

Legislative Deadlines and Partisan Blame Politics in Congress*

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Abstract

The amount of partisan conflict and gridlock over an issue in Congress is typically understood to stem from the amount of policy disagreement, or polarization between the parties. But such an explanation cannot adequately explain the variation in partisan conflict from issue to issue within a Congress or over a short period of time. This paper argues that the strategic efforts parties take to cast blame on each other for gridlock and other public disappointments can explain these variations. Drawing on data on congressional actions taken over expiring policies and programs from 2007-2012, I find that the dynamics of blame politics can explain which issues the parties take up, which issues result in partisan standoffs, and which are addressed without significant partisan controversy. These results have implications for how we understand party politics, action, and gridlock in Congress.

In 2008 Congress faced an impending deadline to reauthorize the electronic surveillance and wiretapping provisions of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Renewed the previous summer for just six months, these policies were set to expire on February 1. What ensued was a partisan standoff in which majority Democrats and the Bush administration refused to compromise as the deadline neared, but instead tried to blame the other side of the aisle for the inaction on an important national security issue. Ultimately, the deadline came and passed, and the FISA policies expired. Even so, the standoff carried on for months with each side trading barbs and taking symbolic votes hoping to encourage the public to their side. Only in late June did Democrats ultimately relent and help pass a bill that primarily met Republican objectives.

Four and half years later, these FISA policies were once again set to expire. However, this time around the partisan rancor that characterized the 2008 battle was absent. Despite divided government again being in place in 2012 (as in 2008) there was little attempt by either party to turn the reauthorization into a partisan spectacle. While opposition to the proposed new policy existed, and was expressed, the bill ultimately worked through regular order in both chambers, and a bipartisan bill was sent to the president's desk in time.

Four years apart, Congress dealt with the very same issue in very different ways. Why did the need to reauthorize FISA surveillance policies stir such partisan conflict and prolonged gridlock in 2008, but not in 2012? What can explain the difference in outcome? The answers to these questions have important implications for how we understand the role party politics plays in congressional action and gridlock. Existing scholarship on this topic emphasizes the role party polarization plays in rates of action and gridlock in Congress, demonstrating that congressional action is less likely, and gridlock and partisan acrimony are more likely, when the parties are more polarized. But this alone cannot explain variation in congressional action from issue to

issue or policy to policy within a Congress, or changes in party conflict over a single issue over a short period of time. Basically, it cannot explain why parties are in conflict over an issue in one instance, agree to work together in another instance, or agree to keep that issue off the agenda in yet another. For us to claim we understand the role parties play on congressional politics, these are important things that we should be able to explain.

In this paper, I argue that the dynamics of partisan blame politics can provide insight. Irrespective of the level of party polarization or disagreement, policy areas that provide better opportunities for a party to try to cast blame on the other side for gridlock or public dissatisfaction are more likely to result in visible partisan conflict in Congress. In contrast, other policies are more likely to foster either quiet compromise or be left off of the agenda entirely. Rather than simply being driven by their adherence to policy positions or ideological purity, parties and their members are often driven by concerns over maintaining the support of the public, or of groups in the public, as they look toward future campaigns. These concerns make opportunities to blame the other side of the aisle for unpopular happenings, and at the same time deflect blame from themselves, quite appealing.

I test these expectations on legislative actions taken on deadlines to reauthorize expiring policies and programs.¹ Since the 1950s, federal programs and policies have commonly been authorized for limit time periods, requiring Congress to “reauthorize” them every one to several years. These deadlines provide opportunities for Congress to revisit and reexamine federal policies on a reoccurring basis (Hall 2004; Adler and Wilkerson 2013). However, most of these deadlines are paper tigers as the expiration of authorizing legislation does not require a program to cease operations, nor does it bar it from receiving or spending appropriated funds (Tollestrup and Yeh 2011). One needs only to consider No Child Left Behind. Its authorization expired in

2007, but its policies continue to form the basis of federal elementary and secondary education policy and receive congressional funding each year.

As such, most of these deadlines are ignored by Congress while the “expiring” policies persist. Original data on these deadlines occurring from 2007 to 2012 (the 110th through the 112th congresses) demonstrate that partisan blame politics influences which deadlines parties strategically choose to leverage into partisan standoffs, which are acted upon without significant controversy, and which are ignored. The findings indicate that action and inaction in Congress is not only about policy disagreement, but the political points that can be scored.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, a theory of partisan blame politics in Congress is described. Second, the manner in which reauthorizing deadlines can be used to test strategic blame casting behavior is discussed. Third, the data are described. Fourth, the results of analyses are presented. Fifth, the implications of these findings for our understanding of party politics and congressional action are discussed.

