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Legislative participation in the American states: determinants and consequences

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**LEGISLATIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE AMERICAN STATES:
DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Political Science

by

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B.A., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2003
M.A., Louisiana State University, 2005
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Robert Stonebraker. He saw potential in a small town girl from Western, PA and gave me the encouragement, knowledge, and support I needed to achieve my goals. He has been a constant source of support in my life for eight years, and I'm not sure where I would be right now if not for his influence.

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to analyze the variability in participation across legislators at the state level and to consider the potential consequences of participatory behavior. In this dissertation, I draw on theories of political participation, legislative goals, and state political institutions to explain participation in state legislative activities. To begin with, I examine legislative participation across the legislative process, considering the determinants of sponsorship and roll-call participation. Next, I examine the consequences that participation has for legislators focusing on challenger emergence in the general election. My research demonstrates that legislative participation varies systematically across individual, institutional, and state level variables. However, final results indicate that participatory variables do not condition challenger emergence in the general election.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Eighty percent of success is showing up.
- Woody Allen

This dissertation explores the question of the determinants and political consequences of legislative activity. While much attention has been paid to *how* legislators participate and the political choices that they make—in the form of sponsorship and cosponsorship, committee debate, and roll call voting—less attention has been paid to the antecedent question of *whether* legislators participate. How much of success is "showing up" in the legislative arena? And what does "showing up" entail?

This question of political participation is crucial, but much of what we know about the choice to participate comes not from studies of elite politics but from studies of turnout in the mass public. Dating back to Riker and Ordeshook's classic theory of turnout (1968), political scientists have argued that the decision to participate depends in part on the benefits of participation (defined in various ways), in part on the costs, and in part on the probability that one's participation may make a difference. Such a perspective can be applied to legislative politics; given the increasing workload that legislators face, time has become a valuable resource to any legislator (Moncrief, Thompson, and Kurtz 1996; Squire 1992). The decision to participate in any one legislative activity entails trade-offs, and an assessment of costs and benefits. Of course, legislators have a different array of possible ways in which they can participate than do individuals in the mass public, and are generally considered to be better informed about any consequences of their decision to participate. These differences between the mass and the elite level suggest that we may be better able to explain participation at the elite level—where the benefits are clear cut, and the costs often no more onerous—than at the mass level.

The first set of questions, therefore, that this dissertation seeks to answer is "Who participates? How do they participate? And (most important) what factors explain the decision to participate? Borrowing terminology from Uslander (1998), who are the "movers and shirkers" in the state legislatures and in what state legislative setting can we find them? Finally, I trace participation from sponsorship to roll call voting, and examine how both individual and institutional characteristics shape a legislator's choices regarding participation. Reelection pressures, personal characteristics, political experience, and ambition all may make it more or less likely that an individual legislator participates a great deal or very little, and likewise may shape the types of activities in which a legislator chooses to participate. Institutional characteristics such as legislative professionalization and partisan balance may also contribute to differences in participation across states. Different chambers may also have different norms for participation.

The second set of questions that this dissertation seeks to analyze involve the consequences of legislative participation, and it is here that the dissertation makes its most important and novel contribution. While prior research has at times examined the decision to participate, virtually no recent scholarship has examined the political consequences of the choice to participate. Does a willingness to participate entail costs? Does a willingness to participate bring about long-term benefits, such as a "free ride" at the next election? What types of participation are most politically beneficial to legislators? Building on my earlier discussion of the causes of participation, and drawing on a rich theoretical literature focusing on legislative goals, I examine how participation has political consequences, once controlling for individual and institutional characteristics. Is there any reward for being a workhorse or any consequence for being a "shirker"?

1.1 Theoretical Basis

My research on the determinants and consequences of legislative participation draws on a rich literature on determinants of political participation across settings. Since the seminal works of Downs (1957), Tullock (1967) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968), political scientists and economists alike have spent a significant amount of time to understand why people in the mass public choose to vote. Downs (1957) notes that “if a theorist knows the ends of some decision-maker, he can predict what actions will be taken to achieve them as follows: (1) he calculates the most reasonable way for the decision-maker to reach his goals, and (2) he assumes this way will actually be chosen because the decision-maker is rational” (4). In other words, to understand and to predict participation, we need to understand first the goals that a political actor may be pursuing through such participation, and second the costs that participation involves. While most of the empirical literature on participation that draws on this foundation has focused on mass-level participation, my dissertation focuses on elite-level participation. Indeed, though Down's work is less often applied to legislative politics, the very nature of legislative politics may be much more suitable than mass publics for a rational choice framework. The legislative arena is smaller than most voting bodies in the mass public, involves repeated interactions across legislators, and legislators enjoy much closer to perfect-information. A focus on legislative politics can greatly contribute to our understanding of the decision to participate.

Likewise, an examination of the decision to participate is of critical importance to understanding legislative politics. According to Hall (1996), “if we are to understand fully the nature of the relationships between legislators and interest groups, between legislators and bureaucrats, between legislators and party leaders, and between legislators and the president, legislative participation must come squarely into focus (9). Hall starts with the assumption that the participation patterns of involvement will prove important for understanding the nature and

quality of representation, the variable exercise of influence in the calculus of legislative consent, and the nature of relationships between actors in Congress and other major actors in the national policy-making process.

Notwithstanding the value of understanding legislative participation, the attention paid to this question by scholars of legislative politics has varied across time. Hall (1996) notes that “while scattered studies have described the variability of participation, theoretical work on the subject has extended little beyond general references to the norms of hard work, specialization, and apprenticeship that are thought to have structured participation in the previous era.” (Hall goes on to observe that legislative norms are considered less powerful in contemporary legislative politics than before, and yet little effort has been made to explain participation. Explaining participation has occupied a central place in scholarship on organizational behavior and mass political behavior, but not in scholarship on elite behavior. The research on participation in elite political behavior has been restricted to studies of political ambition, focusing on the decision to run for office, and studies on committee participation.

1.2 Dissertation Overview

Similar to Hall (1996), this research seeks to better understand how we characterize and define legislative participation. As Hall (1996) notes, legislative participation refers to no single, definable act. Rather, it includes a number of different activities. In this dissertation, I analyze legislative participation at the state level from two different points in the legislative process: bill sponsorship and roll call voting. I am able to evaluate and distinguish between the effects of legislator-specific factor, and state-specific factors, as well as analyze how the decision to participate may change based on the legislative activity under consideration. This research seeks to further test the congressional theories of participation developed by Hall (1996), of

sponsorship (Garand and Burke 2005) and of roll call vote participation (Rothenberg and Sanders 2002).

The outline of this dissertation is as follows: Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the theoretical contribution of this dissertation, the methodological approach, and a review of the research on legislative participation. Chapter 3 will outline and describe the data and variables used to analyze legislative participation, as well a brief discussion of the quantitative models. Chapter 4 will analyze bill sponsorship as an indicator of legislative participation and create a model of determinants of sponsorship. Chapter 5 will analyze roll call participation, specifically absenteeism, as an indicator of legislative participation. Further, it will create a model of determinants and also explore the relationship between bill sponsorship and roll call absenteeism. Chapter 6 analyzes the consequences of participatory behavior, specifically addressing the impact of participatory behavior on challenger emergence. Finally, Chapter 7 will offer conclusions and avenues for expanding this research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 What is Legislative Participation?

Hall (1996) notes that legislative participation is no single, definable act; rather it is a general category that includes a range of different activities that vary in their visibility and legislative significance. What functions of a legislator's job are considered legislative participation? In general, legislative participation can be thought of as the legislator performing the duties outlined by the rules and norms of the office he or she holds. Hall (1996) notes that participation can be categorized as either formal or informal. Formal participation refers to any decision-making activity that takes place in formal legislative settings--for example, speaking during committee hearings, sponsoring legislation, or participating on roll call votes. Informal participation refers to the "behind the scenes" work, or any decision-making activity that happens once the legislator leaves the committee meeting room or the chamber floor. Informal participation includes such activities as constituency service, vote trading, and coalition building. This concept of having two forms of legislative participation is consistent with Fenno's description of the persistent duality of the legislative career; one career is centered upon capital centered legislative activities, whereas the other is centered on district centered activities. This dissertation research will focus on formal participation.

Few pieces of research have directly addressed the issue of determinants and consequences of participatory behavior.¹ Previous research has focused on several components of participation, such as constituency service (Freeman and Richardson 1996), bill sponsorship

¹ A notable exception is Box-Steffensmeier and Grant (1999) who analyze the relationship between legislative effectiveness and PAC contributions. They find that legislators who are successful at passing their sponsored legislation are more likely to receive PAC contributions. However, even there, the focus is on legislative effectiveness, rather than on the level of participation.

(Garand and Burke 2005; Schiller 1995), committee participation and behavior (Hall 1996; Hamm and Moncrief 1982), and roll call voting (Rothenberg and Sanders 2000).

2.2 Conceptualizing and Measuring Legislative Participation

Legislative participation is a difficult concept to measure. It is a complex activity with ambiguous meaning, but is often comprised of simple and definable activities. One way of approaching the definition of legislative participation is to only consider activities that are highly salient or result in new public policy. In this case, a measure of issue or salience or legislative effectiveness would be appropriate. However, Hall notes that “some of the observable legislative activities that members perform day to day, whether in committee or on the floor, have little effect on the shape of the legislative that ultimately gets approved” (25). And, in some circumstances “members take action that they do not expect, perhaps do not even intend, to have any immediate legislative consequences” (25). Should we consider this form of legislative activity – that is, activity which is not intended or expected to influence public policy in the short term – to be primarily symbolic, and therefore not substantive? Hall argues to the contrary; he notes that “participation by the citizens’ several agents and hence the expression of a wide range of alternative points of view is central to the practice of democratic consent. It will invariably happen during legislative deliberations that certain views and interests get expressed that will almost certainly fail. But that does not render them meaningless or merely symbolic” (26). In Hall’s view, even actions that are not of much consequence to legislative outcomes should be considered as substantive legislative participation. This line of reasoning suggests that sponsored legislation that never gets made into law or votes that are cast on a bill that will surely fail are still politically meaningful; the symbolic political behaviors of the short run may translate into the substantive political outcomes of the long run. For this reason, this dissertation research will consider all sponsored legislation and votes on all roll call bills.

How should legislative participation be measured? In a perfect world, all components of legislative participation would be considered. However, given data constraints and the impossibility of quantifying some participatory behavior, this research will focus on two indicators of legislative participation: bill sponsorship and roll call participation. These indicators were chosen because of their visibility, centrality to the legislative career, and well-defined role in the legislative process.

2.2.1 Bill Sponsorship

Bill sponsorship is considered to be the core activity that reflects a legislator's role in agenda-setting, which is perhaps the most critical stage in the legislative process (Bachrach and Baratz 1963, Cobb and Elder 1983, Kingdon 1989). Previous research points to bill sponsorship as one appropriate indicator of political participation. Drafting and introducing legislation is one of the most fundamental components of the legislative process. It is also an activity that requires a large amount of time and effort on the part of the legislators. Warwo (2000) notes that “the tasks and responsibilities of the primary sponsor typically involve entrepreneurial activities such as gathering and communicating information, coalition building, and shepherding legislative through the House” (27). Further, it is one of the most visible legislative functions to both the constituency and the legislative membership. Introducing legislation is one way that legislators can go about achieving their policy-related goals, earning respect among their peers, and gaining reelection support. It is the sponsor who is counted on to be there to defend the bill in committee, protect it on the floor, and handle relationships with the executive branch (Schneier and Gross 1993).

However, sponsorship is not a perfect measure of legislative activity. Although drafting legislation is a central part of the sponsorship process, the sponsor may not be the actual author of the legislation. Bills are often drafted solely by interest groups or legislative staff, and

brought to a legislator to sponsor. In these instances, the actual cost of sponsorship in terms of time spent is less than it would be if a legislator drafted the measure himself. Furthermore, some bills are simply easier to write than others. The number of bills sponsored does not distinguish between bills that took months to draft and bills that took only a few hours; that is, it is not a measure of the time spent in crafting (or arguing for the passage of) legislation. Another potential problem is the introduction of “clean bills,” or bills that a committee chair introduces after they are amended; clean bills may inflate the levels of productivity of committee chairs. However, it is likely that the degree to which legislators use legislative staff and interest groups to draft measures varies much more by state than by legislator. Moreover, the degree to which it varies by legislator likely depends on such factors as legislative leadership and seniority, which can be included in an analysis of sponsorship. That is, more senior members, or members in leadership positions, may be able to participate more through sponsorship activity if they can rely on legislative staff or interest groups to assist them in the drafting of legislation. Nonetheless, if they sponsor a relatively high number of measures, then they can be viewed as being relatively active. It is the sponsor who is counted on to be there to defend the bill in committee, protect it on the floor, and handle relationships with the executive branch (Schneier and Gross 1993). Even if the sponsor doesn’t literally write the bill, “sponsorship” of the bill nonetheless requires some time and effort. Moreover, the electoral and reputational costs and benefits of sponsorship occur regardless of the process by which the bill came into existence. Most important, sponsorship entails taking responsibility for introducing political issues onto the legislative agenda, and the sponsor is regarded as the individual with responsibility for the proposed measure; therefore sponsorship is a crucial measure of legislative participation.

2.2.2 Roll Call Absenteeism

Roll call absenteeism was chosen as an indicator for two major reasons, both related to its status as a clearly definable act that is recorded in the state legislative records. The availability and comparability of the data is a practical advantage. Moreover, the very visibility of the act (and, more important, of the failure to act) makes it a particularly important measure of participation. At the mass level, constituents view frequent absences as legislators “not doing their jobs.” At the elite level, absenteeism can be an indication that the legislator is not supporting the party, not contributing the policy objectives of the chamber, or simply not fulfilling their legislative responsibilities. Roll call voting is often the final step in the legislative process in the chamber. Roll call voting is a way in which legislators publicly stake out policy positions.

However, the absenteeism variable, like the sponsorship variable, is not perfect. In many states, legislators can formally abstain from voting, but the roll call records from which this measure was collected rarely differentiate absenteeism from abstention. I argue that both casting an abstention vote and being absent measures the same concept in terms of the research question. Both will be interpreted by others as a decision not to go on record—and often reflects a lack of commitment, regardless of the reason, on the part of a legislator. In both instances (absenteeism and abstention) the legislator failed to pay the information cost of voting either “yea” or “nay.” Although additional research will be needed to further explore the differences and similarities between abstention and absenteeism, this current research project will not distinguish between the two ways in which a legislator can fail to cast a vote.

The assumption that missing votes “occur randomly, such as when a legislator misses a plane or is too ill to be wheeled to the floor on a gurney” (Cohen and Noll 1991) ignores the possibility that a series of missed votes can often be explained systematically. If absenteeism

can be explained systematically, then the decision to vote will be linked with other aspects of legislative behavior. This research models the failure to cast a roll call vote as a systematic choice to "shirk". To fully understand participation, it is important to understand non-participation.

2.3 Why Study Legislative Participation?

What are the rationales for studying legislative participation at the elite level? Hall (1996) notes that legislative participation has traditionally received little attention among scholars. Those works that have focused on participation have focused primarily on career paths. Prior work has focused on norms that might encourage or discourage participation (e.g., Matthews 1963), or examines the degree to which legislators become more active and more specialized across their careers (Hibbing 1991). While scattered studies have described the variability of participation, theoretical work on the subject has extended little beyond general references to the norms that shape career paths. Hall further observes that legislative norms are considered less powerful in contemporary legislative politics than before, and yet little effort has been made to explain how participation varies independent of the influence of norms. More generally, he argues that understanding activity (or the lack thereof) in legislative politics is a key element of understanding decision-making in legislatures; in his view, too much focus has been placed on majoritarian politics, and too little on how, within a particular political context, participation can influence outcomes (8).

Further, Hall (1996) notes that, "if we are to understand fully the nature of the relationships between legislators and interest groups, between legislators and bureaucrats, between legislators and party leaders, and between legislators and the president, legislative participation must come squarely into focus" (9). Hall concludes that understanding participation is essential to understanding a wide array of other questions, such as the character

of representation, the ways in which legislators work collaboratively or in opposition, both individual and group decision-making, agenda setting, and policy outcomes

A study of legislative participation is also particularly valuable because it focuses on the elite level rather than on the mass level. There are several rationales for the study of participation at the elite level. First, as noted by Hall (1996), the majority of the research in political science and economics has centered on participation at the mass level (see Downs 1957; Campbell, et. al. 1960; and Popkin 1991), but significantly less is known about the participation behavior at the elite level. Moreover, the study of participation at the mass level has been focused attempts to resolve the seeming "paradox of participation"—that individuals participate even when such participation is seemingly irrational.

Scholars such as Aldrich (1993) argue that mass level participation is an activity with few costs and few benefits and is therefore problematic to the rational choice model. In contrast, elite level analysis of legislative bodies, which are characterized by smaller sizes, repeated interactions between legislators, and an almost perfect-information environment, can potentially provide a more hospitable environment for the rational choice approach. Studying participation at the elite level will provide insight not only to legislator behavior, but to participatory behavior in general.

Second, members across and within legislative institutions enjoy varying amounts of legislative resources which they can invest, and vary as well in their individual political goals. For this reason as well, the degree to which legislators participate is highly variable. Hall notes that "it reflects the intensity of their personal or political interest in the matter; the amount of resources that they have to commit; and, under certain specifiable conditions, the strategic calculations they will make regarding the expected return on their resource investments. In sum, one needs to think not only about what members want legislatively but also about their

willingness and ability to pay what it takes to get it” (7). This uneven distribution of legislative resources is particularly interesting at the state level, where resources vary not only across the individual, but across states and legislative institutions. Thus, economic analysis of political actors requires two major steps: first, that we explore the political goals pursued by individuals (and the benefits of achieving those goals), and second, that we understand the costs of the different ways in which goals can be pursued. Previous research by Fenno (1972) and Mayhew (1974) have already defined the goals of legislators. According to the Mayhew and Fenno, legislators are single-minded seekers of reelection. Secondary to gaining reelection, according to Fenno, is achieving influence within the legislative body and making good public policy. However, reelection is the proximate goal, in that it is “the goal that must be achieved over and over if other ends are to be entertained” (Mayhew 1974, 16). Thus, a legislator as “rational man,” is simply an actor that “moves toward his goals in a way which, to the best of his knowledge, uses the least possible input of scarce resources per unit of valued output” (Downs 1957, 5).

Why do some legislators participate with greater frequency than others? In this research, I will argue that the decision to participate is determined by an individual calculus of cost and benefits, which are conditioned by a variety of individual, institutional, and state level factors. It must be noted that the primary purpose of this research is not to develop a formal rational choice model of legislative participation. I will, however, assume that legislators carefully weigh out their costs and benefits before making their participatory decisions.

Hall (1996) sums it up quite nicely: “the House floor presents the individual member with a set of ways in which she might use her legislative time and resources to pursue her objectives, something like a set of political investment opportunities. Which ones she chooses, which ones she forgoes, will depend on her estimates regarding their relevance to her various

interests and the likely political returns of each; the legislative resources she has to invest by comparison with other actors, and her expectations that her investment is likely to achieve the results she seeks; and the information and transaction costs that she will pay—calculations that may vary dramatically member to member” (184).

2.4 Other Contributions to the Literature

In addition to the contribution to the legislative participation literature, this research also seeks to add to the theoretical development of state politics. Furthermore, it seeks to analyze the role of legislative professionalism in conditioning the participatory behavior of legislators.

2.4.1 A Broader Vision of State Politics

A major concern Jewell (1982) was that the study of state politics “is a barren one in terms of theoretical development. While students of cross-national comparative politics develop elaborate and competing theories about political development, institutionalization, functionalism, and political culture, those whose comparative study is limited to the fifty American states seem to be working in a theoretical vacuum” (651). Jewell suggests that state politics scholars turn their attention from single state analyses, to broader cross-state studies, while “being more sensitive to the theoretical dimensions of state studies” (655). Over a decade later, Moncrief, Thompson, and Cassie (1996) note the progress of Jewell’s vision of the state politics research agenda in areas such as gender, campaigns and elections, and legislative organization.

