial w_g \partial A_g]. \quad (4)$$

Assuming, then, that $\partial r_g/\partial A_g = \partial^2 P_g/\partial w_g \partial A_g > 0$ gives us the result.

To be sure, the adherence dimension will not always covary nicely with electoral responsiveness. The possibility exists that $\partial r_g/\partial A_g$ (which is a function of A_g and w_g) will be non-positive for some range of values of A_g and w_g . If $\partial r_g/\partial A_g = 0$ for all values

³ What empirical support is there for the notion that the adherence dimension covaries well with responsiveness? Fenno's work makes clear that congressmen are very aware of the distinction between their primary constituency, their reelection constituency, and other groups, and that they on the whole seem to take good care of their core supporters. These core supporters are also the most demanding, at least of the congressmen's time:

... all the evidence we have accumulated suggests that a congressman's strongest supporters demand more, not less, of a congressman's time than his other constituencies (Fenno, 1978, p. 128).

But, although Fenno and others have provided fairly solid evidence that congressmen do try provide for their core supporters, it is difficult to prove that this is because congressmen view their primary constituencies as electorally more responsive; it is virtually impossible to get an independent measurement of electoral responsiveness

of A_g and w_g , then all groups have identical response functions, and the legislator will be evenhanded, as noted above. If $\partial r_g/\partial A_g < 0$ for appropriate values of A_g , then we have the case of highly responsive swing groups receiving benefits first.

Even if one believes that swing groups tend to be the most highly responsive, however, there are several reasons to expect a bias in the allocative decisions of legislators in favor of their primary constituency. These reasons have to do with the attitude toward risk of incumbents, the institution of primary elections, and certain non-vote electoral resources.

In the earlier discussion using the investment analogy, it was noted that the legislator could be thought of as choosing policies in order to direct benefits to certain groups, thereby in effect "investing" in them in hopes of a return in votes. The return on an investment came principally in the form of an increase in P_g , the proportion of the group *expected* to vote for the legislator. On an investment of w_g , for example, this proportion would increase from $P_g(0)$ to $P_g(w_g)$, yielding an increase in expected votes of $n_g[P_g(w_g) - P_g(0)]$. We now wish simply to note that not all expected increments in P_g are created equal: some are riskier than others.

On the one hand, the primary constituency is a well-known quantity to the legislator. He is in frequent and intensive contact with his core supporters, and if he does not have relatively precise and accurate ideas about how *they* will react, he will probably not last long. On the other hand, swing or independent groups are by definition unattached. The conventional wisdom, that this makes them "open game", is probably correct, but they are "open" to the other party as well, and hunting out on the savannah with one's competitors is less sure than shooting the fish in the barrel. Of course, if the legislator never goes after the open game, he may lose, unless he has a sufficiently large stock of barrelled fish. But the point is *not* that candidates never go after swing groups; they obviously do. The point, to return to an earlier metaphor, is that swing groups are riskier investments than are more supportive and loyal groups.

The greater riskiness of swing groups, combined with the proverbial risk-averseness of Congressmen, constitute a solid theoretical reason to believe that Congressmen view their core and other supporters as better electoral investments. In our view, then, supporters may not get all the good things Congressmen can dispense, but they will get their share, and they will also tend to get to it *first*, in the sense of Consequence 1.

A second reason to believe that legislators will view their supporters, and especially their core supporters, as electorally more important than swing groups has to do with the institution of primary elections. If a legislator wants to make it to the general election at all, he must first win his party's primary (for a spatial analysis of primaries see [1]). But in jumping this preliminary hurdle, the typical legislator does not rely on swing groups, but rather on his primary constituency.

Primary elections have long been recognized as relatively low turnout affairs contested chiefly by the strongest supporters of the respective candidates. Hence, the primary constituency is more important in the sense that a given change in the level of support by the primary constituency affects the legislator's electoral fortunes both in the primary and in the general election, whereas an "equal" change in the level of support by a swing group typically affects only the general election.

In addition to these two basic reasons to view the primary constituency as possessing a better per voter rate of return than that swing groups, note that the same points made

about votes can also be made about other campaign resources, such as contributions and volunteer workers. The primary constituency is the chief and arguably the least risky source of these resources, both for the primary and the for the general election. In contrast, swing groups are riskier and typically would furnish these resources (if ever) only at the general election.

In sum, then, we think the typical legislator views his core support groups as the best electoral investments available to him because these groups are in the lowest risk class and because they provide reelection resources other than general election votes, viz., votes at the primary election, and campaign contributions plus volunteer workers at both the primary and general elections. Hence, other things equal, a legislator's core supporters should receive benefits "first", in the sense of Consequence 1.

The ideas presented here may have further implications. For example, if the existence of primary elections is really important, then we might expect that in situations where there is no primary (or equivalent institution) candidates should be less tied to their core supporters. Local elections where all who wish may run might be an example (although these usually require a majority in the first election, with a run-off failing that, and the first election is frequently dubbed the "primary").

A further consequence of the focus on risk aversion might emerge if attitudes toward risk changes with certain electoral factors, e.g., margin of victory. Many students of constituency influence have speculated that marginal Congressmen ought to be more closely tied to their constituencies [7, 20, 25]. Although this idea has not fared particularly well when the correlation between roll call votes and aggregate demographic characteristics of the constituency is used to measure the degree to which various Congressmen are tied to their constituencies [cf. 12], it may make more sense when the constituency is viewed, not as a demographic aggregate, but as the primary or reelection constituency, and the decisions of Congressmen are measured for agreement with these constituents [cf. 8, 23].

Finally, it is worth noting that the model presented in this paper, although it assumes an election-seeking candidate with no personal policy motivations, nonetheless *does not* imply that electoral competition will lead to convergence of both candidates' strategies at the median voter. It is probably safe to say that most political scientists still view the median voter result as the central result of spatial models of electoral competition; certainly most empirical tests of the spatial model [e.g. sec 24] rely on the median voter result. However, this result is in no sense *the* result to be expected on the assumption that candidates single-mindedly pursue election. Both an earlier result of Hinich's [16] and our result show that rational candidates may, under plausible conditions, diverge. Hence, rational divergence does not depend on additional assumptions, such as that candidates pursue their own policy goals [4, 26, 35].

Conclusion

We have presented a general model of policy choice which hinges on an important analytic distinction not often made in such models. Whereas previous models have paid little attention to group politics *within* the constituency, implicitly viewing the

constituency as politically homogeneous, we distinguish between the "primary" constituency, the "reelection" constituency, the "opposition" constituency, and so forth, and attempt to say something about which parts of the constituency will receive the benefits and which incur the costs of policy decisions. Essentially, we endeavor to meld together the idea of a reelection-seeking candidate (popularized by Mayhew's *Congress: The Electoral Connection*) with some notions about the representational strategies of congressmen (recently emphasized by Fenno's *Home Style*). Viewing the question "who gets what"? as essentially a question of redistribution of welfare, we argue that politicians will attempt, not to be evenhanded toward all groups in their constituency, as some scholars have suggested, nor to direct benefits chiefly to swing groups, as others have suggested, but rather, first and foremost, to maintain their current electoral coalition, and in particular, their primary constituency. The chief arguments for this conclusion hinged on the risk aversion of the typical incumbent politician and on the simple fact that one must win the primary election before having a shot at winning the general.

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