Partisan Blame Politics in Congress

A theory of partisan blame politics in Congress rests on three foundations. First, the behavior of political actors is influenced by considerations of blame. Second, political parties have reasons not only to avoid blame, but to cast blame onto the other side of the aisle. Third, opportunities for blame are abundant and common in American national politics and so considerations of blame are often at the forefront of political thinking. Because of these three things, congressional parties seek to manage and control opportunities for blame casting in a way that benefits them rather than the other side of the aisle.

Political Actors are Influenced by Blame

Blame plays a significant role in the calculations and behavior of political actors. As

Weaver (1986) was perhaps the first to argue, the desire to get reelected not only drives lawmakers to try to maximize credit claiming opportunities (e.g., Mayhew 1974; Fiorina 1977; Stein and Bickers 1994; Bickers and Stein 1996; Grimmer, Messing, and Westwood 2012) but also to try to minimize the blame they might take when bad things happen. This behavior stems in part from the public's tendency to punish politicians for unfortunate developments more so than they reward them for positive developments (see also, Bloom and Price 1975; Kernell 1977; Jacobson 2007). As a result, lawmakers tend to be somewhat cautious in their actions. According to Arnold (1990) lawmakers try to avoid taking actions that may cause them to take blame in the future and this affects the policies ultimately passed in Congress.

Studies looking beyond Congress have found blame to be important for other political actors as well. Hood (2010) finds that executive branch officials and bureaucrats structure their behavior and their interactions with the public to avoid taking blame (see also, Banche et al 2014), and Howlett (2012) notes that blame avoidance plays a crucial role in policy learning among governmental officials. Pierson (1994; 1996) finds that blame plays an important role in how politicians approach and frame actions taken to make cuts to programs like welfare, or generally engage in policy retrenchment, in the United States and elsewhere.

In short, blame is an important influence of the behavior of politicians affecting their decision making processes, the actions they take, and how they justify those actions. As the following sections will show, blame is also important for the collective actions of lawmakers as parties.

Blame and Party Politics

Blame is an important factor in the actions and strategic decisions of parties as collective organizations because, first, there are numerous incentives for members of parties to work

together to bolster their party's reputation and damage the reputation of the other, and second, because blame can be used as an effective negotiating tactic.

First, congressional parties and their members have collective political interests that incentivize them to work together to not only deflect any blame from their own side of aisle, but to cast blame onto the other side hoping to damage the opposition's reputation (Schattschneider 1942; Lee 2009; Cox and McCubbins 2005). First, they have collective electoral interests. Electorally, the relative standings of the parties influence individual lawmakers' chances of winning reelection (Jacobson 2009, 135-44). Representatives and senators have a better shot at winning reelection when the opposing party is strongly disliked, or has earned the public's ire for the disappointments of the previous two years. Thus, for parties and their members, it is in their collective electoral interests to get the other party to shoulder the public's blame for any disappointments.

Second, parties and their members have collective institutional power incentives. Control of Congress gives a party more influence over the agenda, the floor, and the policies passed into law. It also provides benefits to members of the majority in terms of money for district projects (Balla et al 2002; Levitt and Snyder 1995), campaign cash (Cox and Magar 1999; Rudolph 1999), opportunities to obtain powerful institutional positions such as chairmanships, and improved opportunities to influence public policy and exercise power. Tarnishing the standing of the opposition and placing blame on it for the public's dissatisfactions can help a party obtain control over a chamber, or the entire Congress. This gives party members an incentive to go along with partisan efforts to cast blame.

Second, there is some compelling evidence that blame considerations can affect partisan negotiations, and that blame can sometimes be an effective negotiating tactic. Groseclose and

McCarty (2001), for instance, suggest that partisan negotiations can be affected by the desires of parties to avoid taking public blame for appearing obstructionist. Gilmour (1995) shows that blame can be important in a different way, by spurring parties to sometimes spurn compromises with the other party in order to avoid taking blame from faithful supporters interested in “purer” policy outcomes. Parties may also seek to avoid taking blame in the future through the way they cultivate coalitions. Balla et al (2002), in particular, find that congressional majorities work to include minority members in pork barrel coalitions in order to undercut attacks about wasteful spending from the minority.