In the most recent review of the state politics literature, Clucas (2003) summarizes how far the study of state politics has come since the Lawrence Herson’s article “The Lost World of Municipal Government” (1957). Clucas notes that since 1990, over 200 articles on state legislatures have been published in leading scholarly journals, exploring a wide range of substantive questions and drawing on a variety of theoretical perspectives (387). According to Clucas, the problem of state politics research today “is not simply a lack of theory, for most

studies published today are framed in some theoretical perspective. Rather, the problem is the lack of a broader vision in trying to explain state legislative politics” (388). Much of the state level research today is conducted in terms of discrete research questions, with little effort being made to place these questions into a broader question. In other words, we are learning more and more about less and less.

This dissertation seeks to place a particular research question (why do some state legislators participate more than others?) in a broad theoretical context. Theories of mass or even elite level participation have yet to be fully tested and applied to state legislative politics. In terms of the broader vision of state politics, the hope is that further understanding the “why they participate” question will add to the already existing body of legislative decision making literature. Further, this research fits into the current progression of the state legislative politics literature. Where previous research has focused on the state as the unit of analysis, contemporary state politics research is relatively like to place the individual legislator at the center of analysis. Studies of state level careerism and ambition provide a good example of this progression. Earlier work by Squire (1988) models career patterns by analyzing the opportunity structure (in terms of prospects for higher office, staff, and salary) that each state legislature offers their members. Later work is more likely to focus on the factors that influence individual careers. This dissertation contributes to the scholarship on individual-level legislative behavior and careers within state legislatures, so that we can draw conclusions about individual, district, institutional, and state level factors that might shape the decision to participate.

This dissertation also seeks to take what we have learned from participation in Congress, and examine it in the state legislative setting. While it is important for those who study state legislative politics to build and test theories unique to the subfield, we also benefit from testing congressional theories and findings at the state level. This approach can help us understand how

institutional settings can shape legislative behavior and outcomes. Kiewiet, Loewenberg, and Squire (2002) note that although a large amount of research that has been devoted to the U.S. Congress, scholars have rarely investigated whether or how their conclusions can be applied to other legislative settings. Congressional scholars over the years have developed important models of legislative behavior (see Mayhew 1957; Cox and McCubbins 1993; Fenno 1972; Hall 1996; and Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987 for some examples) that could be tested at the state legislative level, thus providing new theoretical perspectives and refining established theories. Finally, Kiewiet, Lowenberg, and Squire (2002) note that “the most important reason for pursuing comparative legislative research is that so much of the recent literature of the U.S. Congress has been inconclusive” (4). And, “there is a strong sense among congressional scholars the theoretical insights that have driven research over the past few decades, derived primarily from various manifestations of the rational choice approach, have raised many issues but resolved few of them” (4). Originally scholars may have developed formal theories of legislative organizations with the goal to better understand Congress, but now scholars need to test these theories in other legislative settings. State politics scholars have noted the importance of using congressional theories at the state level. In addition to general theoretical development, Jewell (1981) argues that state politics should “bridge the gap that still exists between congressional and state legislative research” (1). Clucas suggests that “the research on congressional politics provides a valuable model for scholars of state legislatures, with its strong theoretical orientation that has helped is build a large body of literature and gain great insight into legislative politics” (407). Bridging Congressional research and state legislative research can help political scientists build knowledge in both areas.

Brace and Jewett (1995) recommend an “inclusive approach” to the study of American politics, where “such things as presidential and congressional elections, voting behavior or

federal expenditure patterns that might normally be considered outside state politics are included in cases where the states played an intrinsic role, either as an explanatory factor, or as a domain for political interactions” (646). note that “there are abundant opportunities for fruitful cross-pollination with other subfields in American politics which ultimately can provide more complete and clearer understandings of state and national politics, and politics in general” (645).

This study uses an inclusive approach in its theoretical development. Concepts and models of participation were directly borrowed from the congressional literature. The purpose here is twofold: the primary goal of this research is to develop and test a theory of state level participation and the secondary goal is to examine and test preexisting congressional theories of participation. Further, as suggested by Kiewiet, Lowenberg, and Squire (2002), this research seeks to develop a generalizable theory of legislative participation that can be utilized in a comparative setting.

One of the primary advantages of choosing the American states as the context in which to study politics is that the literature on state politics combines two major fields within political science: American and comparative politics. The context of this dissertation is the American states, but the comparative method is used as an analytical tool. Like developing democracies, the US states have experienced considerable institutional growth over the past 40 years, from the reapportionment revolution in the 1960s, to the legislative reform movement in the 1970s, to Reagan’s devolution in the 80s, to the term limits movement in the 1990s. Clucas (2003) identifies the study of institutions as being particularly theoretically well developed, noting that “scholars have shown more consistent attention to theory building here than in any other area of state legislative research, and, as a result, this line of study offers great promise for future research” (402). Indeed, the marked diversity across state legislatures positions state legislative politics as the center of research on legislative institutions. Shifting the focus away from

Congress and toward state legislatures gives us an opportunity to examine how institutional factors and context can influence legislative behavior and outcomes (Brace and Jewett 1995).

2.4.2 Legislative Professionalism

Previous studies of legislative professionalism have focused on a variety of different questions, ranging from the factors that shape the demand for interest groups (Berkman 2001; Gray and Lowery 1996), the causes and consequences of divided government (Fiorina 1994; Squire 1997); the rise of careerism (Squire 1988; Maestas 2003); membership stability (Squire 1988; Moncrief, Thompson, and Kurtz 1996); and gubernatorial influence and effectiveness (Dilger, Krause, and Moffett 1995). According to Squire (2007) “measures of professionalism are intended to assess the capacity of both individual members and the organization as a whole to generate and digest information in the policy process” (211). Professionalism has been hypothesized to influence a wide range of behaviors and outcomes, both within and outside the legislature. Given the concept’s importance across a wide spectrum of state politics research, the influence of professionalism on legislative participation is a crucial part of any discussion of legislative participation.

The concept of professionalism—and measures of the concept of professionalism—has a rich history in empirical scholarship. Measures of legislative professionalism first surfaced in the early 1970’s in work done by Grunn (1971) and the Citizens Conference of State Legislatures in (1971). The most widely used measure of professionalism was first developed by Squire (1992a). Squire’s index was developed from work initially done by Polsby, who noted that “one favored place to begin has been for reformers quite consciously to adopt as their model the United States Congress. In American state legislatures this has meant a movement toward the establishment of a respectable pay scale, provision for independent staff services, and increases in the time allowed for legislatures to sit (Polsby 1975, 297). Specifically, Squire’s index is a

comparison of the state to Congress, using an index of pay, average days in session, and average staff per member (Squire 2007, 212). That is, Squire's index measures how closely the legislature was to that of Congress. This index is widely considered in the state politics literature to be the standard measure for legislative professionalism, and will therefore be used in this dissertation research.

The major critique of Squire's index comes from Rosenthal (1996), who argues that "professionalism as a concept ought to be restricted to the legislature and not extended to include the members who compromise it" (175). Further, Rosenthal argues that "institutional professionalism refers to the improvement of legislative facilities, the increase in information availability to the legislature, the size and variety of legislative staffs, and probably the time spent at legislative work" (175). In particular, Rosenthal objects to the inclusion of individual legislator salary as part of an index for legislative professionalism, noting that salary is a dimension of careerism rather than professionalism. In other words, changes in salary have an effect on behavior at the individual level, whereas changes in staff and session length have institutional level effects. In general, it is possible that one or two of the elements of "professionalism" are what are of theoretical interest, rather than the entire scale. In this research, the unit of analysis is the individual legislator and a major independent variable is Squire's index. However, this research investigates both state and institutional effects on participation, and all the elements of Squire's index likely influence both individual level activity and aggregate participation in the legislature. Table 1 outlines the major theoretical implications of the components of Squire's professionalism index. According to Squire (1988a) higher salaries allow legislators to devote more time and energy to lawmaking by freeing them from the distraction of another occupation. This research hypothesizes that higher salaries may provide legislators with more freedom to participate in legislative activities.

Table 1: Implications of Legislative Professionalism for Legislators and Legislatures

Professionalism Component	Implications for Legislator	Implications for Legislature
Salary and Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased incentive to serve, leading to longer tenure • Increased ability to focus on legislative activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to members with longer tenure, creating a more experienced body • Attracts better qualified members
Time demands of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced opportunities to pursue other employment and increased need for higher salary to compensate for lost income • Increased opportunity to master legislative skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased time for policy development • Increased time for policy deliberation
Staff and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased ability to influence policy making process • Increased job satisfaction • Enhanced re-election prospects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased policymaking influence relative to the executive

SOURCE: Squire (2007), “Measuring Legislative Professionalism: The Squire Index Revisited”

That is, higher salaries in the chamber would increase the ability of individual legislators to focus on participation; participation is less costly, because it is less likely to detract from the pursuit of goals related to another career. In terms of the legislature as an institution, a chamber that attracts more experienced and better qualified members, and that devoted more time to lawmaking activities, is one that is likely to encourage participation.

The most straight forward effect of participation comes from the increase in session length. As time in session increases, members have more time to participate in legislative activities. Full-time legislators likely have more incentive to participate in part because they are expected to do so by their constituency – and they can participate with fewer costs, because they do not have the distraction and demands of competing career. As time increases, legislatures will be able to more effectively produce and deliberate over policy outputs, thus increasing aggregate participation. Moreover, previous research has shown that increases in staff increases legislator job satisfaction and re-election prospects. It is likely that legislators who enjoy their job (while feeling secure in their position) are more likely to be active in bringing legislative proposals to the policy agenda.

An emerging and important area in this body of literature is the connection between professionalism, public opinion, and job performance. The literature finds that legislative professionalism influences job performance ratings (see Patterson, Ripley, and Quinlan 1992; Jewell 1982; and Cotter 1986). Although these studies have found that economic and social conditions influence the public's assessment of the state legislatures, the causal mechanism that connects legislative professionalism with negative responses by citizens is still generally unclear. A study using an extensive dataset drawn from 124 polls, across 13 states, over a period of 26 years, finds that state polls show that job performance ratings declined as state legislatures become more professional, and that citizens from states with more professionalized legislatures were more supportive of term limit legislation (Hamman 2006). The longitudinal analysis shows that legislative job performance ratings decline in the 1980s and early 1990s after levels of legislative professionalism reached their highest levels. However, the relationship between public approval of legislatures and professionalism appears to depend on the level of professionalism of the states in question. In states that are relatively less professionalized or

moderately professionalized, approval appears to rise with professionalism. When state legislatures become highly professionalized, however, public approval of legislatures begins to decline. Further, Hamman (2006) finds that the volume of bills passed by the legislature has a negative effect on citizen performance ratings. These findings are contradictory to the intent of reformers, who believed that full time professional legislatures assisted by more competent staff would enact policies more consistent with the preferences of their constituents (consistent with the expectation that when constituency preferences are met, approval ratings will increase). Maestas (2000) finds that the policy outputs of professional legislatures are more ideologically representative of citizens than the policy outputs of less professionalized legislatures.

It is overwhelming evident that the public is not very knowledgeable about legislative politics, making the relationship between professionalism and public approval (and policy outputs) somewhat difficult to interpret. Hibbing and Theiss-Moore (1995) find that at the Congressional level, the public is particularly uncomfortable with deliberative, conflictual, or democratic processes. However, these are the very processes that often allow legislators to build policy consensus in the chamber, and promote cooperation between the legislative and executive branches of government.

2.4.3 The Role of Informational Costs and Institutional Knowledge

From previous research, scholars have learned legislative behavior fluctuates over the legislative career (see Hibbing 1990). This fluctuation is caused in part by the incumbency advantage, which may reduce the opportunity costs of a relatively high degree activity within the legislature compared to activity in constituency service and outreach. The fluctuation may also be related in part to the institutional knowledge a legislator gains from service in the legislature. Indeed, the degree to which changes in behavior across the legislative career can be attributed to increased electoral safety and increased institutional knowledge is likely enhanced by the

relatively uniqueness of a legislative career. Holding legislative office requires no formal job training or qualifications. Legislators, especially at the state level, come from a variety of different previous occupations and educational backgrounds. Job activities such as drafting bills, forging relationships with interest groups, voting on measures in committee and on the chamber floor, making speeches, deliberating in committee, and building coalitions are all highly specific to the institution in which they are conducted. For new legislators, the informational and opportunity costs of performing these activities are relatively high. For example, new legislators may have no prior bill drafting experience or may lack the political connections to know which interest groups can be of greatest assistance. Furthermore, many legislators get elected by addressing very issues that are highly specific to their district; once in office, however, legislators are required to take positions on a variety of policies. The process by which legislators gain information to make decisions about how to participate entails substantial informational costs—costs which decrease as they gain experience. Junior legislators generally must take time to learn policy making rules and norms, from the correct way to draft a bill, the way in which bills are presented and deliberated in committee, the most effective path to forging relationships with other legislators to gain support for one's policy proposals, and the most effective way to oppose policy initiatives contrary to one's goals. As the legislative career progresses, legislators may become more electorally safe—and may be able to devote less time in activities outside the legislature designed to shore up support. Activity within the legislature may therefore entail fewer opportunity costs.

This research includes several variables that are indicators of informational and opportunity costs. I argue that different career stages carry different levels of informational costs. For example, as tenure in office increases, a legislator should gain institutional knowledge, and the informational costs associated with performing legislative duties will likely

decrease. Furthermore, previous elected experience may also ease informational costs, particularly at the beginning of the legislative career. Legislators who have made a career of public service may be able to overcome informational costs much more efficiently than legislators without such experience. The opportunity costs of activity within the chamber may be relatively low for legislators who are relatively electorally safe. The roles of institutional knowledge and informational costs on specific variables will be further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 3: DATA

This chapter provides a description of the data, measurements and descriptive statistics for all variables used in the proceeding empirical chapters.

3.1 Description of Data

The data used in this dissertation is a cross-sectional sample of legislators in ten American states during the 2001 legislative session. These states include Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, North Carolina, New Mexico, and Texas. States were selected for both data availability and necessary variation across key institutional variables (professionalism, state ideology, and term limits). Please refer to Table 2 for term limit and professionalism categories by state.

Table 2: Term Limit, Professionalism, and Ideology Categories by State

State	Term Limits	Squire's Professionalism Classification	State Mass Ideology ²
AR	Yes	Citizen	49.72 (7)
CA	Yes	Professional	56.67 (4)
CO	Yes	Hybrid	39.81 (10)
FL	Yes	Hybrid	49.85 (6)
IL	No	Professional	58.65 (2)
MD	No	Hybrid	67.65 (1)
MI	Yes	Professional	58.12 (3)
NC	No	Hybrid	47.02 (8)
NM	No	Citizen	54.11 (5)
TX	No	Hybrid	42.65 (9)

Previous research has indicated that national shifts in partisan support influence legislative behavior, thus the 2001 legislative session was chosen because of its occurrence as both an off-election year (in the states and at the national level) and a non-presidential election year (Rivers and Rose 1995; Page and Sapiro 1993; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993). The states were also selected to represent the US states as a whole. Please refer to Table 3 for a

² Liberalism ranking is located in parentheses.

comparison of the sampled states versus the total state population. The ten states chosen for analysis have relatively high populations. However, the ideology of their populations is roughly comparable to the average citizen ideology in all fifty states, and the average household income in the ten state sample is very close to that of all fifty states. The ten states are also marginally more racially diverse and urban than are all fifty states. The state legislatures tend to be more professionalized, largely because of the inclusion of California and Michigan in the sample. The sampled states are marginally more racially diverse than the national average; they are very representative in terms of gender diversity, partisan balance, and majority party dominance. It should be noted that the sample states are on average well within one standard deviation of the national average on each of the measures presented in Table 3.³

The unit of analysis in this dissertation is the individual legislator. All legislators who were elected during regular elections and who served during the entire duration of the legislative session were included. Furthermore, only members who represented single member districts were included in the data set (i.e. no legislators representing multi-member districts were included). Multi-member districts were excluded from all analyses because the very nature of multi-member districts distorts the electoral connection, making it difficult to draw any conclusions on the trade offs made by legislators. In multi-member districts, where voters can support multiple candidates, it is difficult to assess the relationship between legislative activity and electoral accountability; this is particularly a problem for the analyses of electoral competition that I present in Chapter 6. Furthermore, I include previous electoral margin in the analyses of participation; as noted in Chapter 2, relatively safe legislators may incur fewer opportunity costs when focusing on activity within the chamber. The inclusion of multi-member districts would make it difficult to test the effect of previous electoral margin on participatory

³ The measure of citizen ideology used was developed by Berry, et. al. (1998); it ranges from 0 to 100, from very conservative to very liberal. (put the rest of the sources here)

behavior. Therefore, the forty legislators that were elected from multi-member districts were removed from the sample.

Table 3: Representativeness of Sampled States

	Sampled States	All States
State Level Variable		
State Population (in millions)	11.52	5.62
Citizen Ideology	43.72	46.44
Percentage of African Americans in Population	13.1	9.64
Household Income (in thousands)	37.47	36.18
Percentage Living in Urban Areas	30.7	26.7
Institutional Level		
Legislative Professionalism Index (Squire 2000)	0.25	0.18
Percentage of Female Legislators in the Lower House (2001)	26.67	24.23
Percentage of Black Legislators in the Lower House ⁴	11.06	7.49
Percentage of Democratic Legislators in the Lower House (2001) ⁵	55.03	51.01
Average Percentage of Seats Held by the Minority Party in House, 1996, 1998	39.62	36.59

3.2 Measurement of Variables

Table 4 provides the names and measurements for all dependent and independent variables used in this research. The theoretical reasoning and expected impact of these variables will be discussed in the chapters four through six. In this research, I conduct three analyses of the determinants and consequences of legislative participation.

⁴ Data Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

⁵ Data Source: http://www.ipsr.ku.edu/SPPQ/journal_datasets/klarner.shtml

Table 4: Measurement of Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable Name	Measurement
Dependent Variables	
Bill Sponsorship	The total number of bills the legislator sponsored during the 2001 legislative session. Resolutions, which tend to be less substantive (and are often honorary), are not included.
Roll Call Absenteeism	The percentage of bills on which an individual legislator did not cast a "yea" or "nay" vote during the 2001 legislative session.
Challenger Emergence	Dichotomous Variable; coded 1 if the legislator faced a challenge in the next electoral cycle (generally, 2002) and 0 otherwise.
Independent Variables	
Individual Variables	
Political Party	Dichotomous Variable; coded 1 if the legislator is a Republican and 0 otherwise
Majority Party	Dichotomous Variable; coded 1 if the legislator is a member of the majority party and 0 otherwise
Previous Electoral Margin	Measured as the percentage of the general election vote the legislator earned in the previous election.
Seniority	A count of the total number of consecutive years the legislator served in his/her current seat.
Freshman	Dichotomous Variable; coded 1 if the legislator is currently serving in his/her first term, and 0 otherwise.
Retirement	Dichotomous Variable; coded 1 if the legislator is not running for reelection in the next election and 0 otherwise
Gender	Dichotomous Variable, coded 1 if the legislator is female and 0 otherwise
Party Leader	Dichotomous Variable; coded 1 if the legislator is a member of the party leadership (speaker or floor/party leader)
Committee Chair	Dichotomous variable; coded 1 if the legislator is a committee chair and 0 otherwise ⁶ .
Previous Elective Experience	Dichotomous Variable; coded 1 if the legislator held previous elected office and 0 otherwise.
Ideology	W-Nominate score, ranging from -1 (very conservative) to 1 (very liberal)
Ideological Extremism	Folded W-Nominate score, values ranging from 0 (ideological moderate) to 1 (ideologically extreme).

² In Maryland, very few standing committees exist, and so chairs of subcommittees were included as "committee chairs."

(Table 4 Continued)

Distance	The average distance from the legislator's district to the state capital.
<hr/> State and District Variables <hr/>	
Citizen Ideology	The Berry, et. al. (1998) score for citizen ideology, ranging from 0 (very conservative) to 100 (very liberal).
Social Diversity	Sullivan's Index; ranges from 0 to 1 with high values indicating that citizens in the district share few common characteristics. The index includes measures of income, occupation, education, age, and race.
<hr/> Institutional Variables <hr/>	
Legislative Professionalism	Measured as the rank (from 1 to 50) the state received on Squire's Index. Low values indicate high professionalism.
Term Limits	Dichotomous Variable; coded 1 if the state is term limited and 0 otherwise.

Bill sponsorship and roll call vote participation will be used as indicators of participation and challenger emergence will be used as an indicator of the consequence of legislative participation. As noted above, bill sponsorship is measured as the total number of bills sponsored by each legislator during the 2001 regular legislative session. This number excludes any bills sponsored during special sessions and does not include the sponsorship of resolutions. Furthermore, legislative records generally made a distinction between cosponsorship and primary sponsorship; when such a distinction was made, only bills for which the legislator was the primary sponsor were included in the count. Table 5 includes the average number of bills sponsored by state. Across all states, the average legislator sponsors about fifteen bills. A relatively high number of measures are sponsored, on average, in Texas, California, and Illinois; a relatively low number of measures are sponsored, on average, in Colorado, Florida, and Maryland. There is a great deal of variation in sponsorship levels across the states. Roll call vote participation is measured as the percentage of bills in which the member did not cast a "yea" or "nay" vote on during the 2001 regular legislative session. Legislative records do not always

make a distinction between absenteeism (not being present to vote when the roll call occurs) and abstention (or a failure to vote "yea" or "nay", even when present in the chamber). I argue that the differences between these concepts are not relevant for this research, Both abstention and absenteeism are instances where the legislator did not take a formal position on the bill, thus shirking (voluntarily or not) on a central duty of their job. In both cases, the legislator did not stake out a visible policy stance on the bill. Furthermore, the levels of roll call participation did not vary substantially across states, providing evidence that the variable was measuring the same concept in each legislature. Table 6 includes the average percentage of abstention per state. Legislators from New Mexico and Arkansas have the highest levels of roll call absenteeism, while Colorado has the lowest levels of absenteeism. Across all states, the average legislator misses between seven and eight percent of roll call votes.

Table 5: Number of Bills Sponsored by State⁷

State	Mean	N	Std. Dev.
AR	11.65	99	8.33
CA	21.60	78	5.69
CO	6.31	64	2.07
FL	8.37	118	5.72
IL	20.77	109	15.01
MD	8.95	20	4.51
MI	14.32	106	7.89
NC	14.20	80	11.14
NM	13.96	69	10.78
TX	24.96	148	16.06
Total	15.70	891	12.25

Roll call vote participation is measured as the percentage of bills in which the member did not cast a “yea” or “nay” vote on during the 2001 regular legislative session. Legislative records do not always make a distinction between absenteeism (not being present to vote when

⁷ In Illinois, the Democratic Speaker and Republican floor leader (Michael Madigan and Lee Daniels) were the primary sponsors of an extremely high number of bills. To eliminate the possibility that these two legislators would distort the results of the analyses, they were eliminated from the study.

the roll call occurs) and abstention (or a failure to vote "yea" or "nay", even when present in the chamber). I argue that the differences between these concepts are not relevant for this research, both abstention and absenteeism are instances where the legislator did not take a formal position on the bill, thus shirking (voluntarily or not) on a central duty of their job. In both cases, the legislator did not stake out a visible policy stance on the bill. Furthermore, the levels of roll call participation did not vary substantially across states, providing evidence that the variable was measuring the same concept in each legislature. Table 6 includes the average percentage of abstention per state. Legislators from New Mexico and Arkansas have the highest levels of roll call absenteeism, while Colorado has the lowest levels of absenteeism. Across all states, the average legislator misses between seven and eight percent of roll call votes.⁸

Table 6: Average Percentage of Absenteeism by State

State	Average	N	Std. Dev.
AR	12.1	99	7.1
CA	7.9	78	5.7
CO	2.9	64	4.2
FL	4.2	118	3.6
IL	4.9	109	8.8
MD	5.2	20	3.6
MI	6.1	106	7.4
NC	9.2	80	12.1
NM	15.4	69	12.9
TX	7.5	148	7.5
Total	7.5	891	8.6

What is the relationship between sponsorship and absenteeism? Do legislators with high levels of absenteeism also have high levels of sponsorship? To test the relationship between sponsorship and absenteeism Table 7 provides the results from a Pearson's correlation between sponsorship and absenteeism. The results indicate that the two variables are positively

⁸ Legislators who missed more than 95% of all roll calls were eliminated from the analysis.

correlated, indicating that as levels of sponsorship rise as do levels of absenteeism. In other words, high levels of sponsorship activity are significantly associated with high levels of participation on roll call votes. This relationship will be further explored in Chapter 5.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation between Sponsorship and Absenteeism

	Sponsorship	Absenteeism
Sponsorship		
Pearson Correlation	1	0.244**
Sig. (2-tailed)	N/A	0.000
N	945	945
Absenteeism		
Pearson Correlation	0.244**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	.
N	945	945

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To further clarify the relationship between sponsorship and absenteeism, Figure 1 provides a summary of the absenteeism (in percent) and sponsorship by state. Although the overall relationship between absenteeism and sponsorship is positive, it is clear that in some states (Texas, California, and Illinois) high levels of sponsorship are associated with low levels of absenteeism. Again, this relationship will be further explored in the forthcoming chapters. This research will consider the impact of two institutional variables; legislative professionalism and term limits. Because of their centrality to this research, it is important to understand their relationship with the two indicators of participation. Figure 2 provides a line graph of the relationships between sponsorship and legislative professionalism and between absenteeism and legislative participation. With the exception of Texas, it seems that the general relationship between sponsorship and professionalism is a negative one; as professionalism rises, levels of sponsorship seem to fall. However, as clarified by the line graph, the negative relationship is a very general trend. What is most apparent is a distinct state by state variation across sponsorship levels. In terms of absenteeism, the relationship between absenteeism and professionalism is

fairly constant until Colorado. From Figure 2, it seems that once professionalism decreases to a certain level, roll call absenteeism begins to rise.

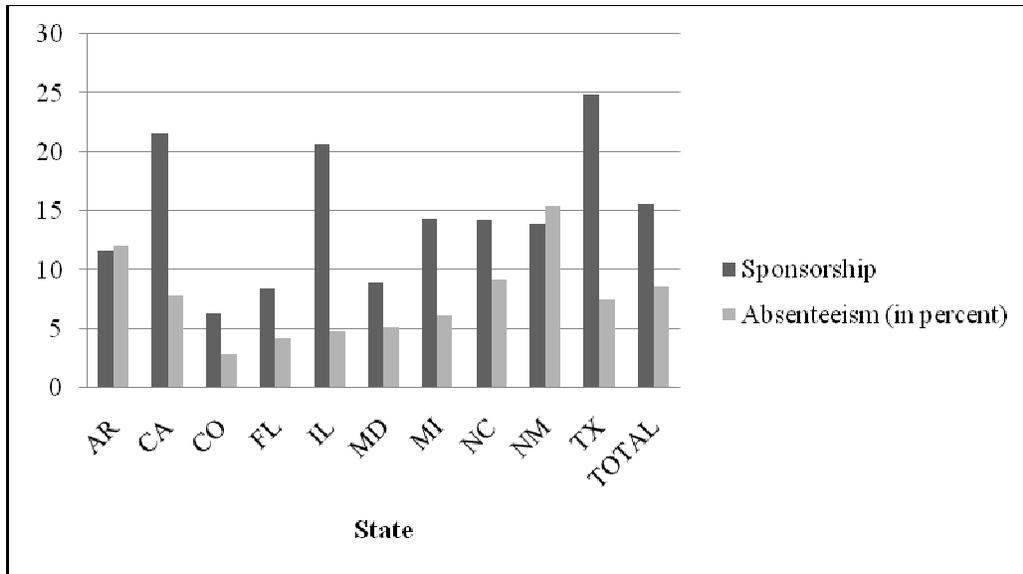


Figure 1: Average Sponsorship and Absenteeism by States

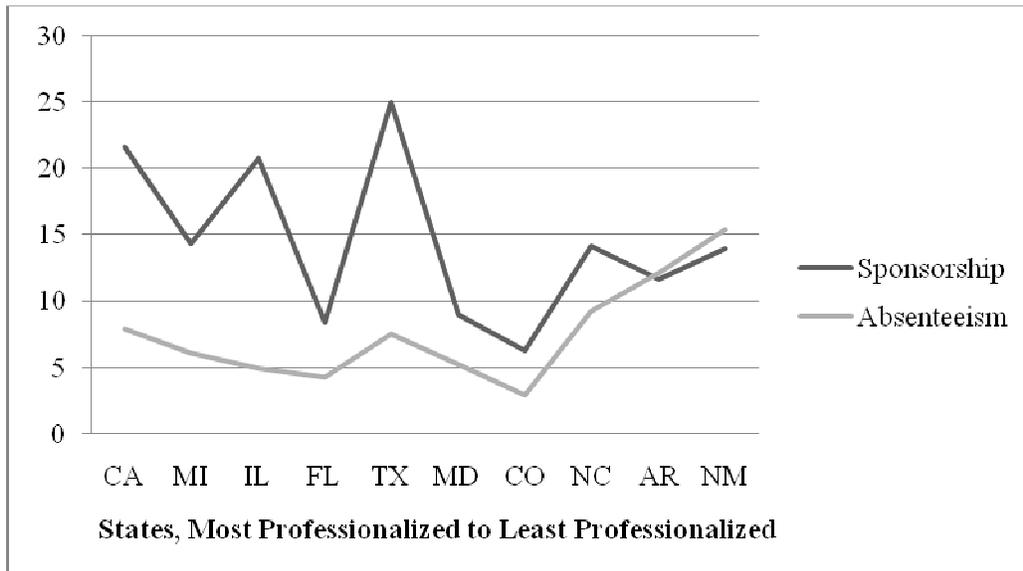


Figure 2: Sponsorship and Absenteeism by Levels of Professionalism

Figure 3 provides a comparison of absenteeism and sponsorship levels across term limited and non-term limited states. In terms of sponsorship, legislators from term limited states sponsor less legislation; however the difference is only about four bills. Legislators from non-

term limited states show up to vote on roll call bills about two percent less than legislators from term limited states.

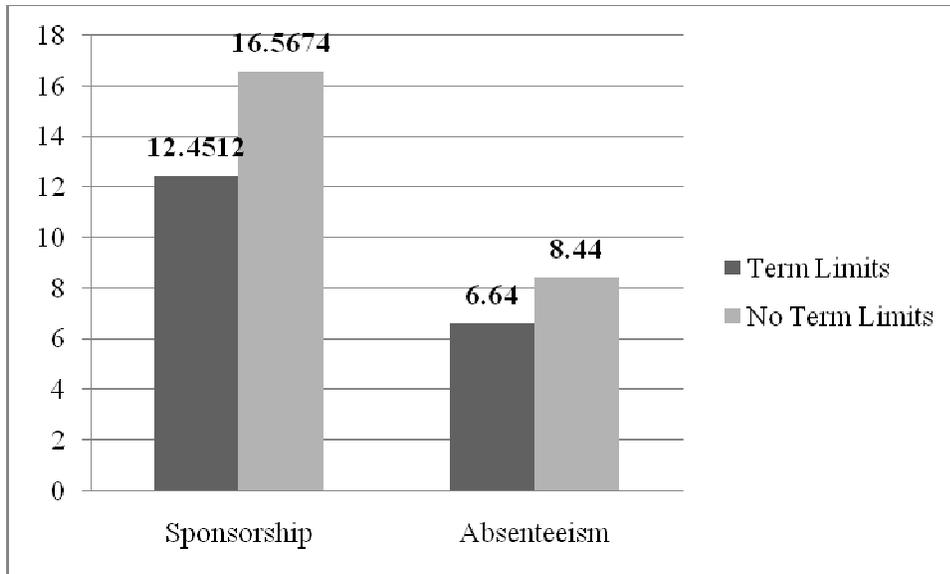


Figure 3: Sponsorship and Absenteeism by Term Limits

The challenger emergence variable measures whether or not the incumbent was challenged by a major party candidate in the next general election. Of the 891 legislators serving during the 2001 legislative term, only 657 ran for reelection. Furthermore, of those 657, only half faced a challenge in the next election. Table 8 includes the frequency of the total challenges and contested elections. Arkansas, Florida, and New Mexico had the lowest rates of challenger emergence of all the states. In fact, only 20% of incumbents running for reelection were challenged in Arkansas. This is a stark difference to the electoral environment in Michigan, where only one incumbent running for reelection did not face a challenge. Incumbents California faced a similar electoral environment, with nearly 85% drawing a challenge. Figure 4 illustrates the rates of challenger emergence across legislative professionalism. The general trend indicates that as professionalism decreases, so do challenges to incumbents. Maryland appears to be an outlier in data; this may be partially caused by the exclusions of the multi-

member districts. The relationship between challenger emergence and professionalism will be further explored in Chapter 6.

Table 8: Frequency of Unchallenged and Challenged Elections by State

	Unchallenged	Challenged	Total	Percent Challenged
AR	52	13	65	20.0%
CA	7	39	46	84.8%
CO	15	34	49	69.4%
FL	65	27	92	29.3%
IL	41	48	89	53.9%
MD	4	12	16	75.0%
MI	1	54	55	98.2%
NC	34	30	64	46.9%
NM	38	21	59	35.6%
TX	72	50	122	41.0%
Total	329	328	657	49.9%

Figure 5 illustrates the difference in challenger emergence across term limited and non-term limited states. Incumbents are about 10% more likely to draw a challenge in term limited states, than they are in non-term limited states. The relationship between term limits and challenger emergence will be further analyzed in Chapter 6. The results from Figure 5 seem to indicate that term limits do not act as a major deterrant or attractor for potential challengers.

Referring back to Table 3, this research uses a number of individual, institutional, and state/district level independent variables. A few of these variables need more explanation than what is provided in Table 3. Previous elective experience includes any experience in elected public office, such as city council or school board, or previous legislative experience. The distance variable was calculated an average of the furthest point in the district to the state capital and the closest point in the district to the state capital (in miles).

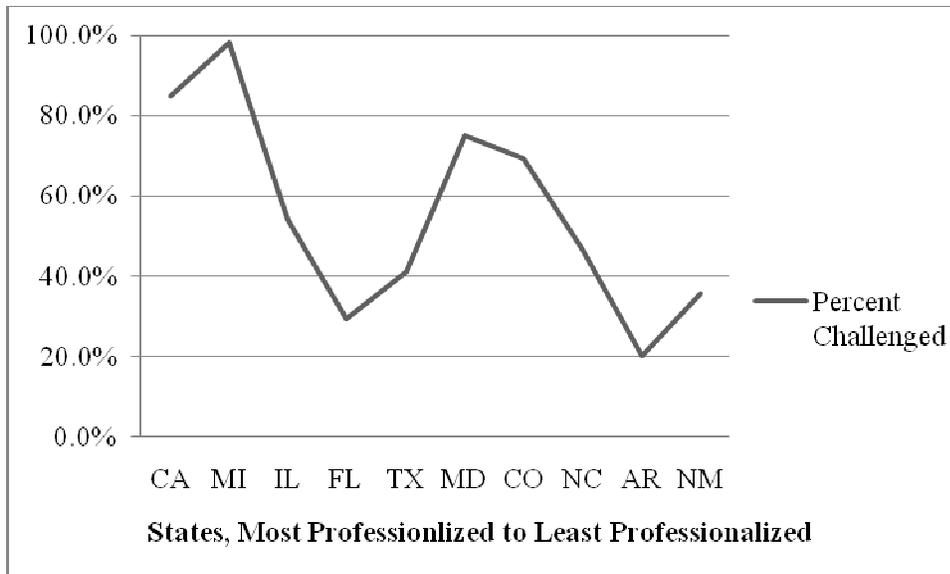


Figure 4: Percentage of Legislators Challenged by Levels of Professionalism

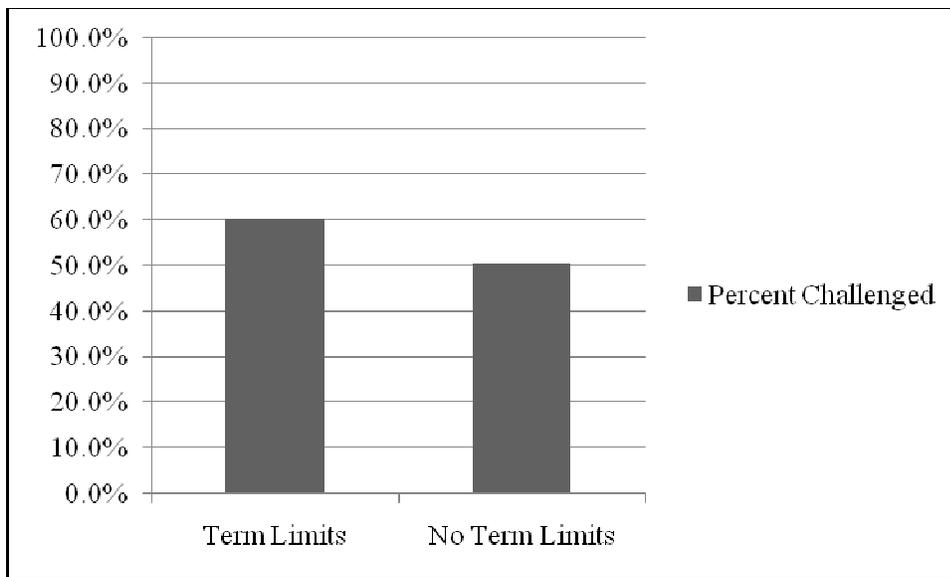


Figure 5: Percentage of Legislators Challenged by Term Limits

Referring back to Table 3, this research uses a number of individual, institutional, and state/district level independent variables. A few of these variables need more explanation than what is provided in Table 3. Previous elective experience includes any experience in elected public office, such as city council or school board, or previous legislative experience. The distance variable was calculated an average of the furthest point in the district to the state capital and the closest point in the district to the state capital (in miles).

Ideology is measured by a W-nominate score, ranging from -1 (very liberal) to 1 (very conservative). The W-nominate score is a scaling method developed by Poole and Rosenthal (1997). Using the matrix of binary choices by legislators (in this case, “yea” or “nay” on state roll call votes) over a series of state roll call votes, W-Nominate produces a configuration of legislators and outcome points for the Yea and Nay alternatives for each roll call using a probabilistic model of choice.⁹ A legislator’s vote choice on these roll calls can then be transformed into the -1 to 1 scale. The ideological extremism variable is simply the absolute value of the W-Nominate score. This dissertation research uses a variable developed by Berry, et. al. (1998) to measure citizen ideology at the state level. This measure assigns an ideological position to each member of Congress (using interest group ratings), then estimates citizen ideology in each Congressional district of a state using the ideology score for the district’s incumbent, the estimated score for a challenger (or hypothetical challenger) to the incumbent, and election results (under the assumption that these results reflect the ideological divisions in the electorate). Citizen ideology scores for each district are used to compute an unweighted average for the state as a whole.¹⁰ Finally, social diversity is measured by the Sullivan Index, which ranges from 0 to 1 with high values indicating that citizens in the district share few common characteristics. The Sullivan Index is composed of five district level demographic characteristics: family income (percent \$100K or greater, percent less than \$100K but greater than \$50K, percent \$50K or less); occupation (percent in manufacturing, percent in service industry, percent in government, percent in farming); education (percent with at least a two-year degree, percent with less than a two- year degree); age (percent aged 55 years old and older,

⁹ For a detailed discussion of the W-Nominate process, please refer to Poole and Rosenthal (1997).

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the citizen ideology variable, please refer to Berry, et. al. (1998).

percent younger than 55); and race/ethnicity (percent White, percent Black, percent Hispanic, percent Asian).¹¹

3.3 Descriptive Statistics

Table 9 provides descriptive statistics for all dependent and independent variables. Across all states, legislators sponsor on average about sixteen bills. The legislator responsible for the upper bound of sponsorship (101 bills during the 2001 legislative session) was Wyvette Hoover Young (D) from Illinois. Representative Young is seventy-one years old and as served in the Illinois state legislature for the past twenty seven years. The average legislator was absent on 7.5 percent of roll call bills, with legislators from New Mexico averaging the highest percentage of absenteeism and legislators from Colorado averaging the lowest percentage of absenteeism. In terms of challenger emergence, half the states had more contested seats than uncontested seats.

Of the 891 legislators, about 47% were Democrats and 58% were in the majority party in their chamber. Legislators across states had an average of 5.5 years in office. The longest tenure in office was thirty-five years (Tom Uher, D, Texas); just over two hundred legislators were in their first term. Nearly twenty-five percent of legislators were retiring in the next legislative term. In terms of position within the chamber, about one quarter of legislators served as committee chairs.

¹¹ Sullivan (1973) uses the following formula to compute social diversity scores:

$$A_w = 1 - \left(\sum_{k=1}^p Y_k^2 / V \right)$$

Where:

A_w = the social diversity measure for the district.