In general, blame plays an important role in party behavior, particularly where collective incentives for partisanship and party conflict are concerned. A party and all of its members are better off when it can convince the voting public that the other party is to blame for things they are unhappy about.

Opportunities for Blame Abound

Finally, in addition to the important ways blame affects the behavior of lawmakers and parties, blame is important in American politics simply because occurrences for which a party could take blame are so common. Beyond exogenous events outside of the control of lawmakers, which at times are laid at the feet of one of the parties, there are aspects of the American political system that make blame-worthy events particularly common.

For one, the American political system makes gridlock a common occurrence. Gridlock is arguably the norm in American politics for several structural reasons, including the checks and balances among the federal branches, congressional bicameralism, and the interaction of political parties with these design elements (Krehbiel 1998; Binder 1999, 2003; Coleman 1999, Jones 2001). Combined, these institutions typically require that new laws are supported by large,

bipartisan, and super-majoritarian coalitions. But because parties make the compromises necessary to form these coalitions difficult, inaction is commonplace. However, the public's distaste for gridlock makes this a problem for both parties. For many, gridlock is a symptom of everything that is wrong with a government driven by corruption, special interests, and a political class out of touch with the public (see, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). Further, there is some evidence that the public punishes parties and politicians at the ballot box for gridlock in Congress. Lebo, McGlynn, and Koger (2007), find that parties with worse rates of success on tough votes do worse in subsequent elections, and Lebo and O'Green (2011) find that a president's level of success in moving legislation through Congress affects his or her party's standing and electoral performance (see, also, Cohen 2013). Altogether, the frequency of gridlock and inaction in Washington provides many opportunities for blame to be cast.

In addition, because the policymaking system necessitates bipartisanship and compromise, even when action does occur many groups in the public are likely to be dissatisfied with policy outcomes, and at least one party make take blame for giving in. While the American public typically says it likes bipartisanship, the compromises that necessitate partisan cooperation can also illicit backlashes, especially among each party's base. A study completed by PEW in 2014 found that while people overwhelming indicate they prefer that the parties compromise, they also want that compromise to favor their side.² These findings are echoed in some studies of partisan politics. Karol (2009), for instance, finds that party leaders work to ensure the groups within their party's coalition remain satisfied with the party's actions and policy positions. Gilmour (1995) notes that in doing so parties often reject compromises that would be preferable to policy status quo in order to keep allied groups from complaining that too much was ceded.

Generally, because of the structure of the political system, both action and inaction in Congress carry the possibility of a backlash. Generally, opportunities for one party or the other (or both) to be blamed for what happens in Washington are quite frequent and so the parties have to constantly consider how blame will factor into their politics.

Expectations

Because blame is an important influence on lawmakers and parties, and because occurrences where a party could take blame are so common, we should expect that congressional parties, rather than passively waiting for these events to occur and reacting, should work to try to strategically influence blame-casting opportunities in a way that benefits their party rather than the opposition. Gridlock will happen. Unsatisfactory compromises will happen. But a party can try to influence which issue gridlock occurs over, and which party has to accept the unsatisfactory compromises. It is through this strategic behavior that party politics influences how different policy issues are addressed, which result in action or gridlock, and which are left off of the agenda entirely. The next section discusses how congressional action over legislative deadlines can be used to test these expectations.

Legislative Deadlines and Partisan Blame

Legislative deadlines to reauthorize federal policies and programs provide excellent opportunities for parties to try to create blame-casting opportunities, and as such are a fruitful place for testing expectations about partisan blame politics. Since the 1950s it has been increasingly common for laws authorizing federal agencies, policies, and programs to be time-limited, with deadlines by which they must be reauthorized (Adler and Wilkerson 2013, 69; Hall 2004). Today, nearly all authorizing legislation is for a fixed time period, usually between one and seven years. These deadlines were intended to promote good governance, encouraging

Congress to revisit governmental policies on a regular basis for oversight and correction. However, authorization deadlines have increasingly been ignored. Today, hundreds of policies and programs with expired authorizing legislation continue to operate and receive billions of dollars in annual discretionary appropriations. This occurs because, as Tollestrup and Yeh (2011) note, an expired authorization does not mean the legal authority for program spending and operations have expired. Federal programs and policies, in most cases, can continue unabated and may legally receive and spend funds. In other words, these “expirations” do not really alter the public policy status quo in any way, but they may alter the *politics* around these policies.³