Y_k^2 = the proportion of the district within a given category for each variable.

V = the number of variables.

p = the total number of categories within each of the variables.

Data on district characteristics comes from Barone, Lilley, and DeFranco (1997) and Lilley, DeFranco, and Diefenderfer (1994). For a detailed discussion of the Sullivan Index, please refer to Sullivan (1973) and Liberson (1969)

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables

Variable Name	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Dependent Variables					
Bill Sponsorship	891	15.69	12.25	1	101
Roll Call Absenteeism	891	7.50	8.62	0	9.21
Challenger Emergence	657	49.92	50.03	0	1
Independent Variables					
Individual Factors					
Republican	891	0.47	0.50	0	1
Majority Party	891	0.58	0.49	0	1
Electoral Margin	889	0.78	0.19	0.501	1
Seniority	891	5.51	5.30	1	35
First Year	891	0.25	0.43	0	1
Retirement	891	0.24	0.43	0	1
Female	891	0.25	0.43	0	1
Leader	891	0.02	0.15	0	1
Committee Chair	891	0.25	0.44	0	1
Previous Elective Experience	891	0.46	0.50	0	1
Ideology	891	-0.045	0.70	-1	1
Ideological Extremism	891	0.66	0.23	0.017	1
Distance	891	1.47	1.11	0	5.35
State/District Level Factors					
Social Diversity	886	0.361	0.043	0.21	0.48
Citizen Ideology	891	51.05	6.74	39.81	67.65

(Table 9 continued)

Institutional Factors					
Professionalism	891	16.3	12.42	1	41
Term Limited	891	0.52	0.5	0	1

Of course, very few (2.2%) legislators held a top leadership position. Almost half of the state legislators in this study (nearly 45%) had held previous office. In terms of ideology, the average member was ideologically moderate (leaning slightly liberal). About 75% of legislators were male.

The average legislator's district was located about 147 miles from the state capital. On average, legislators from Florida and California had to travel the furthest to their respective state capitals and legislators from Colorado had the least distance to travel. The legislative who had to travel the farthest distance from his district to his capital (Joseph Pickett) served in Texas.

Please refer to Table 10 for a summary of the average distances by state.

Table 10: Average Distances to State Capital by State

State	Average Distance	N	Std. Dev.
AR	79.71	99	45.86
CA	260.99	78	144.82
CO	51.76	64	59.04
FL	273.01	118	106.40
IL	146.84	109	44.76
MD	63.25	20	39.19
MI	74.81	106	50.83
NC	96.06	80	52.07
NM	119.63	69	86.83
TX	176.31	148	99.63
Total	147.04	891	111.49

As noted above, the ten states used in this study were roughly representative of the nation as a whole in terms of citizen ideology. There was substantial range in citizen ideology across

the states, however. Colorado had the most conservative citizenry, while Maryland had the most liberal population. Please refer to Table 2 for a summary of citizen ideology by state. On average, the states represented in this research were ideologically moderate.

In sum, the states selected vary across key institutional variables and are representative of the US states as a total population. Furthermore, there is substantial state by state variation in the dependent and independent variables.

CHAPTER 4: PARTICIPATION AND BILL SPONSORSHIP

4.1 Previous Research on Bill Sponsorship

In keeping with the major goal of this research project, this chapter seeks to answer the question “why are some members so active, while some members are so inactive?” Or, in terms of sponsorship, why do some members actively sponsor legislation, while others do not? Many previous studies at the congressional level have examined the effects of various factors on the sponsorship and co-sponsorship activities of individual members (Garand and Burke 2005, Campbell 1982, Frantzich 1979, Schiller 1995). Schiller (1995) describes three possible costs of bill sponsorship: resource costs, opportunity costs, and political costs. Resource costs refer to the time and energy that the senator and his/her staff spend on meetings with interest groups, constituents, and other political offices. Political costs entail any backlash that the introduction of the bill may cause, such as negative press or lowered approval in the constituency. When legislators sponsor bills, they go on record with their policy positions. Because of the complexity of many measures, political opponents can easily point to sponsored legislation (or parts of sponsored measures) as evidence of a legislator's shortcomings. Finally, opportunity costs are the costs associated with sponsoring a measure focusing on one policy—rather than another. Although not specifically addressed by Schiller (1995) the opportunity cost of sponsoring legislation can also include other legislative activities, such as roll call voting or constituency service. Schiller argues that “if the legislator is a rational actor, there must be benefits attached to bill sponsorship that can outweigh the costs. These benefits may include improvements in public policy, material gains for the senator’s state, and internal and external reputations as an issue expert, all of which can contribute to electoral success” (190).

Schiller’s study reveals that individual, institutional, and state level variables influence sponsorship behavior. At the individual level, senior members and committee chairs were more

likely to sponsor legislation (see also Sinclair 1989). This fits well with Schiller's rational choice argument. As members gain seniority and move into influence positions, the costs of sponsorship decrease because these members have a relatively higher degree of policy making expertise and skill. They therefore likely expend less time and energy when sponsoring legislation. Furthermore, leadership roles (such as committee chairmanships) allow legislators to more effectively and efficiently pursue their legislative agenda and promote their legislative proposals. As the cost of sponsoring legislation decreases, these legislators are able to sponsor more legislation. Very junior legislators, on the other hand, lack policy-making expertise, skill, and influence. Consistent with this reasoning, Schiller (1995) finds that legislators in their first two years of service are significantly less likely than their more senior colleagues to sponsor legislation. I therefore expect that seniority will be related to sponsorship activity; relatively junior members will have relatively low levels of bill sponsorship.

Schiller finds that senators with larger legislative staff also have higher levels of sponsorship. A large staff can help the legislator in two ways. First, the staff can directly assist the legislator in writing bills, through researching issues or actually drafting proposals. Second, legislative staff can assist the legislator by taking on tasks other than bill drafting—such as constituency service—thus reducing the opportunity costs that might be incurred when sponsoring policy proposals. Staff is a component of the Squire professionalism index. The other two components of the index, pay and average days in session, are also likely to reduce opportunity costs. Legislators who regard legislative service as a full-time career (that is, those in more professionalized legislatures) are likely better able to sponsor legislation without reducing the amount of time spent in other legislative activities. I therefore expect that legislative professionalism will be positively associated with sponsorship activity.

Schiller (1995) finds that both ideology and partisanship have little effect on the level of bill sponsorship. These results may be caused by the individualistic nature of the Senate, compared to the party-centered atmosphere of the House of Representatives. Furthermore, in her study, it was impossible to determine the effects of chamber control on sponsorship, since the Senate was consistently controlled by Democrats. Nonetheless, the question of the influence of partisanship and the influences of majority party control are theoretically important, given the majoritarian nature of U.S. legislatures, and the different views the major parties have on the size and power of government.

Garand and Burke (2005) analyze the effect of majority party status, ideology, and partisanship on bill sponsorship. They note that “during periods of Democratic control of the U.S. House, it is impossible to distinguish the effect of being a Democrat (Republican) from being a member of the majority (minority) party” and that “most of the literature on sponsorship and cosponsorship has been focused on time periods of fixed partisan control of the U.S. House” (167). Their analysis of the 102nd to 105th congressional sessions reveals that representatives in the majority party were more active in sponsorship than their colleagues in the minority party. Indeed, majority party status was a highly significant influence on sponsorship, even above and beyond the effects of ideology and partisanship. Their results show as well that the “Republican House members increased their sponsorship activity relative to that of Democrats directly as a result of becoming the majority party in the House. Democrats had higher sponsorship rates while they were the majority party, and Republicans had higher sponsorship rates after they took control of the House (179).

In keeping with Schiller (1995), Garand and Burke (2005) initially hypothesize that ideologically conservative and/or Republican members of the House would have lower levels of sponsorship because of their traditional views on the limited role of government. They find that

“Republicans do not have the systematically lower levels of sponsorship that we expected; to the contrary, there appears to be no systematic difference between Republicans and Democrats in their sponsorship behavior” (179). Garand and Burke (2005) use both a measure of the liberal-conservative dimension and a measure of ideological extremism¹². They find that sponsorship rates are somewhat higher among members who are relatively liberal and/or ideologically extreme. They also find that “sponsorship rates are higher among former legislative staffers, state legislators, or state and local elected officials, relatively senior, committee or subcommittee chairs, non-Black, and electorally secure as indicated by a large margin of victory in the previous election” (180).

At the state level, the research on sponsorship has primarily focused on the differences in bills enacted across different legislatures; that is, the analyses focus on institutions rather than on individuals. For example, recent work by Gary and Lowery (1995) and Squire (1998) uses measures of legislative professionalism and interest group activity across the states to explain differences in aggregate levels of legislative production.

The scholarship that examines bill sponsorship at the state level has focused primarily on the sponsorship of measures in a particular policy area. For example, Barnello and Bratton (2007) find that personal characteristics such as race, education, age, and family circumstances are associated with sponsorship of "women's issue" legislation by men. Previous work by Thomas (1991), Bratton and Haynie (1999), Reingold (2000), and Swers (2002) suggest that female legislators are more likely than their male colleagues to focus on issues that are particularly relevant to women. In a larger context, the research on women's issue legislation

¹² Garand and Burke (2005) use a DW-Nominate to measure the liberal-conservative dimension, with scores coded so that high values represent the more conservative policy positions. Further, Garand and Burke (2005) measure ideological extremism/intensity (or strong policy preferences) with a “folded” DW-Nominate score which is the absolute value of the raw DW-Nominate scores. The result is a measure ranging from 0 (pure moderate) to more than 1 (intense liberal or conservative).

suggests that individual level factors substantially influence levels of participation at the agenda-setting stage of the legislative process.

To date only a few studies (Krach 2005; Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski 2006) have analyzed sponsorship patterns at the state level in a manner similar to the congressional scholarship of Schiller (1995) or Garand and Burke (2005). The most comprehensive analysis of sponsorship at the state level is conducted by Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006), who analyze the sponsorship patterns of legislators from twenty state legislatures over two legislative sessions (1997-98 and 1999-00). This approach builds on previous state level research (see Gray and Lowery 1995 and Squire 1998) in that it examines the influence of individual, district, and institutional factors. Furthermore, the twenty state sample allows for cross state comparison of a number of state-level factors, such as legislative professionalism, interest group strength, and public opinion liberalism. The comprehensive nature of this work also allows us to compare the behavior of state legislators to on the behavior of members of Congress. Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006) find that various state level variables have an impact on sponsorship. First, legislators from states with a higher percentage of citizens who self-identify as liberal introduce significantly more legislation than their counterparts in relatively conservative states. It may be that legislators view sponsorship as a means to satisfy the constituency demands of good governance. The authors also find that interest group strength has a negative and significant relationship to levels of bill sponsorship. In states with relatively strong interest groups, levels of bill sponsorship are relatively low. Finally, legislators representing heterogeneous districts that contain many disparate interests introduce more legislation than legislators representing homogeneous populations. In general, these state level findings suggest that legislators do pattern their behavior to meet constituency demands, which is compatible with the cost-benefit argument outlined in Chapter 2.

Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006) also find that legislative professionalism is related to bill sponsorship, but (contrary to expectations) bill sponsorship is relatively low in relatively professionalized legislatures. This finding also runs somewhat counter to the earlier work of Schiller (1995), who found that increased numbers of legislative staff resulted in a greater number of sponsored legislation. It is possible that legislators in professionalized legislatures are more refined in their law making abilities, and are more effective, and therefore introduce fewer measures—but more measures which pass. Furthermore, this research does not measure the size or policy area of the bill. It may be possible that members from professionalized legislature sponsor a smaller number of measures with the same number of policy provisions; professionalize state legislatures may be more likely to produce omnibus measures, or measures with several amendments and riders.

Consistent with Garand and Burke (2005)'s conclusions regarding sponsorship in Congress, Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006) find that members in the majority party introduce more legislation than minority party members. Unlike Schiller (1995) and Garand and Burke (2005), they find that both partisanship and ideology have a significant impact on bill sponsorship. Consistent with the theory that sponsorship is related to general views on government, they find that conservatives and Republicans, who are often thought to support a relatively limited role of government, . Furthermore, both seniority and committee chairmanship significantly affect sponsorship activity. These findings at the state level are consistent with the findings at the Congressional level of Schiller (1995) and Garand and Burke (2005). Moreover, these individual level findings point to the legislator's need to make decisions about how to allocate the resource of time.

4.2 Variables and Hypotheses

This research will analyze the determinants of sponsorship (as an indicator of participatory behavior) with a variable measuring the total number of bills that an individual legislator sponsors during the 2001 legislative session. As previously noted, this measure does not include resolutions. Like Garand and Burke (2005), I control for a variety of individual level factors. Furthermore, like Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006), I provide controls for state/district and institutional level variables. In the following sections of this chapter, I will discuss the hypothesized effects of the independent variables on legislative sponsorship.

4.2.1 Ideology and Ideological Extremism

Legislators who are more liberal may be inclined to support a larger, more active role of government and therefore may sponsor more legislation. However, the previous literature has drawn mixed conclusions regarding the effects of ideology. Schiller (1995) finds that ideology does not significantly affect sponsorship activity, while Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski, and Garand and Burke (2005) find that as a legislator's ideology becomes more liberal, they are more likely to sponsor legislation. In keeping with the state level finding of Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006), I hypothesize that more liberal legislators will sponsor more legislation.

Members who are ideologically extreme may sponsor fewer bills because their ideological preference is outside the median preference of the floor. These members may feel disenfranchised and choose not to participate in this legislative function. On the other hand, ideologically extreme legislators may find that the agenda-setting stage of the legislative process is the stage at which they can most effectively exercise their voice. Indeed, bill sponsorship may represent a unique opportunity for these members to make their preferred policies visible. Placing policies on the legislative agenda may be a first step to moving those policies into the mainstream of public debate Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006) test the effect of ideological

extremism on sponsorship, but finds no effect. I hypothesize that ideologically extreme members will sponsor more legislation than their moderate counterparts.

4.2.2 Political Party

Previous researches on the effect of political party are mixed. Garand and Burke (2005) find that Republicans introduce more legislation than Democrats, while at the state level Karch (2005) finds that party has no effect on sponsorship. Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006) find that Republicans sponsor less legislation than do Democrats. I expect that the effect of party will be similar to the effect of ideology; in other words, I expect that Republicans will introduce less legislation because of their support for a limited role of government.

4.2.3 Majority Party

Keeping with the findings of Garand and Burke (2005), I hypothesize that legislators in the chamber's majority party will sponsor more legislation than those in the minority party. Being a member of the majority party facilitates the introduction process; those in the majority party have more influence over the final form and outcome of the bills that are placed on the legislative agenda.

4.2.4 Seniority, Freshman, and Retirement

Three variables are used to measure the effect of careerism on legislative sponsorship: seniority, freshman, and retirement. The seniority and freshman variables reflect the role of informational costs and institutional knowledge in conditioning sponsorship behavior. Senior members have already traveled a relatively long way on the bill sponsorship "learning curve." These members have developed bill drafting expertise and have established relationships with staff and interest groups who can assist them in researching drafting the legislation). Moreover, senior members are likely relatively well respected within the institution and have developed relationships with both the chamber leadership. They can more efficiently and effectively

sponsor a higher number of measures. In short, more senior legislators, by gaining institutional knowledge, have decreased levels of informational costs. Drawing on the findings of Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006), I hypothesize that seniority will be positively related to bill sponsorship. Furthermore, I expect the inverse effect for newly elected representatives. In keeping with the reasoning above, I expect that first year members will introduce less legislation than other members.

What is the effect of impending retirement on sponsorship activity? Work by Hibbing (1991) and others suggest that the members in their last term of service are less active than other members. Herrick, Moore, and Hibbing (1994) find the legislators who do not plan to run again introduce fewer pieces of legislation. This finding suggests that members respond to electoral pressure, and that those who are retiring may have less of an incentive to introduce legislation because they are no longer constrained by their electorate. Moreover, members who know that they will not be present in future years may be less likely to use sponsorship as a means to reach long-term policy goals. In other words, without the fear of losing reelection, members may shirk on their sponsorship duties. I expect that legislators in their (voluntary) last term of service will sponsor less legislation than continuing members.

4.2.5 Previous Elective Experience and Freshman/Experience Interaction

As outlined above, I expect that seniority will lead to greater knowledge of the legislative process, and therefore decrease information costs, leading to more sponsorship activity. I likewise expect that legislators with previous political experience will sponsor more legislation. It is likely that legislators with previous political experience have a legislative agenda already in mind when they enter legislative service. And because they have a better understanding of the legislative process, they likely have the skills and the networking abilities to more efficiently and effectively implement that agenda. Prior work has not examined the effect of prior experience

on sponsorship activity, in part because of lack of available data. I expect that legislators with previous experience in elected public office will sponsor more legislation than legislators who are relatively new to politics. I also expect that the costs of gathering information about the legislative process will be most pronounced for those who lack experience both outside of and within the chamber. Therefore, I expect that the effect of experience will be most pronounced for newly elected legislators who have no prior political experience.

4.2.6 Party Leader and Committee Chair

Two dichotomous variables are used to examine the relationship between sponsorship activity and serving in a leadership position within the chamber. Legislative leaders are more involved with all aspects of the legislative process than the typical rank and file members. They have greater power over the legislative agenda, thus can put their legislation on the docket with greater ease. Furthermore, leaders may use their sponsorship activity as a signal to the rest of the legislative body. Committee chairs may enjoy some of the same legislative perks as those in the leadership. Committee chairs will also have greater control over the legislative agenda than the typical rank and file member. Finally, I suspect that some rank and file members will look to committee chairs and legislative leaders to sponsor some of their legislative initiatives (thus, ensuring that the bill gets full consideration). Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006) test the impact of both leadership and chairmanship on sponsorship. He finds that being a committee chair has a positive effect on bill sponsorship, and (although barely significant) a small, positive effect of leadership position on bill sponsorship. I hypothesize that legislators who are leaders or committee chairs will sponsor more legislation than other legislators.

4.2.7 Gender

Scholars have consistently found that the sex of a legislator influences sponsorship activity. Thomas (1991) and Swers (2002) find that women are more likely to sponsor women's

issue legislation than their male counterparts. Bratton and Haynie (1999) find that women are more likely to sponsor legislation across a number of issue areas, including women's issues, health policy, education policy, welfare policy, or children's policy. When interviewing state legislators in Arizona and California, Reingold (1992) found that female legislators – and some of their male colleagues – generally perceived women as better able to represent women. But both men and women were often ambivalent about that representational connection, and stressed that there was more that were more similarities than differences in the ways in which men and women approached representation (Reingold 1992). Given the possibility that women will see "women" as a separate constituency, I expect that female legislators will sponsor more bills than their male counterparts.

4.2.8 Previous Electoral Margin

Bill sponsorship can be a way for a legislator to stake out relatively popular positions on salient issues. That is, bill sponsorship can be used as a form of advertisement for the legislator, and a way to gaining recognition and support from their constituents. From this perspective, those who won the last election by a relatively small margin would find sponsorship activity most beneficial; those who won their seats by a large margin may not need to increase sponsorship to maintain their seat.

However, electorally vulnerable legislators may find it more advantageous to spend their time electioneering in their districts, or providing constituency service for voters and potential voters. Members who are electorally secure can spend less time on electioneering activities and more time on pursuing their public policy goals. Consistent with the findings of Garand and Burke (2005), I expect that members who won a large margin of victory in the previous election to sponsor more legislation. In other words, electoral security brings the gift of time to devote to

agenda-setting activities within the legislators; less electorally secure legislators must focus on electioneering activities.

4.2.9 Professionalism

Professional legislatures have greater staff support to assist in drafting and researching legislative measures, thus making it easier for legislators to introduce legislation. Gray and Lowery (1995) suggest that sponsorship levels are higher in more professionalized chambers. Contrary to expectations, however, Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski. (2006) find a negative relationship between professionalism and bill sponsorship (i.e. as professionalism increases, the number of bills sponsored decreases). This negative effect may be in part of a “gate keeping” function. Chambers with a large staff may more effectively sort out measures before they are placed on the legislative agenda, removing duplication or unnecessary measures, and combining bills which share similar policy objectives. The norms within more professionalized legislatures may discourage the introduction of bills that are destined for failure. Furthermore, legislators from professionalized legislatures may feel more pressure from interest groups to *not* sponsor legislation. Given the mix of theoretical expectations and findings, I therefore have no specific expectation regarding the relationship between professionalism and bill sponsorship.

4.2.10 Term Limits

Since the majority of work on sponsorship is conducted at the congressional level, little is known about the effect of term limits on sponsorship behavior. Other scholars (see Herrick, Moore, and Hibbing 1994) suggest that legislators who know that their careers will be short will be likely to specialize in order to enact their personal policy agenda before their time is up. That is term limits may encourage members to aggressively and quickly pursue their goals. Glazer and Wattenberg (1996) likewise suggest that term limits will encourage members to spend less time focusing on their own reelection prospects and more time focusing on legislative activities.

I therefore expect that legislators from states that are term limited will sponsor more legislation than legislators from non-term limited states.

4.2.11 Public Opinion Liberalism

States with a more liberal citizenry may prefer a more activist government, and thus legislators will be more active in sponsorship. This is consistent with the findings of Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006). I therefore hypothesize a positive relationship between public opinion liberalism and bill sponsorship.

4.2.12 Distance

Trips to the state capital are more difficult and costly to state legislators living in far away districts. Furthermore, their local news may devote relatively little coverage to the legislative process unfolding in the capital city. Moreover, legislators who live far from the capital may find it relatively important to maintain visible connections with the district. They may be more likely, therefore, to focus on constituency service than their colleagues who live close to the capital, and there may be more of a trade-off between policy work that occurs within the chamber and electoral efforts that take place outside of the capitol. Although the distance variable has been tested in the rational abstention literature (see Rothenberg and Sanders 2000, 2002), it has not been tested as a factor effecting bill sponsorship at either the state or national levels. I hypothesize that as the distance from the capital increases, the number of bills sponsored will decrease.

4.2.13 Social Diversity

The social diversity variable measures the demographic heterogeneity of a district. This dissertation research measures social diversity with an index developed by Sullivan (1973), where high values indicate that citizens within a district are relatively diverse. Previous research on state level bill introduction has suggested that total population, urbanization, and

industrialization have a positive relationship with bill introduction (Rosenthal and Forth 1978). Several scholars find that racial diversity within a district is associated with the sponsorship of policies of particular interest to African Americans (e.g., Bratton and Haynie 1999; Grose 2005). However, Gray and Lowery (1995) find few direct district level effects on aggregate bill sponsorship. Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006) is the only study to date that examines the role of a general measure of district social diversity on bill sponsorship. They find a positive relationship between social diversity and bill sponsorship. In other words, legislators representing heterogeneous districts introduce more legislation than do legislators representing homogeneous populations. This finding suggests that legislators are responding to constituency demands through their sponsorship behavior; as district population becomes more diverse, legislators sponsor more legislation in order to address the needs and interests of those multiple constituencies. Like Hogan, Kromer, Wrzenski (2006) and Rosenthal and Forth (1978), I expect that social diversity will have a positive effect on bill sponsorship.

4.3 Model and Results

What are the determinants of legislative sponsorship? In order to empirically answer this question, an ordinary least squares¹³ multiple regression analysis using the total number of bills introduced by a legislator is conducted. Table 10 provides the results from three different models: a fixed effects model, a random effects model, and a mixed model. The mixed model includes all individual level variables described above, in addition to the three state level variables described above (a measure of legislative professionalism, a measure for citizen liberalism within the state, and a dummy variable for term limits,). It also includes six dummy variables to control to the degree possible for other state-level effects on sponsorship which

¹³ Some scholars (see King, 1988) would argue that a negative binomial regression would be the more appropriate statistical model given the event count nature of the dependent variable. In addition to the OLS analysis, I conducted the same analysis using negative binomial regression (see Table 12). The results were virtually identical.

cannot be measured—such as norms or traditions within the legislature that change average sponsorship levels, or the political culture of the state. Because of the inclusion of the three state-level variables, only six dummy variables could be included. The fixed effects model, on the other hand, eliminates the three state level variables (professionalism, citizen liberalism, and term limits) and includes nine state dummy variables to control for state-level effects on sponsorship. Note that the only difference between the "fixed effects" and "mixed" models is that the mixed model excludes three of the state-level dummies in order to include three state-level substantive variables; therefore, the individual-level effects are the same in the two models. Finally, the random effects model eliminates all the state dummy variables, but does include the three state-level variables (professionalism, citizen liberalism, and term limits).

In my discussion of the effects of the individual level variables on sponsorship, I will focus on the "fixed effects" and "mixed" models, which include the most rigorous controls. The independent variables included in the model predict about 37% of the variance in sponsorship. The most powerful effects on sponsorship appear to be related to career, partisanship or ideology, and position within the chamber. As expected, majority party members sponsor more measures; conservatives sponsor fewer measures. Contrary to Hogan, Kromer, and Wrzenski (2006) and consistent with Garand and Burke (2005), I find that Republicans introduce about three more bills than legislators from other political parties. However, it should be noted that auxiliary regression analyses indicate that this negative and significant effect is due to the inclusion of legislator ideology (measured through the W-Nominate score) in the model—that is, only after we control for individual ideology do we find that Republicans sponsor more measures. Once legislator ideology is removed from the analysis, Republicans introduce significantly fewer measures than Democrats.

Table 11: OLS Regression: Effects of Legislator, Institutional, and State Factors on Sponsorship

Variables	Analysis 1 (Mixed)		Analysis 2 (Fixed Effects)		Analysis 3 (Random Effects)	
	Estimate	Std. Err.	Estimate	Std. Err.	Estimate	Std. Err.
Individual Level						
Seniority	.14	.14	.14	.14	.10	.14
Freshman	-3.61**	.91	-3.61**	.91	-5.79**	1.02
Retirement	1.35	.94	1.35	.94	1.80 ⁺	1.01
Leadership Position	1.45	2.25	1.45	2.25	-.68	2.44
Committee Chair	3.15**	1.01	3.15**	1.01	2.82**	1.08
Previous Experience	-1.89*	.82	-1.89*	.82	-1.90*	.88
Previous Experience, for Freshman	.94	1.15	.94	1.15	3.52**	1.26
Legislators						
Gender	-1.25	.84	-1.25	.84	-1.67 ⁺	.88
Party	3.62*	1.84	3.62*	1.84	.98	1.96
Majority Party	4.31**	.72	4.31**	.72	4.15**	.80
Ideology (W-Nominate)	-4.25**	1.35	-4.25**	1.35	-2.73 ⁺	1.41
Ideological Extremity	.40	1.71	.40	1.71	3.60*	1.68
Previous Electoral Margin	1.80	1.92	1.80	1.92	5.96**	2.07
Distance	-.89*	.45	-.89*	.45	.06	.36
Social Diversity	-.54	10.71	-.54	10.71	13.23	9.63
State Level						
Legislative Professionalism ^a	.41**	.05			.17**	.03
Citizen Ideology	-.66**	.07			-.04	.06
Term Limits	1.82	1.30			-5.68**	.95
State Dummies						
Arkansas			4.25*	1.72		
California			15.90**	1.81		
Colorado	-22.09**	1.54	-.40	1.31		
Florida	-11.19**	.86	4.32*	1.74		
Illinois	3.51*	1.55	13.46**	1.72		
Maryland						
Michigan	-5.30**	1.48	8.03**	1.72		
North Carolina	-8.21**	1.55	6.12**	1.56		
New Mexico	5.86**	1.79	6.23**	1.65		
Texas			17.60**	1.77		
Constant	33.17**	5.17	2.20	4.43	.50	.92
R²	.37		.37		.26	
Number of Legislators	885		885		885	

^a: Squire index is transformed so that higher values=more professional

*: p≤.05, two-tailed test

** : p≤.05, two-tailed test

⁺: p≤.05, one-tailed test

Table 12: Negative Binomial Regression: Effects of Legislator, Institutional, and State Factors on Sponsorship

Variables	Analysis 1 (Mixed)		Analysis 2 (Fixed Effects)		Analysis 3 (Random Effects)	
	Estimate	Std. Err.	Estimate	Std. Err.	Estimate	Std. Err.
Individual Level						
Seniority	.01	.01	.01	.01	<.01	.01
Freshman	-.33**	.06	-.33**	.06	-.50**	.07
Retirement	.09 ⁺	.05	.09 ⁺	.05	.15*	.06
Leadership Position	.11	.13	.11	.13	-.05	.13
Committee Chair	.18**	.05	.18**	.05	.15**	.05
Previous Experience	-.10*	.05	-.10*	.05	-.11*	.05
Previous Experience, for Freshman	.07	.09	.07	.09	.27**	.10
Legislators						
Gender	-.07	.05	-.07	.05	-.12**	.05
Party	.27*	.12	.27*	.12	.12	.14
Majority Party	.28**	.04	.28**	.04	.24**	.05
Ideology (W-Nominate)	-.22**	.08	-.22**	.08	-.15 ⁺	.09
Ideological Extremity	.06	.10	.06	.10	.27*	.11
Previous Electoral Margin	.15	.12	.15	.12	.43**	.13
Distance	-.05*	.02	-.05*	.02	.01	.02
Social Diversity	.14	.56	.14	.56	1.22*	.51
State Level						
Legislative Professionalism ^a	.02**	<.01			.01**	<.01
Citizen Ideology	-.04**	<.01			<.01	<.01
Term Limits	.21**	.08			-.35**	.06
State Dummies						
Arkansas			-.69	.11		
California						
Colorado	-1.63**	.10	-1.28**	.09		
Florida	-.86**	.07	-.88**	.07		
Illinois	.27**	.09	-.19**	.09		
Maryland			-1.05**	.14		
Michigan	-.32**	.09	-.48**	.09		
North Carolina	-.40**	.09	-.59**	.12		
New Mexico	.42**	.12	-.61**	.10		
Texas			-.01	.09		
Constant	3.53**	.31	2.73**	.27		
Wald Chi-Square	1262.22*		1262.22**		367.8**	
Number of Legislators	885		885		885	

^a: Squire index is transformed so that higher values=more professional
 *: p<.05, two-tailed test ** : p<.05, two-tailed test⁺: p<.05, one-tailed test

The effect of seniority on sponsorship is quite small in magnitude and statistically insignificant. However, I find that, as expected, new legislators sponsor fewer measures than their more established counterparts, and committee chairs sponsor a relatively high number of measures. These findings provides support for the argument that freshman members may be hindered by their lack of institutional knowledge, and that relatively influential legislators have more resources and incentives to sponsors a relatively high number of measures. Surprisingly, the results indicate that members who are retiring sponsor more bills than those hoping to continue on in the next legislative session, although this result is only significant in the negative binomial regression, and then only marginally so. The direction of the effect of "retirement" is counter to both my hypothesis and the congressional findings of Hibbing (1991) and Herrick, Moore, and Hibbing (1994). It may be that legislators in their final term of service are making the most out of their remaining time in the legislature and want to sponsor as much legislation as possible.

Legislators who serve in top leadership positions sponsor more measures, but not significantly more measures, than others in the chamber. It may be that members of the leadership are too busy with other duties to frequently sponsor their own legislation. Perhaps most surprising, legislators with previous elected office experience were less likely to sponsor legislation (although the coefficient was small). It may be that these legislators are more skilled, thus only introducing a few bills with a higher probability of passage

Ideological extremists introduced more bills, as expected, but the effect was significant only in the random effects model. Electoral margin is, as expected, positively related to sponsorship, but again is only significant in the random effects model. Distance from the capital is, as expected, significantly related to sponsorship; legislators who live far from the capital introduce fewer measures. What were the effects of the state-level variables (professionalism,

citizen liberalism, and term limits)? In the fixed effects (and mixed) model, legislative professionalism is positively related to sponsorship—the more professional a legislature, the more sponsorship activity takes place. Citizen liberalism also significantly influences sponsorship, but in a negative direction, which is counter to expectations. It may be that citizen liberalism may influence the type of measures introduced, rather than the overall number of measures; here, the dependent variable is simply a count and does not take into account the ideological tone of the bill.

Is the significance of the results affected by the association across the variables? Not surprisingly, there is a substantial degree of multicollinearity in the sponsorship analysis. In a multivariate regression, the variables for party, legislator ideology, professionalism rank, term limits, and citizen ideology all have VIF scores above 4. However, collinearity will not alter the magnitude of the parameter estimates, but will only inflate the standard errors of the estimates; both partisanship ("Republican") and legislator ideology ("Conservatism") are statistically significant in both an OLS regression analysis and in the event count (negative binomial) analysis. Therefore, the high degree of collinearity does not influence the interpretation of the results.

It is not surprising that the three variables that do not vary within states (professionalism rank, term limits, and citizen ideology) are highly collinear with each other. Therefore, the standard errors and significance of the estimated effects of these variables are somewhat difficult to interpret. Moreover, including both the dummy variables and the state level variables makes it somewhat difficult to interpret the coefficients of the state level variables, since they essentially represent the effects of the excluded states. At the same time, since there are three state-level variables, it is difficult to interpret the meaning the effects of the state dummies in the analysis where the state-level variables are omitted.

To address these difficulties, in addition to calculating VIF scores to assess collinearity, I also performed a set of thirty-five auxiliary regressions, each omitting a different set of state dummy variables, but including the three state level variables. In almost all states, regardless of what set of dummy variables was excluded, the coefficient for professionalism ranking was positive, and it was statistically significant in a substantial majority of cases. Note that the significant coefficient present in Table 11 suggests that collinearity is not an issue in the fixed effects regression that is present. Professionalism appears to be clearly positively related to sponsorship activity. The findings for citizen liberalism are less conclusive, but in about 70% of the auxiliary regressions, citizen ideology is negatively and significantly related to sponsorship—the more liberal a state, the less sponsorship activity takes place. The findings for term limits are much more mixed; whether the effect is positive or negative, and whether it is significant, depends largely on the choice of states to include in an analysis.

4.4 Discussion

What have we learned from these analyses? That is, who participates? In general, the results indicate that majority party members, liberal legislators, committee chairs, and those who live close to the capital sponsor more legislation than their colleagues. Legislators who serve in professionalized states are generally more active; legislators who serve in relatively liberal states and who have prior political experience are somewhat less active. First year members sponsor fewer measures.

I previously argued the given the increased constraints on a legislator's time, trade-offs have to be made. Although Chapter 6 will more directly address the role of trade-offs in participatory behavior, the findings in this chapter suggest that legislators are making decisions based on opportunity costs. First year members may not have the same set of skills and level of expertise as more established members, and therefore sponsor fewer measures. Members who

live far from the state capital have higher transportation costs and as a result participate less in the capital centered activity of bill sponsorship. More generally, the results of the majority party and committee chairmanship variables suggest that as the relative ease (or decreased cost) of sponsorship decreases the level of sponsorship rises. Majority party members and committee chairs are more able to get their bills on the docket and will not experience the same obstacles as members of the minority party or non-chairs. Further, because of the power they yield over the legislative body, these legislators may receive more “help” from interest groups in bill composition and research (thus, decreasing the informational costs). Likewise, members serving in relatively professionalized legislatures are better equipped to efficiently and effectively place measures on the legislative agenda.

There are several promising avenues for future research. Some of the questions raised by this and previous research focus on whether the individual-level and state-level variables influence not only the amount of legislation introduced, but also the type of legislation introduced. Therefore, future research should focus on the introduction of bills that pass. Furthermore, an analysis of “key bills” or bills with high salience would be beneficial. It may be that quality legislators are more likely to pass legislation or focus their efforts on legislation of higher importance. Future research could also distinguish bills based on policy area or ideological tone, to better sort out the effects of partisanship and constituency.

CHAPTER 5: PARTICIPATION AND ABSENTEEISM

The previous chapter examined sponsorship as one measure of legislative participation. What other activities may also be used as a measure of participation? One of the most studied legislative activities is the roll call or floor vote. In this chapter, I build on prior research by analyzing legislative shirking. Both sponsorship and shirking tap into legislative participation, but do so in fundamentally different ways. Legislators make choices about bills to sponsor—and through a legislative session, implicitly make choices about bills not to sponsor. Yet they are never called to visibly express their decision not to sponsor, and the decision not to sponsor a bill is not recorded. In contrast, legislators must make a clear, visible choice to participate or not to participate in each roll call vote. By analyzing the determinants of both forms of participation, I will be able to draw conclusions on the trade-offs that legislators make with their scarce time. Are the two forms of participation related? Do members with high levels of bill sponsorship activity also have strong roll call attendance records? Or, with the growing time constraints that legislators face, do they make trade-offs between their legislative activities, leading to little or no association between sponsorship activity and roll call attendance? To fully understand participation, it is important to understand non-participation.

This chapter will proceed as follows: I begin with a review of the relevant literature, which is focused heavily on the concept of rational abstention. Second, I develop a model of determinants of absenteeism. This model includes the sponsorship variable from Chapter 4, to examine the relationship between the two forms of participation. I also include all the independent variables included in the earlier analyses of sponsorship, in order to make the results as comparable as possible. Finally, I draw conclusions regarding the determinants of legislative absenteeism, and discuss the relationship between absenteeism and sponsorship.

5.1 Previous Research on Roll Call Participation

What is the relationship between participation and non-participation? Most legislators participate on roll call votes. Further, most roll call votes at both the state and national levels are decided by a wide margin with a very predictable outcome. Some scholars view participation in roll call voting as a signaling activity. Mayhew (1974), for example, sees roll call voting as a way legislators signal their constituents about their stands on issues. According to a narrow interpretation of his analysis—the interpretation that Mayhew himself presents—only the signal itself, and not the legislative outcome, is important to the legislator. Legislative activity is solely about position-taking, and not about the pursuit of policy preferences. From the Mayhewian perspective, therefore, absenteeism matters because it sends a signal about the representation being provided to the constituent—that is, no representation at all. Cohen and Noll note that “the most common explanation holds that abstention is harmful to legislators because their constituents are likely to interpret a poor participation record as evidence of poor representation” (99). The choice to cast a yea or nay vote on legislation may be a signal to the either the party leadership or the electoral constituency that the legislator is on-board and a committed member of the party, or is actively representing the constituency's interests in the chamber.

Public choice perspectives often characterize turnout and absenteeism as influenced by the benefits and costs of voting. The “calculus of voting”, developed by Downs (1957) and refined by Riker and Ordeshook (1968), maintains that the value of participation is a function of the interaction of a probability that an individual's participation would change the outcome and the benefits which would accrue to the individual if the preferred outcome was realized, less the costs of participation. However, there are several well-known challenges to this theoretical perspective. When applied to mass participation, voting turnout is actually higher than one would expect given a "rational model". In part, this is because of the nature of the costs and

benefits involved, which are relatively low (see Aldrich 1993, 1997; Mueller, 1989). Moreover, the benefits to would-be voters may include a feeling of satisfaction from satisfying one's civic duty, or casting a ballot in support of the preferred candidate. Such a benefit can still be compatible with a rational choice perspective, as it is linked to self-interest. What is less compatible, however, is the argument that individual in the mass public are altruistic, and incur the costs of voting merely to pursue the interests of the community as a whole.

The rational choice perspective may work better when studying participation at the elite level. First, there are both higher costs and more substantial benefits to participation. Roll call voting allows elected officials an opportunity to actually influence policy, and to receive benefits more quickly and with greater certainty than do voters choosing among candidates in an election. Legislators may act for the good of the community—but in such a small community, almost everything affects the individual in some manner. Even if a bill does not pass, the act of staking out a position—particularly a position that is compatible with a legislator's party and constituency—may bring electoral benefits. Moreover, in terms of sheer numbers, the one roll call vote of a single legislator is far more likely to make a difference than the vote of a single constituent in a state-level or Congressional election. Legislative votes can also signal policy preferences to other legislators—that is, roll call votes can provide information to other legislators, and can persuade other legislators to support (or oppose) a policy. And, even when measures fail, those measures may well be considered another day—and this may be particularly likely in close votes. That is, a single roll call vote may not contribute to a winning outcome in the short term, but may contribute to the likelihood that an issue will be considered again. Further, legislators, through direct contacts with interest groups, party leaders, and other sources of expert information, are likely better able to accurately assess the costs and benefits of each choice, whereas at the mass level, the costs of not voting are typically low. In the legislative

setting, where participation is considered more obligatory, the costs of not voting are more apparent. Substandard participation rates may be portrayed by a challenger as a dereliction of a member's legislative duties, and missing a particular vote may be interpreted (and publicized) by interest groups as opposition to the group's agenda.