Namely, these deadlines provide ripe opportunities for parties to cast blame on each other. On any deadline, one or both parties can strategically decide that rather than ignoring the deadline, or working across the aisle to reauthorize the expiring program, they can draw the other party into a contentious partisan standoff in which the “expiration” of the policy or program is threatened. In doing so, a party hopes to cast blame on the other side in two ways. First, they hope to get the public to blame the other party for the standoff and the gridlock, and see that party as incapable of governing, obstructing positive action in Washington, or threatening the ability of a critical aspect of the government to function. For example, by drawing both sides into a standoff over the annual reauthorization of the Department of Defense, one party can try to blame the other for threatening the ability of our defense and national security apparatuses from keeping Americans safe, and portray that party as more concerned about ideological purity or special interests than national security. Second, in creating a partisan standoff, a party hopes to force the other side into giving in and accepting a compromise that their base will find unsatisfying. Returning to the example of FISA, Republicans hoped to not only get the public to blame Democrats for the standoff, but get Democratic groups to blame the Democrats for giving

in. This resulted in a lose-lose for Democrats and a win-win for the GOP.

Recent congresses have seen many legislative standoffs with blame-casting implications including very prominent ones over the debt ceiling, the “fiscal cliff,” and government shutdowns. But similar standoffs have occurred over many issues, including deadlines to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration, the government’s surface transportation policies, the Higher Education Act, and more. But not all deadlines are leveraged into partisan standoffs—in fact most are not. A theory of partisan blame politics suggests that the deadlines resulting in partisan acrimony should be predictable as each party tries to provoke these standoffs only when they feel it is good for their blame-casting purposes. Generally, the suitability of deadlines for blame casting varies on its *policy dynamics* and its *partisan dynamics*.

Policy Dynamics

Irrespective of partisan politics, the significance of different policies and programs makes some better suited for casting partisan blame than others. Some, for example, comprise a major portion of the federal budget while others require only small amounts of spending. Some policies affect large swaths of the American public while others seem to only affect particularized constituencies. The more significant the policy or the program, the more easily it can be leveraged for blame politics. Trying to cast blame on the other party over a minor policy or relatively small agency may impress some, but the impact is likely to be slight. By contrast, creating a sense that the other party is to blame regarding a major policy or a massive federal program—for example a large entitlement program or the Department of Defense—should be more enticing an opportunity.

At the same time, the suitability of policies and programs for blame politics should also be affected by their general salience. Large or small, some policies attract more political and

public attention than others, and this attention can vary from year to year. For example, while federal immigration policy has always affected millions of Americans it has been more or less salient at different times in American history. Saliency should affect blame politics independent of each deadline's size and significance.

Partisan Dynamics

The dynamics of the party politics surrounding different deadlines affects their suitability for blame-casting as well. Several studies have found that the parties typically “own” or are advantaged on different issues (e.g., Petrocik 1996; Damore 2004; Pope and Woon 2008; Egan 2013). In other words, the public positively associates some issues with one party and different issues the other. Republicans, for example, are often considered to be advantaged on taxes, crime, and national security, while Democrats are typically considered to be stronger on health care, education, and the environment. Parties should be more eager to use issues on which they are advantaged for the purposes of blame because they will believe it easier to rally support to their side.

However, the ability of parties to leverage their advantaged issues and deadlines into blame-casting situations is likely to be constrained by other aspects of party politics. For one, parties are motivated not only by their ability to score points with the general public, but to take action that satisfies the important groups within their coalition (Karol 2009). While taking strong positions and creating standoffs over an issue is one thing, some groups may also want to see tangible policy results. As such, parties will also feel pressure to take responsible action and deliver positive policy change on issues important to the groups that are central to their coalitions. These pressures limit the degree to which parties may be willing foster inaction, gridlock, and standoffs on some issues.

In addition, the actions taken to cast blame are influenced by whether or not a party has control over Congress. A party holding at least some of the reins of power is likely to feel some responsibility to govern rather than just engage in blame politics. A party in-power could certainly play partisan political games all the time, but they may risk backlash from the public or from the groups within their coalition hoping to see results. By contrast, a party out-of-power has incentives to act irresponsibly, promote gridlock and inaction, and do things like create partisan standoffs (Lee 2013a). Generally, a party without governing power should be the primary driver of blame politics, and all else equal, their issue advantages and coalition groups should be the most relevant regarding when blame-casting opportunities are created.

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Altogether, the legislative deadlines likely to be leveraged into blame-casting partisan standoffs should be those with the right combination of the above dynamics. If this is found to be true, it will provide evidence that partisan blame politics, and parties' strategic political calculations, are a major influence on the patterns of action and inaction we see in Congress from policy to policy and from Congress to Congress. The next section describes the data used to test these expectations.