As legislative voting data has become readily available, numerous scholars (see Poole and Rosenthal 1997 for an example) have used roll call data to analyze voting behavior. However, most legislative studies have only focused on the actual preferences expressed—rather than on the decision to express a preference. Although limited, the work done on absenteeism has provided a strong theoretical basis for the work in this dissertation. Cohen and Noll (1991), Poole and Rosenthal (1997), and Rothenberg and Sanders (1999, 2000a, 2000b, and 2002), which are developed in the specific context of the US Congress, and Scully (1997) and Noury's (2004) work on abstention in the European Parliament are examples of such studies.

Cohen and Noll (1991) analyzed the abstentions on eight roll calls on the Clinch River Breeder Reactor Project that took place between 1975 and 1982. The major focus of their work is the complex relationship between the decision to vote, and the preference expressed through voting, and constituency characteristics. Controlling for each representative's overall proclivity to participate, they observe that “on virtually all roll call votes, the outcome is virtually certain and winning margins are very large...high rates of voting combined with virtually certain outcomes are at odds with a naïve instrumental theory of voting” (99). They model legislative behavior as being motivated primarily by re-election, rather than by a desire to influence the actual policy outcomes. More specifically, their model of legislative voting is based on the assumptions that incumbents maximize reelection probabilities and that citizens make retrospective judgments. They hypothesize that abstention will be greatest among those (1) who are program supporters; (2) whose constituency is conflicted and are more likely to vote on the

losing side in a lopsided votes; and (3) who are indifferent when outcomes appear certain. In general, they find that abstention is not random among supporters and opponents of a bill.

Where Cohen and Noll analyzed a limited amount of roll call votes over a small time frame, Poole and Rosenthal (1997) addressed the problem of selection bias and generalizability by analyzing abstention over the entire history of the US Congress. Unlike Cohen and Noll (where the primary focus was the connection between reelection and abstention) Poole and Rosenthal employed the spatial theory of voting and focused on the likelihood that a member of Congress is pivotal rather than on her reelection motive. Congressional roll calls are similar to two-candidate elections in that they involve choices between two alternatives, and can therefore be studied with the well known decision-theoretic model developed by Downs (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook (1968):

$$R = PB - C + D$$

Poole and Rosenthal apply this equation as follows: R is the net reward for voting; PB is the instrumental benefit of voting, where B is the voter's utility gain if the side he or she favors win and P is the subjective probability that the voter assigns to his or her chances of casting the decisive vote; C is the fixed costs (such as the opportunity cost of the time spent voting); D is the fixed benefits (such as the sense of citizen's duty) (211).

Poole and Rosenthal maintain that abstention should be induced by indifference to the alternative choices, close votes, voting costs, program support rather than opposition, and the size of the legislative body. They test five major hypotheses in their research; (1) turnout should be inversely related to the degree of indifference, as measured by spatial utilities computed from D-NOMINATE coordinates; (2) turnout should be higher when preferences on a roll call are evenly divided rather than being lopsided; (3) turnout should decrease as the cost of voting increases; (4) turnout should be higher on the minority side of an issue than on the "silent"

majority side; and (5) turnout should decrease as the number of members of the legislative body increases (210).

Poole and Rosenthal conclude that fixed costs matter; they find that travel time to Washington, DC, from a member's home district does vary systematically over time, and is related to abstention. Their findings indicate that the decrease in prolonged abstention is related to advances in transportation technology, communication technology, and health care. In terms of a general theory of abstention, they maintain that "a good overall turnout record on roll call votes may benefit one's reputation among constituents, but the value of the benefit may vary across individual legislators over time. Similarly, the cost of being present in Washington may vary over time and cross-sectionally particularly because different members have different travel times from Washington to their constituency" (212). Historically, they find that members "trapped in Washington" by distant districts abstained less. Similarly, they find that non-continuing members – who presumably will gain the least benefit from voting – vote at much lower levels than their colleagues. Poole and Rosenthal note that "most of the increase in lame-duck shirking has occurred in the past 100 years." (220).

In terms of P (the subjective probability that the voter assigns to his or her chances of casting the decisive vote) Poole and Rosenthal find that the lopsided roll call votes have a higher abstention rate. In other words, members are more likely to cast a vote if it is more likely to make a difference. Poole and Rosenthal use the B term to test their theories on indifference. They find that "regarding the results on indifference, the attractiveness of abstention (relative to participation) is inversely related to the B term" (223). In other words, the expected pattern of indifference (turnout should be inversely related to the degree of indifference, as measured by spatial utilities computed from D-NOMINATE coordinates) is only present on close votes. Poole and Rosenthal suggest that this result can be explained by the alienation of ideologically

extreme members. Poole and Rosenthal do little in terms of addressing the D (the fixed benefits of voting) term. However, members who have consistently high participation levels may be viewed by their fellow legislators as being reliable and predictable--bringing about more respect within the legislature.

Rothenberg and Sanders (1999, 2000a, 2000b, and 2002) constructed unified model of roll call participation. Their work as attempted to correct the major critiques of the earlier work done by Cohen and Noll (1991) and Poole and Rosenthal (1997), including selection bias and a lack of generalizability, as well as a lack of statistical controls at both the legislator and bill levels.. Rothenberg and Sanders develop a model that incorporates the role of individual, district, and bill characteristics on legislative abstention. Their model specifies legislators' preferences over actions (voting Yea, voting Nay, or abstaining) as a function of utility differentials and the costs and benefits of voting. They find that participation in Congress depends most heavily on factors beyond a desire to affect outcome (lending support to Mayhew's signaling theory). They find the strongest effects on C factors; the timing of a vote, and the day of the week on which it takes place, both have substantial effects on levels of abstention. Rothenberg and Sanders conclude that legislators are shirking on their roll call voting duties in order to perform other functions of their job, such as electioneering and constituency service activities.

Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) brings an interesting distinction to this body of literature. What happens when legislators are freed of their electoral constraints? Do members behave differently if they are voluntarily retiring from their position? Rothenberg and Sanders find that members of Congress who decide to exit their office "cut back substantially on their effort level and reject the backbreaking schedule of the average House member" (322). In other words, when the electoral connection is severed and the member is no longer concerned with the

repercussions of abstention they participate less. In other words, shirking is reduced when representatives know they may be held accountable for their behavior.

There has only been a single state level study specifically addressing of roll call participation. Recent work by Wright (2007) focuses on the effects of term limits on roll call vote participation. Wright (2007) hypothesizes that “roll call participation rates for term limited members will be lower than it is among those who are seeking reelection” (262). Wright goes on to hypothesize that “the level of shirking on roll call participation should be proportional to the effort required to make these votes” (262) and that the effect of term limits should be especially pronounced in professionalized legislatures. Wright argues that participation in citizen legislatures is not driven by a fear of punishment, but a general sense of obligation to the citizens they represent therefore taking away reelection possibilities will have a diminished effect. On the other hand, legislators from professionalized legislatures participate because they have a lot at stake. Maestas (2000) uses a “stick and carrot” argument, where the combination of career and salary act as the carrot and reelection as the stick. Thus term limits essentially take away the stick. Wright finds that term limits have a conditioning effect on legislative professionalism in terms of participation. The interaction of professionalism and term limits are as expected; they have a negative and significant effect on legislative participation. However, the independent effects of term limits and professionalism are just the opposite. Legislators from professionalized legislatures have higher rates of roll call participation, as well as legislators from term limited states.

5.2 Variables and Hypotheses

This research will analyze the determinants of absenteeism (as an indicator of participatory behavior) with a ratio variable measuring the proportion of bills in which a member did not cast a “yea” or “nay” vote on during the 2001 legislative session. Similar to the previous

work done by Rothenberg and Sanders (2002) and Wright (2007), I provide controls for individual, state and institutional level variables. This section will discuss the hypothesized effects of the independent variables on legislative absenteeism.

5.2.1 Bill Sponsorship

To test the relationship between participation (bill sponsorship) and nonparticipation (roll call absenteeism), this analysis will include the sponsorship variable from Chapter 4 as an independent variable. What is the relationship between participation and nonparticipation? Do legislators who actively participate in one legislative activity, actively participate on other legislative activities? More specifically, are legislators who frequently sponsor legislation more likely to show up to vote than legislators with low levels of sponsorship activities?

If sponsorship and roll call absenteeism are negatively related, then increases in bill sponsorship will increase roll call participation. That is, legislators who participate at high levels will participate at high levels across activities. This would be the case, for example, if legislators who frequently sponsor legislation are better versed in public policy, and have already overcome the informational costs of taking a policy position on a bill. On the other hand, if sponsorship and roll call absenteeism are positively related, this suggests that legislators, perhaps because they are faced with an increasing workload, are making trade-offs between legislative activities. Although both lines of reasoning are compelling, I expect that legislators will make trade offs with their time; bill sponsorship should have a positive relationship with roll call absenteeism.

5.2.2 Political Party

The partisanship of a legislator has been shown to be a strong predictor of vote choice (see Poole and Rosenthal 1997; Aldrich 1995). However, when it comes to influences on participation, the results are mixed. Rothenberg and Sanders also find mixed effects on the differences in abstention behavior across partisan lines. They find that Republicans are more

likely to abstain than Democrats, although the effect is relatively small in magnitude when compared to other contextual variables. When a bill is sponsored, it can be seen as a proposal to create new public policy—and therefore an argument can be made that Republicans, who traditionally espouse limited government, may sponsor fewer bills. In the case of roll call voting, however, the choice to cast a vote (regardless of whether it supports or opposes a policy) does not represent a choice to create new public policy. There is therefore no clear theoretical basis for the expectation that Republicans (or Democrats) will be more likely to shirk. Although partisanship is a necessary control variable, as norms may differ across party caucuses, I have no expectations regarding the direction of the effect of partisanship on absenteeism.

5.2.3 Majority Party

The effect of majority party status can be considered in terms of numbers and incentives. On one hand, members of the majority may be more likely to cast a floor vote because it is relatively likely that any measure that has been reported out of committee to the floor has majority party support. This gives majority party members more incentive to sponsor legislation; recall that in Chapter 4, I found a significant and positive relationship between sponsorship and majority party affiliation. Majority party status may similarly encourage roll call participation.. On the other hand, members of the minority party need all the votes they can muster to pass their legislation—or, more commonly, stop legislation proposed by the majority party. I therefore expect that minority party members will have higher levels of roll call attendance than majority party members.

5.2.4 Seniority, Freshman, and Retirement

Hibbing (1991) finds that member seniority has a strong influence on roll call voting behavior. In terms of the roll call voting career, Hibbing notes that members have a general tendency to be “less supportive of their party” and are “likely to participate in roll call votes”

(106). He notes that “the decline in participation over the course of a career is not particularly earth-shattering” (106). In keeping with Hibbing (1991), I hypothesize that as seniority increases, levels of absenteeism will increase.

Recall that in Chapter 4, I argued that newer legislators would sponsor fewer measures, because of prohibitive informational costs. However, despite the informational costs associated with roll-call voting, it is likely that newer members will have higher participation rates. First year representatives have a strong incentive to establish a record of voting on the existing legislative agenda, in order to show a commitment to the party and constituency. Sinclair (1995) reports that in nominating speeches for exclusive committees the nominee’s party loyalty is praised by the leadership. Leadership endorsement is important (Shepsle 1978) and legislators who vote more often with leaders have a high probability of being transferred to a preferred committee. More senior members may be less concerned with impressing the leadership or sitting on a preferred committee, in part because their reputations have already been established. I expect that junior members will have higher levels of roll-call participation than senior members.

Poole and Rosenthal (1997) also note that “other costs may arise for legislators who know they will not be present in the next Congress. Some of those who will not return for the next Congress may be abstaining because they have decided to retire or pursue another career or higher office. These legislators, particularly those leaving politics, find voting relatively costly, as they not longer have the incentive to present their electorate with a good attendance record (213). However, they go on to note that “the causality may run the other way” (213), in that a poor voting record may result in an involuntary exit due to electoral defeat. Further, Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) find that legislators who are in their last term have lower levels of

participation than their counterparts. For these reasons, I expect that members in their last year of legislative service will have higher levels of absenteeism.

5.2.5 Previous Elective Experience and Freshman/Experience Interaction

I expect that legislators with previous elective experience will be more effective at managing their scarce legislative time. Furthermore, and likely most important, these legislators may have a better understanding of a broad range of policy issues, and will therefore incur lower informational costs when casting roll call votes. Because of their political experience, they are relatively likely to have considered and formulated an opinion on a wider range of political issues. I expect that legislators with previous experience will be less likely to miss votes. To further test the impact of previous elective experience on legislative absenteeism, I also include an interaction term that measures the conditioning effect of previous elective experience only on first year legislators. If previous elective experience actually does decrease the informational costs of taking policy positions, this effect should be especially pronounced during a legislator's first term. I hypothesize that newly elected legislators with previous elective experience will miss fewer roll call votes than the less experienced legislators in their cohort.

5.2.6 Party Leadership and Committee Chairs

According to Strattman (2000), freshman members look toward party leaders for voting cues. This is particularly true because (as Chapter 4 showed), committee chairs often take the lead in placing policy proposals on the legislative agenda. It is necessary for party and committee leaders to cast a vote to provide the necessary guidance for the membership. I therefore expect that committee chairs and legislative leaders will have lower levels of absenteeism than non-leaders and chairs.

5.2.7 Gender

The previous work on legislative abstention does not address the role of gender. However, other research (see Thomas 1991, Bratton and Haynie 1999, Barnello and Bratton 2007) has found that women have different patterns of bill sponsorship than their male counterparts. In addition, women may have a higher incentive than men to have a near perfect participation record, since their behavior in office may receive (or may be perceived to receive) closer scrutiny. I therefore hypothesize that female legislators will have lower levels of absenteeism than their male counterparts.

5.2.8 Voting Extremism and Ideology

Poole and Rosenthal (1997) and Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) both discuss the role of alienation, indifference, and abstention. Drawing on Poole and Rosenthal's original theory of abstention, they argue that turnout should be inversely related to the degree of indifference. Ideological alienation leads to lower participation levels. Unlike sponsorship—which gives ideological extremists one of their only opportunities to place their policy concerns and preferences on the political agenda—roll call voting involves an up-down vote on a measure that has already been vetted by committees. Scholarship on state legislative committees indicates that committees are generally representative of the chamber as a whole, suggesting that measures reported out to the floor are likely not close to the ideal points of ideological extremists. (Overby Kaze, and Prince 2004).

There is no theoretical basis for an expectation regarding the effect of legislator ideology (that is, how conservative or liberal a legislator is) and roll call participation. Like party, ideology may influence the decision to sponsor bills, but is less likely to influence the decision of to cast a vote (whether in support or opposition) of an existing policy proposal. I therefore have no expectation regarding the relationship between legislator liberalism and roll call participation.

5.2.9 Previous Electoral Margin

Legislators who are not electorally secure (that is, those who won their seat by a relatively small margin) may find it more advantageous to spend their time electioneering or providing service back in their districts rather than staying at the capital to vote. Members who are electorally secure can spend less time on electioneering activities, thus focusing on other legislative activities (i.e. roll call voting). Members with fewer electoral worries are the ones who have time to consider each piece of legislation, whereas members with electoral worries do not. I hypothesize that as previous margin of victory increases, legislators will be less likely to be absent from roll call votes.

5.2.10 Professionalism

Squire (2007) notes “increasing pay has an additional, more subtle, consequence for legislators in that it allows them to focus their energies exclusively on their legislative activities rather than having to juggle them with the demands of their regular occupations” (214). Early proponents of state legislative reform hoped that increasing institutional resources would increase policy making capabilities and increase the collective responsiveness of the state legislatures (Rosenthal 1996; Squire 1992). Supporters of legislative reform have suggested the increase in professionalism will attract higher quality representatives, who view their service in the state legislature as a long term career.

Furthermore, the increase of staff (a component of the professionalism measure) may lead to better informed legislators, decreasing the cost of acquiring information about policy proposals. Squire (2007) notes that better informed members have greater influence over the policy making process, thus feeling as if their contributions make a difference; that is, the act of participation is more beneficial to legislators. Recall from Chapter 4 that sponsorship was

positively and significantly related to the professionalism of the chamber. I therefore expect that legislators from professionalized states are more likely to participate on roll call votes.

5.2.11 Term Limits

Work by Wright (2007) examines the influence of term limits on individual legislative behavior. He finds that legislators who are being termed out are surprisingly more likely to participate, but that this effect is primarily restricted to non-professionalized legislatures. In this research, I control for whether a state legislature is term limited, as well as whether legislators are not running for office in the next election (whether through voluntary retirement or through being term limited). In keeping with the expectation that impending retirement would be negatively related with participation, I expect participation levels to be lower in term limited than in non-term limited states.

5.2.12 Public Opinion Liberalism

As previously argued, states with a more liberal citizenry may prefer a more activist and professionalized government. These citizens may expect that legislators actively represent them in government by voting on each piece of legislation. Therefore, I hypothesize that as public opinion liberalism increases, the level of absenteeism will decrease.

5.2.13 Distance

Both Poole and Rosenthal (1997) and Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) find a relationship between abstention and the geographic distance to Washington, DC. Recall that in Chapter 4, distance was negatively correlated with sponsorship levels; it may have an even stronger influence on roll-call voting, since roll call voting takes place at fixed times which may be scheduled with only short notice and are largely out of the legislator's control. In keeping with this finding, I expect a similar relationship between roll call participation and distance from home district to state capital.

5.2.14 Social Diversity

No previous research has directly analyzed the relationship between social diversity and absenteeism. However, the conclusion of Hogan, Kromer, Wrzenski (2006) does provide theoretical support for potential effect of social diversity on roll call participation. If legislators are sponsoring more legislation in heterogeneous districts to respond to a diverse set of constituency demands, it is possible that legislators are less likely to miss roll call votes because of the diversity of interests within the district. For example, if the majority of the constituents in a district all work at manufacturing industries, voters or interest groups may not notice if a legislator misses a vote on the topic of corporate tax policy or agriculture subsidies. On the other hand, if the occupations in the district are more diverse, legislators will be under more pressure to show up to vote. The central argument here is that increased diversity results in increased demands and expectations from the constituency. Furthermore, legislators from diverse districts will be obliged to learn more about a diverse set of issues, thus further providing an incentive to cast floor votes. For these reasons, I expect that as social diversity increases, roll call absenteeism will decrease.

5.3 Model and Results

What are the determinants of roll absenteeism? What is the relationship between participation through legislative sponsorship and absenteeism? In order to empirically answer this question, an ordinary least squares analysis using the percentage of bills in which the legislator did not cast a “yea” or “nay” vote on is employed to determine the influence of the independent variables described earlier. Table 13 provides the results from three different models (a random, fixed, and mixed effects model) used to predict the determinants of absenteeism. As in the sponsorship analysis, the mixed effects model includes the same individual, institutional, and state level variables as the random effects model, with the addition

of six dummy variables to control for state-level effects. The fixed effects model includes all of the variables as the fixed effects model, but excludes any state level controls (i.e. term limits, professionalism, and citizen ideology). The random effects models include the three state-level variables, but does not use state dummy variables to estimate state effects beyond that. All absenteeism models include the sponsorship variable as an independent variable. Consistent with the discussion in Chapter 4, I will focus on the results of the fixed and mixed effects models, which are of course identical.

Only five of the independent variables were found to have a statistically significant effect on bill sponsorship, and the independent variables predict about 22% of the variance in absenteeism. It appears that we can explain sponsorship better than we can explain roll call voting. This is perhaps not surprising, since the decision to cast a vote on an existing piece of legislation may be less systematic than the decision to place legislative proposals on the policy agenda. That said, it should be noted that since sponsorship is included in this model, then all the variables that influence sponsorship also indirectly influence the likelihood that a legislator will cast a floor vote on a bill.

What is the relationship between participation and shirking? The results show that sponsorship has a negative and significant effect on roll call absenteeism. In other words, legislators who are active in sponsorship are active in roll call voting. It may be that legislators who frequently sponsor legislation are more knowledgeable on public policy, thus have already overcome the informational costs associated with forming a policy opinion. And, there are more policy proposals in which they have made a direct investment. This result lends support to the idea that some legislators are simply “work horses” and do not make trade-offs in terms of their participatory decisions.

Table 13: OLS Regression: Effects of Legislator, Institutional, and State Factors on Absenteeism

Variables	Analysis 1 (Mixed)		Analysis 2 (Fixed Effects)		Analysis 3 (Random Effects)	
	Estimate	Std. Err.	Estimate	Std. Err.	Estimate	Std. Err.
Participation						
Sponsorship Activity	-.08*	.03	-.08*	.03	-.03	.03
Individual Level						
Seniority	.31**	.09	.31**	.09	.28**	.09
Freshman	-.71	.78	-.71	.78	1.49 ⁺	.78
Retirement	1.14	.76	1.14	.76	1.56 ⁺	.79
Leadership Position	3.34	4.10	3.34	4.10	3.02	4.23
Committee Chair	.04	.69	.04	.69	.01	.67
Previous Experience	-.13	.66	-.13	.66	.08	.67
Previous Experience, for Freshman Legislators	.11	.93	.11	.93	1.39	.99
Gender	-.66	.55	-.66	.55	-.84	.56
Party	-.07	1.41	-.07	1.41	.25	1.45
Majority Party	-.87	.65	-.87	.65	-1.14 ⁺	.65
Ideology (W-Nominate)	-.82	1.05	-.82	1.05	-1.19	1.08
Ideological Extremity	-2.57*	1.30	-2.57*	1.30	.71	1.35
Previous Electoral Margin	1.50	1.71	1.50	1.71	.57	1.64
Distance	.06	.37	.06	.37	.39	.29
Social Diversity	-11.68	8.73	-11.68	8.73	1.01	7.62
State Level						
Legislative Professionalism ^a	<.01	.04			-.23**	.03
Citizen Ideology	-.18**	.05			.09	.04
Term Limits	5.59**	.97			.06	.86
State Dummies						
Arkansas			8.86**	1.47		
California			7.64**	1.66		
Colorado	-10.37**	1.49	.35	1.15		
Florida	-6.15**	.81	2.73 ⁺	1.51		
Illinois	.09	1.18	1.77	1.57		
Maryland						
Michigan	-2.92*	1.28	4.44**	1.48		
North Carolina	1.50	1.28	5.30**	1.80		
New Mexico	9.99**	1.76	12.45**	1.72		
Texas			4.61**	1.39		
Constant	19.58**	3.98	7.17*	3.56	8.19	3.40
R²	.22		.22		.16	
Number of Legislators	885		885		885	

^a: Squire index is transformed so that higher values=more professional

*: p≤.05, two-tailed test

**: p≤.05, two-tailed test

⁺: p≤.05, one-tailed test

Two individual level variables (seniority and ideological extremism) reached statistical significance. Consistent with theories developed by Hibbing (1991), I find that more senior members are less likely to participate in roll call voting. It may be that senior legislators have gained so much name recognition and good standing with their constituencies that their reputations will not be diminished by low participation (or, for that matter, enhanced by high participation) on roll call bills. These members may not need to use roll call votes as a form of coalition building, thus they can easily shirk on their voting duties without fear of repercussion from even within the chamber. Contrary to Rothenberg and Sanders (2002) and Poole and Rosenthal (1997), I find that members who are ideologically extreme are miss fewer votes than those who are ideologically moderate. There extreme views may make these legislators more likely to form an opinion on each and every vote, thus participating more often than those with more moderate opinions.

In the random effects model (but not in the fixed effects model), professionalism is positively related to roll call participation (that is, negatively related to absenteeism). When conducting the same set of thirty five auxiliary regressions, swapping out different sets of state dummies, it is clear that in a substantial majority of cases, term limits is as expected positively and significantly related to participation—that is, negatively related to absenteeism. The magnitude of the positive effect, however, does depend in part on which states are under consideration. In these auxiliary regressions, the liberalism of the state's population is, as expected, usually (but not always) positively associated with participation (and negatively associated with absenteeism). The direction of the effect of citizen liberalism is not as consistent as the direction of the effect of professionalism. Finally, term limits is as expected most often

negatively associated with participation (and positively associated with absenteeism), although again the results depend in part on the states included when estimating the effect.¹⁴

5.4 Discussion

Perhaps most important, the results indicate that legislators who participate at high levels do so across activities. It may be that the trade-offs are being made elsewhere, potentially between activities inside and activities outside the legislative chamber. That is, it is efficient for legislators with a high degree of commitment and policy expertise, as well as an electoral incentive to participate, to participate in multiple activities. Surprisingly, however, distance from the capital was not significantly related to levels of participation in floor votes. In general, few of the measures that I expected would influence absenteeism – such as distance, career-related factors, or minority party status – have a significant effect. However, some of these factors do have an indirect effect on participation through sponsorship. Legislators who sponsor more measures also are more likely to vote on legislative measures, and therefore factors that influence sponsorship activity indirectly influence roll-call voting. First-year representatives, for example, sponsor fewer measures and therefore have somewhat lower rates of voting on floor measures; committee chairs sponsor more measures, and this indirectly increases their floor voting rates. Those who live further from the capital sponsor fewer measures—and this indirectly dampens their participation in floor voting. Conservatives and minority party members introduce fewer bills, and this also indirectly reduces floor voting. It should be noted that these indirect effects are quite small and sometimes (as in the case of first-year representatives) in a non-intuitive direction. Nonetheless, the relationship between the two forms of participation under consideration here has implications for the determinants of roll-call voting participation.

¹⁴ VIF scores for some of the variables, such as majority party affiliation, partisanship, and ideology, were relatively high, but auxiliary analyses indicate that collinearity did not appear to influence significance.

CHAPTER 6: CONSEQUENCES OF PARTICIPATION

Thus far, this research has centered on the determinants of participatory behavior. The results presented in earlier chapters indicate that partisanship and ideology influence participation. Legislators who are liberal or who are affiliated with the majority party sponsor more measures; legislators whose ideologies are relatively far from the chamber median (very conservative and very liberal legislators) are more likely to participate in floor voting. Distance and leadership position affect sponsorship behavior. Legislators who serve as committee chairs are more active in sponsorship. Those who live far from the capital sponsor fewer measures than their more senior and more locally situated colleagues. Sponsorship levels and participation in roll call voting are both also relatively high in professionalized states—and, somewhat surprisingly, tend to be lower in states with a relatively liberal citizenry. I also found that sponsorship was positively related to participation in floor voting—legislators who sponsor more measures are also more likely to cast a yea or nay vote on legislation on the floor.

I have previously argued that the decision to participate can be effectively modeled using a rational choice approach, in that legislators are rational actors who make decisions on what legislative activity to pursue (or not to pursue) based on the perceived costs and benefits. While the benefits to legislative participation can include salary, power, civic duty, and enacting good public policy, the costs of behavior can be most clearly identified as the potential to lose an upcoming election. As Fenno (1978) observes, many legislators feel insecure, regardless of the empirical reality. In Jacobson and Kernell (1983), Representative Guy Vander Jaft (previously the head of the National Republican Congressional Committee) notes that “Just as they say pitching is 80 percent of baseball, in a Congressional race the candidate is 80 percent of winning. A good candidate can win it, no matter how bad the conditions, and a bad candidate can lose it, no matter how good the conditions” (99). Although the odds are strongly in their favor,

incumbents never feel completely insulated from the possibility of being unseated in the next election.

What is the significance of legislative participation on electoral risk? Given the centrality of the electoral connection on legislative behavior, this chapter seeks to create a model of consequence for legislator's participatory behavior. Legislators who believe that they are insecure may respond by focusing on electioneering outside of the chamber, and spend less time on tasks within the chamber such as sponsorship and roll-call voting. Indeed, the random effects analyzes of sponsorship that were presented in Chapter 4 suggest that individuals who are electorally safe sponsor significantly more measures. But is this response well-justified—do legislators pay a price for low participation? The previous chapters have outlined potential individual, institutional, and state/district level determinants of legislative participation and this chapter will analyze how these factors, along with the indicators of legislative participation affect the potential consequences of the likelihood of a challenge to the incumbent's seat. What, if any, are the costs of poor legislative participation? Are incumbents who sponsor relatively few measures or who shirk on roll call voting targeted by challengers? Are these members viewed as weaker political opponents?

This chapter will use challenger emergence as a measure of electoral accountability. This indicator was chosen because of the nature of constituency awareness and candidate recruitment in the American states. In a seven-state survey of 2,112 constituents, Squire (1993) finds that most constituents are both ill informed and not interested in the business of their state legislature. In general, Squire (1993) finds that most citizens give their state legislature a "passable" rating. This general disinterest and lack of awareness suggests that the consequences of legislative activity are likely shaped by political elites, most obviously through the recruitment of challengers by party elites in that state. Since party elites are likely aware of the participatory

behavior (or lack thereof) of incumbents, and since the mass public is likely less aware of any such lack of participation, then any potential effect of participation would be found in the likelihood of drawing a challenger, rather than in the electoral margin. Party elites and challengers alike may view legislators who do not place many policy proposals on the legislative agenda, and who have low attendance rates for floor voting, as relatively vulnerable. Moreover, poor participatory records can be advertised as a failure to represent the constituency. Therefore, I expect that legislators who are relatively active in sponsorship and roll-call voting will be more likely to run unopposed in their next election.

This chapter will proceed as follows: First, I will provide a review of the relevant literature. Second, I will develop a set of hypotheses based on the previous literature and the previous chapters. Next, I will develop a model of consequences for legislative behavior based on challenger emergence. I will end this chapter with a discussion of the results and concluding remarks on their contribution to the literature.

6.1 Previous Research on Incumbency Advantage and Challenger Emergence

Previous research has shown that incumbents are more likely to win in state legislative elections than challengers (Breux 1990, Garand 1991, Jewell and Breux 1988, King 1991). This incumbency advantage is often thought to come from the resources of office and other external forces such as the state of the economy and presidential approval rating. Jewell and Breux (1988) found an incumbency advantage, but one that did not increase over time. Garand (1991) likewise found a positive relationship between incumbency and vote share in the general election. Other research consistently suggests that incumbent members have a significant advantage in fundraising (Cassie and Breux 1998; Herrnson 2000). Current and previous research indicates a strong incumbency advantage at both the national and state levels. However, not every incumbent shares equally in the electoral fortunes that are brought about by tenure in

office. Previous research indicates that the incumbency advantage is conditioned by a variety of individual, institutional, and state level factors.

Squire (2000) makes two important observations in terms of incumbency advantage in the American state legislatures. First, a substantial number (about thirty five percent) of seats in the state legislatures are uncontested in each election cycle; state legislators are much more likely than members of Congress to run unopposed for re-election. Second, there is substantial variation across states and within states in the likelihood of running unopposed.¹⁵ Why is it that some incumbents in a given state are seldom challenged, while others are challenged quite frequently? This research will draw on previous work in this area to examine challenger emergence, and will add to the extant literature by focusing on the relationship between legislative activity (through sponsorship and roll-call voting) and the likelihood of drawing a challenger.

What type of legislator is relatively likely to draw a challenger? Pritchard (1992) finds that incumbents who appear to be vulnerable, based on previous vote margin, are not surprisingly more likely to be challenged in the general election. However, the data used in the study (Florida House of Representatives between 1972-80) limits the ability to draw a general conclusion about challenger emergence. Van Dunk (1997) finds that “quality challengers run against incumbents who have shown previous electoral vulnerability and quality challengers are more likely to be successful when they do run” (794). Van Dunk (1997) also finds that older state legislators are more likely to draw a challenge than younger state legislators.

Hogan (2004) considers legislative accountability from three different perspectives: likelihood of a challenger emerging, the strength of the challenger's campaign, and the

¹⁵ Squire (2000) analyzes elections from all 50 states from 1988 to 1996. Squire (2000) uses the 1996 as an example of the variation between states and notes that two-thirds of the seats in the Arkansas House were uncontested, while no seats in the Massachusetts House were uncontested.

percentage of the general election vote received. The data used in the analysis include all legislators from upper and lower chamber elections in fourteen states in 1996 and 1998.¹⁶ Controlling for a variety of institutional, district, and individual level factors,¹⁷ including the degree to which the incumbents voting record reflected the preferences of the constituency, Hogan finds that district and institutional level factors are strong determinants of challenger emergence and strength. Hogan does not examine the effect of levels of legislative activity in general on challenger emergence. Furthermore, Hogan (2004) does not control for the impact of gender on challenger emergence. This research contributes to earlier research by examining the relationship between legislative activity and challenger emergence.

6.2 Variables and Hypotheses

The dependent variable in the analysis of challenger emergence is a dichotomous indicator measuring whether or not the incumbent is challenged in the general election by a majority party candidate (coded 1 if the incumbent was challenged by a majority party candidate and 0 otherwise).

In terms of the consequences of participatory behavior, I test the following hypotheses:

H₁: Legislators with high levels of roll call abstention will draw more challengers than legislators with high levels of attendance on roll call bills.

H₂: Legislators with active sponsorship records will draw fewer challengers than legislators with inactive sponsorship records.

To reiterate, it is likely that partisan elites and potential candidates are likely to monitor the behavior of incumbents. Indeed, an observer may become a potential candidate because of the behavior of incumbents. Low levels of sponsorship and roll call voting may signal that a

¹⁶ The states include Alaska, California, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

¹⁷ Hogan (2004) controls for campaign finance restrictions, chamber, chamber competition, party advantage in district, district population, percentage rural, majority party, length of service, leadership, committee chairmanship, policy divergence, partisanship, and election year.

legislator is not fully involved in the legislative process; legislators who have low participation levels may be perceived as inadequately representing their constituencies.

The major focus of this chapter is the impact of sponsorship and abstention on the reelection prospects of state legislative incumbents. The cost of low levels of participation is central to this examination of legislative behavior. That is, I propose that these two components of lawmaking functions (sponsorship and roll call voting) not only vary systematically across members, but have an effect on electoral security. I also seek to build on the earlier findings of Hogan (2004), Van Dunk (1997), and Prichard (1992) on challenger emergence and quality, by incorporating a similar set of independent variables that may influence challenger emergence.

This chapter considers several individual level factors that potentially influence challenger emergence. Like Hogan (2004), I control for seniority, leadership, committee chairmanship, partisanship, and majority party status. In addition to these variables, I include controls for gender, first term, past general election vote, and prior experience.

6.2.1 Seniority and Freshman Term

This research uses two variables to control for the effects of seniority on challenger emergence and quality; a continuous variable measuring the total years of service in the legislature and a dummy variable coded 1 if the legislator is in his/her first legislative term and 0 otherwise. As members gain seniority they insulate themselves from electoral defeat with name recognition, pork barrel politics, contributions, and institutional knowledge. Further, time in the legislatures could allow legislators to amass a substantial “war chest,” thus “sending a signal to challengers that they too will have to raise a similarly large amount of money to be competitive” (Hogan 2001, 816). Breaux (1990) and Holbrook and Tidmarch (1991) both found that there was a “sophomore surge” in incumbency advantage and the surge was higher in states with more institutional resources. In general, tenure in office seems to intensify the incumbency advantage

in elections. Work by Squire (1989) and Prichard (1992) suggest that junior state legislators are less entrenched and therefore more vulnerable; in fact, Prichard (1992) finds that incumbent tenure is negatively related to the probability of challenger emergence. Most convincing, Van Dunk (1997) finds that tenure in office has a negative relationship with challenger emergence, even when controlling for the age of the legislator. Finally, Hogan (2001) finds a small relationship between incumbency and challenger emergence.

I hypothesize that there will be a negative relationship between tenure in office and challenger emergence. Entrenched legislators are formidable opponents and challengers will find it difficult to muster both the funds and the political skills to defeat them. On the other hand, I hypothesize that freshman members will face more challenges. First-term legislators haven't had the time to amass large campaign war chests or even name recognition, and thus will be considered more politically vulnerable.

6.2.2 Previous Elective Experience and Experience/Freshman Interaction

Van Dunk (1997) and Jacobson (1989) conceptualizes "quality challenger" as a challenger that has previously served in public office. Candidates with previous elected experience have developed the skills for campaigning, policy expertise, and the name recognition that makes their run for state legislative office more effective. These skills are most likely enhanced overtime, making incumbents with other experience in public office especially invulnerable. Furthermore, legislators with previous elective experience are more likely to understand the electoral process and do a better job of insulating themselves (perhaps, but effectively participating in legislative activities or focusing on the legislative activities that matter the most to their electorate). I hypothesize that legislators with previous experience will draw fewer challengers than legislators who are new to political office.. This analysis also includes an interaction term that measures the effect that previous elective experience has on freshman

legislators. If previous electoral experience does, indeed, make legislators less likely to draw a challenger (by both appearing stronger and actually being stronger) then this effect should be especially pronounced among first-year legislators. That is, I expect that first-year legislators are more likely to draw challengers, but that this is less true for first-year legislators who have political experience.

6.2.3 Party Leadership, Committee Chairs, and Majority Party Affiliation

Party and committee leadership are typically responsible for the institutional organization of the legislative body. According to Rosenthal (1981), legislators in leadership positions “bear great responsibility and exert more than nominal influence” (162). Morehouse (1980) notes that “majority party leadership in each legislature makes the crucial decisions about party membership on committees, the party ratio appointment of chairmen, the rules and settling the chamber down to its job” (280). These leadership controlled benefits can provide individual legislators with an electoral advantage over rank-and-file members. Holbrook and Tidmarch (1993) test the effect of leadership and committee chairmanship on electoral margin of victory. They find that “party leaders and committee chairs have a higher margin of victory than other incumbents in their state” and “the effects of leadership positions and chairing a committee are significant primarily just for members of the majority party” (906). Finally, research by Dwyer and Stonecash (1992) find that it is the party leadership that raises and makes decisions on the allocations of funds to members of their party. It should be noted, however, that those in leadership positions are relatively visible, and may therefore be more likely to draw a challenger—even if their eventual margin of victory is likely to be substantial.

However, given the overall findings of previous literature, I expect that legislative leaders and committee chairs, and those in the majority party, will be less likely to face electoral challenges. Legislators who are either party leaders or committee chairs should be relatively

able to satisfy the interests and preferences of their constituencies, through control of the legislative agenda. While their visibility may be a two-edged sword, they should have substantial influence over the shape and tone of media coverage. And, perhaps most important, their influence over the redistricting process likely gives them a comfortable, safe electoral environment, therefore discouraging challengers.

6.2.4 Gender

Although there has been a substantial amount of research done on the policy preferences, ideology, and general impact of female legislator when they gain elected office, little is known how the characteristic of being female affects the retention of that office. Previous research by Dolan (1997) finds that the roles of female legislators have changed overtime. She finds that although women are not abandoning their service on committees dealing with women's issue legislation, they are now more likely than before to serve on committees dealing with financial and business concerns. Furthermore, female state legislators are more likely to hold a leadership or committee chair position now than they were previously. Her general conclusion is that women serving in state legislatures are "younger, better educated, come to the legislature from more professional occupations" than women from previous decades (147). Dolan (1998) analyzes the determinants of constituency support for female candidates during the "Year of the Woman"¹⁸. She finds that women are more likely than men to support a female candidate. She concludes that female candidates are still viewed as outsiders and support for female candidates may be in part for a desire to change "business as usual" or because of an increased concern for domestic and social issues. However, in her 2004 book "Voting for Women: How the Public Evaluates Women Candidates," Dolan notes that "the candidate's sex and the gendered considerations it raises, has a more complex and nuanced impact on voters than we may have

¹⁸ 1992 is often called the "Year of the Woman" because of the historic legislative gains (in terms of total seat count) in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

imagined” (154). She finds no consistent pattern explaining the impact on candidate sex on congressional or senatorial races and that incumbency and partisanship remain the primary predictors of constituency voting behavior.

What does this mean for the electoral security of female legislators? Does their gender insulate them from challengers? Or, does characteristic of being female make them a magnet for opposition? One of the most interesting findings of Dolan (2004) is that “people were more likely to have more information about women candidates, both Democrat and Republican, than about men of either party” (155). In other words, voters pay closer attention to female candidates and in politics attention often equates to scrutiny. If female legislators are now achieving these positions of legislative leadership and increasing their tenure in office, do they equally reap the aforementioned benefits? Further, if the typical female state legislator is arguably more “qualified” to serve, are they viewed as a fierce political adversary thus scaring off potential challengers? According to Atkeson (2003), women have a greater likelihood of political engagement when a competitive female candidate is present. If women have a core constituency of women, does this lead to a decreased likelihood of being challenged? Or does the perception of women as more vulnerable lead to an increased likelihood of being challenged? Research consistently indicated that women are just as successful at winning office as their similarly situated male candidates (Fox and Oxley 2003; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997). However, it may be that women are *perceived* as more vulnerable, therefore leading to the emergence of challengers. I therefore expect that female legislators will be viewed as more vulnerable than male legislators in similar political situations. Decisions on candidate recruitment are often made by the party elite, not by the constituency at large. Work by Sanbonmatsu (2002) indicates that women’s political recruitment is more limited where party organizations exert a great deal of influence over the recruitment process, suggesting the party

officials may see men as enjoying electoral advantages—and women as being easier to defeat.. For these reasons, I hypothesize that female legislators will be more likely to draw challengers than their male counterparts.