Data

Testing expectations about blame politics and legislative deadlines requires a dataset of authorization deadlines and their outcomes, as well as measures of policy and partisan dynamics for each expiring policy or program, and measures of the amount of policy or ideological disagreement between the parties on each issue as a control. The following subsections describe the data and measures used for these purposes.

Dataset of Expiring Authorizations

Compiling a list of expiring authorizations was no simple task. While the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) publishes a list of the programs set to expire each fiscal year, along with the date of that expiration, the list cannot be read as comprehensive and it requires significant reorganization. For one, the list only includes authorized programs set to expire which were receiving discretionary funds during that fiscal year. Programs and policies that do not receive discretionary funds or that received no new funding during that year would be excluded from the list. In addition, it lists each funded policy or program separately, including those that are always enacted together. For example, the Department of Defense is reauthorized annually and all of the programs and policies within it are always reauthorized together in a single legislative package. In the CBO documents, each expiring defense policy and program is listed separately. Congressional actors, however, do not view the Defense Department as dozens of separate expiring programs, but one: for the Department as a whole.

Consequently, steps were taken to massage the list as well as identify missing deadlines. First, the programs and policies in the CBO list are reorganized and combined as necessary. Programs and policies that are typically reauthorized together (such as those included in a department-wide reauthorization like defense and energy, or reauthorizations that are fairly standard such as the surface transportation reauthorization) are combined if they have the same expiration date.

Second, two media searches were conducted to identify any missing deadlines. For the first, *New York Times* archives were searched for the words “Congress” and either “expire,” “deadline,” or “must-pass.” The search returned hundreds of articles, each of which was examined for a description of an expiring program or policy. The second search was of *CQ Weekly’s* annual “legislative summary” articles which summarize congressional action (and often

inaction) by issue. Again, each summary was read for reference to an expiring program or policy. If a reference was made, articles published during that year on that issue were read for further details.

Deadlines were compiled for the years 2007-2012 (the 110th-112th congresses) yielding a list of 330 expiring authorizations. This time period is advantageous for several reasons. First, the parties were deeply polarized during this period, allowing for the analyses to assess the role of blame on congressional action and partisan politics in the face of significant policy disagreement. Second, the three congresses studied include variation in party control of Congress and the broader federal government. The 110th Congress featured unified Democratic control, but with a Republican president. The 111th Congress featured Democratic control again, but with a Democratic president. The 112th Congress featured split control of Congress with Republicans controlling the House and Democrats controlling the Senate.

Coding the Outcome of Each Deadline

In order to conduct the analyses, each deadline in the dataset had to be coded for its resolution. In other words, each had to be coded as resulting in one of three outcomes: (1) Being ignored by the parties and left off the agenda; (2) Being addressed in a relatively non-controversial manner with the passage of a new law; or (3) Being leveraged into a partisan standoff. In order to code each case, I read any *CQ Weekly* or *New York Times* articles on the deadline or its policy issue from the year of the deadline. In addition, I used *Congress.gov* to determine if there were any attempts to reauthorize or extend the expiring policy by conducting searches for the expiring program, policy, or law.

A case was coded as resulting in a partisan standoff if significant partisan acrimony arose over the issue during that Congress, and if the deadline was openly threatened by one or both

parties during the standoff. These include cases like the deadline to reauthorize FISA in 2008, during which the deadline passed and the authorization expired, but action ultimately took place after the deadline. But they also include cases in which no new law was ever passed, and cases in which a new law was passed before the deadline but after a contentious standoff. In most cases it was easy to determine if a standoff had occurred, but I erred on the side of caution by only coding cases as such if there was clear evidence.

A case was coded as noncontroversial action if action was taken to address the expiring policy or program and new law was passed during the Congress in which the deadline occurred, but without any sort of partisan spectacle. In some cases action was taken before the deadline while in other cases the policy expired before action took place. Some cases resulted in legislation that had broad, bipartisan support while others resulted in legislation supported primarily by one party. Action taken over the FISA deadline from 2012 is coded as noncontroversial, for instance. The key difference between these cases and those coded as partisan standoffs is that neither party tried to openly use the deadline to cast blame or gain leverage in the negotiations.

The remaining cases were coded as being ignored and left off of the agenda. None of these deadlines were meaningfully addressed by Congress. There was no prominent talk of the deadline on Capitol Hill, the parties did not use the deadline to score political points, and legislation addressing the expiring policies and programs was neither considered nor passed on the floor. The deadline simply came and went.