6.2.5 Partisanship

Although partisanship is one the primary and most consistent predictors of reelection, in context of this research question partisanship is used as a control variable. In congressional studies, previous research has shown that members of Congress are often punished or rewarded for the electoral fortunes of the president. The time period in this research does not overlap with the election of a state or national executive, and therefore coattails should not be a major issue of concern. Moreover, research indicates that an individual's partisanship (an presumably the partisanship of a single legislator) does not influence public approval; a study done by Patterson, Ripley, and Quinlan (1992) found that citizen partisanship had no effect on the evaluation of the Ohio State Legislature (as a legislative body). They did find that Ohio citizens identifying themselves as Democrats did evaluate the Democratic Congress more favorably than their Republican counterparts. Therefore, in states and districts where Democrats are a majority, it is likely that Republicans will draw more challengers, and in states and districts where Republicans are a majority, it is likely that Democrats will draw more challengers. However, the variables for previous electoral margin will in control for any such pattern, as one's margin of victory reflects a base of support in the district. I do include partisanship as a control variable, because the norms and resources of parties may vary across states and across districts, but I do not have a theoretical expectation regarding the general influence of party on challenger emergence.

6.2.6 Previous Electoral Margin

Legislators who have a previous and consistent record of victory are not desirable opponents. A large margin of victory, particularly one earned in the last election, is a clear indicator of strength, and a small margin of victory is a clear indicator of vulnerability. Consistent with the findings of Prichard (1992), I hypothesize that legislators with a higher margin of victory in the previous electoral cycle will be less likely to draw a challenger.

6.2.7 Social Diversity and Distance from Capital

Legislators from heterogeneous districts face more constituency demands than members from homogeneous districts. With each decision they make, legislators from districts with high levels of social diversity risk the possibility of alienating one part of their constituency. While legislators from heterogeneous districts have likely developed the policy and communication skills to successfully address the various and competing policy demands of their districts, it is likely that incumbents from relatively diverse districts remain relatively electorally vulnerable. I likewise expect that incumbents whose districts are far from the capital will be more likely to draw a challenger than those who live near the capital.

6.2.8 Professionalism

The effect of professionalism on challenger emergence and quality creates an interesting paradox to consider. On one hand, work by Jewell and Breaux (1988) note that the trend of larger margins in state legislative races are not found in open seat races. This trend suggests the increasing margins are largely explained by the growing advantages enjoyed by incumbents rather than an increase in electorally safe districts (512). Further, Cox and Morgenstern (1993) conclude that the growth of the incumbency advantage at the state level is positively related to the growth in state legislative operating budgets and resources. In general, Cox and Morgenstern find additional support to the theory that professionalism further insulates incumbents. One

could justify that the insulation of incumbents in professionalized legislatures could as a deterrent to potential challengers. Berry, Berkman, and Schneiderman (2000) find just that; legislators in professionalized legislatures have more resources to insulate them from electoral competition.

However, does the attractiveness of the professionalized legislative seat override these institutional insulations? Squire (2000) finds that more professionalized legislatures draw more challengers than less professionalized legislatures. Increases in staff and salary make service in the legislature far more attractive. As the perks of the job increase, and as the job becomes a full-time career option, the likelihood that potential candidates are willing to pay the cost of running a campaign may also increase. Professionalized legislatures may also attract a specific type of challenger. Berkman (1988) and Maestas (2003) note that a by-product of professionalism is the increased number of progressively ambitious legislators who are now attracted to state legislative service. Politicians, who are planning a relatively long political career that extends beyond the state legislature to the halls of the U.S. Congress, may view service in a state legislature as a stepping stone to higher office. They are potentially faced with a different set of opportunities and risks than potential candidates for less professionalized legislatures (Berkman 1994; Squire 1988, 1988a). Since holding office is a necessary step—but just one step—to a long-term goal, these individuals may be more likely to challenge a sitting incumbent in the state legislature, with an eye toward (at worst) increasing their electoral experience and (at best) gaining state legislative office which can be eventually used as a springboard to a higher position. Most recently, Hogan (2004) finds that professionalism has a significant positive effect on challenger emergence, lending further support that seats in professionalized legislatures are quite enticing.

Although unseating an incumbent from a professionalized legislature may be more difficult than unseating a legislator from a citizen legislature, the attractiveness of the office and the type of challenger the office attracts should outweigh the campaign costs—even if the challenger is defeated, there are benefits gained from running. Given the previous research, I expect that legislators from professionalized legislatures will draw more challengers than less professionalized legislatures.

6.2.9 Term Limits

Do legislators from term limited states draw more challengers than otherwise? Term limits are thought to create opportunity by opening seats. This opportunity may generate interest in running for the legislature, potentially creating an aggregate interest in running for that particular legislature. However, the attractiveness of legislative service in the state legislature may decrease if they seat is term limited. Even those who are particularly politically ambitious could be dissuaded from service by the limit on their legislative service. For example, these legislators would prefer to stay in state wide office until a politically advantageous time to run for national office arises. Furthermore, challengers may find it advantageous (both politically and financially) to wait the relatively short period of time until the seat becomes open—and the while the costs of the race may be higher (because both individuals are likely relatively credible candidates), the seat is almost certainly easier to win. Therefore, I hypothesize that incumbents in term limited states will draw fewer challengers.

6.2.10 Citizen Ideology

I hypothesize that legislators from states with a more liberal citizenry will be more likely to draw challengers than those representing states with a more conservative citizenry. Citizens from these states are likely more supportive of the progressive ideals of reform and changes to

the status quo, and therefore these states are likely relatively hospitable environments for would-be challengers.

6.3 Model and Results

This analysis is restricted to those individuals who ran for re-election after 2001. As noted in Chapter 3, about half of these incumbents faced a challenge in upcoming electoral cycle. What factors are associated with an electoral challenge? Specifically, what is the impact of participatory behavior within the legislature on challenger emergence? Table 14 gives the results of a logistic regression model in which challenger emergence (coded 1 for challenge, 0 for no challenge) is the dependent variable. As in Chapter 4 and 5, I provide the results for a fixed, random, and mixed effects model.

As in Chapters 4 and 5, I will focus this discussion on the results in the fixed effects analysis (which are, of course, the same as the results of the analysis which includes both the three substantive state-level variables of professionalism, term limits, and citizen ideology, as well as six dummy variables to control for state effects). Both the sponsorship and absenteeism variables failed to reach any level of significance. Thus, I find no support for my two hypotheses. The earlier findings regarding sponsorship activity indicated that legislators who are electorally vulnerable have relatively low sponsorship levels. It appears that any choice to have relatively low sponsorship levels (perhaps because time is spent outside of the chamber in electioneering activities) does not create an even greater electoral risk. It is possible, of course, that poor participation is punished through different means and in different contexts. For example, legislators who have poor participatory records may not get a seat on their preferred committee or earn a leadership position. Further, legislation proposed by these legislators may be less likely to receive a full hearing, or to pass. All of these possibilities would be fruitful questions to address with future research.

Table 14: LOGIT Analysis: Effects of Legislator, Institutional, and State Factors on Challenger Emergence

Variables	Analysis 1 (Mixed)		Analysis 2 (Fixed Effects)		Analysis 3 (Random Effects)	
	Estimate	Std. Err.	Estimate	Std. Err.	Estimate	Std. Err.
Participation						
Sponsorship Activity	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
Roll Call Absenteeism	.02	.01	.02	.01	.02 ⁺	.01
Individual Level						
Seniority	-.02	.02	-.02	.02	-.03	.02
Freshman	.02	.31	.02	.31	-.20	.29
Retirement	N/A		N/A		N/A	
Leadership Position	.61	.73	.61	.73	.64	.76
Committee Chair	.49 ⁺	.26	.49 ⁺	.26	.37	.24
Previous Experience	-.30	.23	-.30	.23	-.25	.23
Previous Experience, for Freshman Legislators	-.04	.41	-.04	.41	-.04	.38
Gender	-.40 ⁺	.21	-.40 ⁺	.21	-.36 ⁺	.20
Party	.03	.52	.03	.52	.15	.52
Majority Party	-.21	.24	-.21	.24	-.31	.21
Ideology (W-Nominate)	-.03	.36	-.03	.36	-.23	.36
Ideological Extremity	.62	.48	.62	.48	.58	.44
Previous Electoral Margin	-2.59 ^{**}	.56	-2.59 ^{**}	.56	-2.75 ^{**}	.52
Distance	.06	.11	.06	.11	-.27 ^{**}	.08
Social Diversity	2.41	2.77	2.41	2.77	1.83	2.38
State Level						
Legislative Professionalism ^a	.04 [*]	.02			.05 ^{**}	.01
Citizen Ideology	.06 [*]	.03			.04 ^{**}	.01
Term Limits	-.02	.47			.22	.23
State Dummies						
Arkansas			-2.06 ^{**}	.71		
California			.09	.87		
Colorado	1.08	.71	-.37	.69		
Florida	-1.36 ^{**}	.43	-2.18 ^{**}	.73		
Illinois	-.60	.45	-.68	.67		
Maryland						
Michigan	2.70 [*]	1.16	2.70 [*]	1.25		
North Carolina	-.14	.34	1.23 ⁺	.67		
New Mexico	-.16	.65	-1.86 ^{**}	.70		
Texas			1.30 ⁺	.69		
Constant	-3.48 ^{**}	1.61	1.84	1.26	-2.16 [*]	1.22
R²	.21		.21		.15	
Number of Legislators	885		885		885	

^a: Squire index is transformed so that higher values=more professional

*: $p \leq .05$, two-tailed test ** : $p \leq .05$, two-tailed test⁺: $p \leq .05$, one-tailed test

In the current analysis, only four variables had a statistically significant effect on challenger emergence. Like the previous research on this question, I find that legislative professionalism has a positive impact on the likelihood of challenger emergence. In other words, legislative elections in states with more professionalized legislatures are more likely to be contested. Although incumbents in professionalized seats have more resources to insulate them from electoral defeat, it appears that these resources do not prevent them from being challenged. The effect of professionalism is quite large and demonstrates how enticing seats in professional legislatures are to potential candidates. Legislators from states with a more liberal citizenry have a greater likelihood of challenger emergence. This finding is in keeping with my expectations, and may be reflective of a more progressive outlook on governance. In other words, challengers may find that the citizenry are more receptive of challenges to the status quo (i.e. the current incumbent).

Consistent with the earlier findings of Prichard (1992) and others, I find that previous electoral margin has a negative impact on the likelihood of challenger emergence. Large margins likely deter challengers. Legislators who are committee chairs have an increased likelihood of challenger emergence, which is contrary to my expectations. It may be possible that legislators in leadership positions are more visible and therefore are more likely to attract electoral challenges, even if those challenges are quixotic in nature.

Finally, the most interesting result is the impact of gender on the likelihood of challenger emergence. I hypothesize that, despite evidence that female legislators are just as likely to be successful as their similarly situated male counterparts and that in general women holding state office are more qualified, female incumbents will be more likely to draw challengers than male incumbents because they are likely to be *perceived* as more vulnerable. The results show that female incumbents have a decreased likelihood of drawing a challenger than their male

counterparts. It should be noted that prior research has indicated that women tend to run when the probability of winning is relatively high—that is, they are more risk averse in their electoral behavior than are men (Fox and Lawless 2004). Therefore, it may be that women are more likely to represent districts that match well to their interests and ideology, and that they have high electoral margins when first elected, and these factors combine to discourage would-be challengers.¹⁹

6.4 Discussion

The results indicate that the participatory behavior of incumbents does not significantly influence the likelihood that an incumbent will face an electoral challenge. There appears to be little direct electoral consequence for low participation within the chamber. Two comments are in order. First, it may be that the actual reasons for low participation is that the legislator is devoting more time to electioneering outside the chamber, and that this attenuates any relationship between legislative behavior and electoral accountability. Moreover, it is also possible that an electoral consequence of poor participatory behavior would be more visible during the primary. Finally, it is possible that the consequences of legislative participation are found in legislative outcomes, not in electoral outcomes. More research should be done to explore these questions.

¹⁹ Supplementary regressions of vote margin on the same set of independent variables produced results that are substantively similar to the results presented here. Moreover, the "prior electoral margin" variable does reduce much of the available variance, since it taps into much of what constitutes electoral vulnerability. However, when this variable was removed from the analysis, the overall results and conclusions were the same.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning of this project, I asked the question “who participates?” Using bill sponsorship and roll call participation as indicators of participation, I identified several individual, institutional, and state level factors that influence levels of participation. I found that participation in the form of sponsoring and voting on legislation varies across party and ideological lines, as well as across career stages and institutional contexts. Liberal legislators, majority party legislators, legislators who have served beyond their first year, and those who are in their last term of service sponsor more legislation. More ideologically extreme legislators and more junior legislators vote at higher rates than their more moderate or more senior colleagues. Committee chairs sponsor a relatively high number of bills, but do not appear to vote at different rates than do their colleagues. Surprisingly, legislators with previous political experience sponsor fewer bills than their less experienced colleagues, perhaps because they can better prioritize across potential policies, and focus their energies on bills that will have a marked impact on the policy agenda, or shore up electoral support. Legislators from states with professionalized chambers sponsored more bills, and missed fewer votes. Legislators from relatively liberal states sponsored fewer bills, but have higher voting rates. Perhaps most important, legislators who were active in sponsorship were also relatively active in roll call voting.

Some of the results suggest that legislators do make trade-offs, and that these trade-offs may occur not so much at any particular point in time, but more so across a legislative career. In their first year, legislators have relatively high attendance rates for roll call voting, but sponsor fewer bills than do their more senior colleagues. As the career progresses, absenteeism on floor votes becomes more common, but legislators are more active in placing legislation on the policy

agenda. At any one point in time, however, it appears that there is little trade-off between sponsorship and roll call voting. Legislators who sponsor a higher number of bills miss a fewer number of floor votes. It is unlikely that this is due merely to participation in floor votes on bills which any one legislator sponsored; the number of floor votes is much higher than the number of bills that any one legislator sponsors and brings to the floor. It appears that legislators who are active within the chamber are active in multiple forms of legislative activity. It may be that any trade-off that takes place is one involving a choice between activity *within* the physical confines of the legislature and activity outside of the chamber. Indeed, the finding that electoral margin was positively related to sponsorship suggests that such a trade-off may be taking place—legislators who are electorally vulnerable may be focusing on constituency service and electioneering outside of the chamber, in the interests of pursuing their proximate goal of re-election, and sacrificing the more long-term benefit of pursuing good public policy.

Without data on the time spent on constituency service and electioneering activities, such conclusions are speculative, but can provide a springboard for future research. Any such relationship would be very compatible with a rational choice model, and very much in keeping with Mayhew's argument that legislators are first and foremost concerned with re-election, rather than the pursuit of public policy. Of course, the equivalent conclusion that can be drawn is that electorally safe legislators take advantage of the opportunity to pursue public policy—therefore suggesting that contrary to Mayhew's relatively narrow conception of the interests of legislators, legislators do have public policy goals.

In what other ways do the findings shed light on the question of whether legislators are behaving "rationally"? In several ways, it appears that legislators are weighing costs and benefits. First year legislators and minority party legislators—for whom introduction likely entails relatively high costs and few benefits—are less active in sponsorship. Junior legislators

focus on roll-call voting instead, which likely brings the benefit of solidifying their reputation in the chamber. Committee chairs, who likely pay relatively low costs to sponsor legislation, but are relatively likely to enjoy the credit-claiming and policy-making benefits of proposed (and eventually successful) legislation, sponsor more legislation. Liberals appear to be relatively likely to take the opportunity to shape the policy agenda through sponsorship activity, and ideological extremists are relatively likely to take the opportunity to voice their opinion in floor voting. Sponsorship and voting activity was relatively high in professionalized legislatures, where the opportunity costs and informational costs of sponsoring and casting votes on legislation is relatively low. Indeed, these results suggest that members do assess costs and benefits, thus increasing the efficiency of the legislative process. However, those costs and benefits are not always narrowly restricted to re-election benefits.

I found that it was easier to explain legislative activity than to explain the consequences of any lack of legislative activity. It may be that the consequences of a lack of legislative participation are found in the legislative process itself. Again, even if legislators are interested in making good public policy, if their proximate goal is re-election, then it may be that they are willing to trade-off legislative activity for electioneering activity—and that such a trade-off does not have consequences at the ballot box.

1.1 Lessons for Future Research

There are several ways to build on this research project. The first is that the measure of agenda-setting behavior – sponsorship – could be further developed. Sponsorship is clearly a measure of legislative activity, and it is a good measure, given that the agenda-setting stage of the legislative process is not only a crucial element of policy-making, but also offers legislators an opportunity to express their interests and the interests of their constituencies without being constrained to an up-down vote. However, agenda-setting could also be measured by the policy

areas of the bills that are introduced, as well as the ideological tone of the measures. Measures of bills that are truly "new" to the legislative agenda—as opposed to those who refine existing policies in relatively narrow way, or which have been introduced before—would be particularly valuable. The saliency of legislation would, and/or the degree of controversy that is involved in a particular policy would be useful to know when assessing agenda-setting participation.

Diversity across legislative proposals sponsored by a legislator could also be a useful measure of legislative participation. Moreover, it would be useful to assess the determinants of the sponsorship of successful measures. In general, this dissertation contributes by recognizing that the straightforward level of activity is important to consider—but much, much more could be done to assess the factors that influence the set of measures that each legislator places on the legislative agenda.

In the other analyses, a distinction between absenteeism and abstention should be made (if possible) in future research, and activity through committee deliberation and voting would be useful to incorporate in any overall story about legislative participation. Most important, much more could be done as well to assess the consequences of activity. It may be the consequences exist more for legislation that is actively passed (or, for that matter, actively blocked), and that consequences take the form of interest group rewards (or sanctions) and effects on one's reputation within the chamber. Work by Box-Steffensmeier and Grant (1999) find that legislators who are successful at passing their legislative agenda are awarded by PACs. The relationship between sponsorship and consequences may be more apparent if the sponsorship indicator measures effectiveness, instead of a simple count, and if the consequences variable taps into interest group activity.

This project—and particularly the analyses of sponsorship and agenda-setting—provides a good starting point for future research on legislative participation. By making some of the

adjustments to the dependent variables mentioned above, the analyses in this dissertation will be strengthened both empirically and theoretically. Those adjustments aside, future research on legislative participation (particularly the consequences of participation) need to include additional legislative sessions. By using a panel research design, it will be possible to draw conclusions of the determinants and consequences of participation over time. The results are less susceptible to external forces, and the effects of electoral margin will be easier to analyze. Furthermore, the comparison of election years and off-election years will provide an necessary and interesting dimension to the analysis. I expect that legislators will dramatically alter their participatory behavior when they know they are being closely monitored by constituents, potential challengers, and the news media.

This research can also serve as a bridge between prior research and future research on legislative and electoral reform. An expansion of the work done by Wright (2007) on term limits would also help us better understand legislative participation. Wright (2007) only considers a single term limited state in his analysis duplicating his research across states would provide the necessary empirical tests to draw broader conclusions on the conditioning effects of term limits. How do term limits change the amount and type of legislative participation? Building on the work of Hogan (2001, 2004), future research on the relationship between money, campaign finance reform, and legislative participation would be particularly fruitful. Do campaign contributions influence participatory behavior? Are states with more stringent campaign finance laws have varying levels of legislative participation? What are the financial consequences for poor participatory behavior?

In closing, this study of legislative participation at the state level provides scholars with a better insight on legislative behavior in general. It is important that we develop a body of literature that focuses on both the determinants and consequences of participation. In particular,

studying participation at the state level will help to develop and test broad theories of behavior. If legislators are “rational” and make decisions base on costs and benefits—costs and benefits that can be identified and measured across legislators and chambers – then we should be able to go even further in explaining legislative participation. This dissertation serves as a building block toward that goal.

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