Measures of Policy and Partisan Dynamics

In order to assess how partisan blame politics influences the outcome of each case, measures of the policy and partisan dynamics around each deadline (and its underlying policy or

program) are needed.

Three measures assess the policy dynamics: A policy's significance is understood and measured here as its *annual cost*, or the annual federal spending on each policy or program in the dataset. Whenever possible, the amount used is the amount appropriated to be spent during the fiscal year in which the program or policy was set to expire. In some cases, this amount was unavailable or the amount for the final fiscal year was an aberration from the norm. In these cases, the average amount per year under the expiring authorization is used. The CBO list of expiring authorizations provides amounts for many of the expiring programs and policies. Roughly, two-thirds of the cases could be coded from the list. The remaining deadlines required analyzing appropriations bills, CBO cost estimates, reports by the Congressional Research Service, and spending information made available on the websites of governmental departments and agencies. In all, the annual cost for more than 90% of the deadlines could be easily identified. The remaining cases included some programs related to national security and intelligence programs for which spending totals are classified. For these, public estimates made by CBO leaders and leaks obtained by Edward Snowden or WikiLeaks form the basis of the value used. For a handful of remaining cases spending information simply could not be obtained. The programs expiring under each of these deadlines were very small and minor. As such the variable's minimum value was inputted for these cases (4% of cases).

Interest group interest measures the amount of money spent by groups with an interest in each deadline's policy, and it represents political salience of each deadline. To create this measure, first each deadline's policy or program was coded for issue content using the Policy Agendas Project's (PAP) codebook, which includes 220 issue topics nested within 20 broader issue areas.⁴ Each of the 20 issue areas was then matched to Center for Responsive Politics'

(CRP) data on spending by 128 issue industries in each election cycle on the basis of the one or two issue areas each industry should be most interested in (see Table A.1 in the Appendix). The total dollar amount (in 2012 constant dollars) of all interest group spending spent by industries interested in that deadline's issue area during the expiring Congress is recorded.⁵

Public salience is measured using Gallup's most important problem question. The PAP aggregates responses to this question annually and matches them to each of its 20 issue areas. The measure is the percentage of responses in each year that indicated each deadline's issue area was the most important problem facing the country. This measure should indicate the amount of public concern over each deadline in the dataset, though the measure is fairly rough.

The partisan dynamics around each deadline are assessed using three measures as well. The first uses each party's ownership or advantage on each issue. Specifically, I draw on the results of Egan's (2013) analysis which determines whether each party has a significant advantage on each issue and the magnitude of that advantage. Egan compiled survey responses since the 1970s to determine the issues owned by each party during each decade. His analysis reveals the average percent (in terms of survey respondents) by which either party was favored on a number of issues, and whether that advantage is statistically significant. I use his findings for the 2000s. Table 1 shows the issues identified as advantaged for each party and how they were matched to each of the PAP's issue topics. Any deadline addressing one of these topics had the percent advantage assigned to it by party.

[TABLE 1 about here]

As hypothesized above, the amount of control a party has over Congress, and thus the responsibility it feels for taking action, should impact the role blame plays. Parties that are out of power should be more likely to use blame to score political points as they are relatively

unrestrained, and feel less responsibility for taking actual action. By contrast the party in power should be the most constrained as it feels a need to govern and not just cast blame. For the congresses studied here, the “minority” or “out” party is understood as the party in the minority in Congress. For the 110th and 111th congresses this is clear: the Republicans were in the minority during both. However, with Republicans taking control of the House for the 112th Congress the coding is murkier. Since the Democrats controlled the White House during this Congress, I continued to code Republicans as the “minority” party.⁶

Finally, *minority interest group pressure* measures the amount of interest group pressure on the minority party for each issue, and thus each deadline. This measure takes the total amount spent by interest groups interested in each issue, and uses the percent of that spending that went to politicians and party organizations within the minority party (in this case the Republicans). As discussed above, on issues where a party faces significant pressure from groups within their coalitions their willingness to engage in blame politics should be restrained as they may be expected to produce policy outcomes. This measure provides a rough gauge of whether the majority or minority is receiving more financial support, and thus more pressure, from groups concerned with each deadline.

Measures of Policy Disagreement

In order to draw stronger conclusions about the role blame politics plays in the outcomes of these deadlines, results should be found after measuring the amount of policy disagreement between the parties on each issue or program facing a deadline. A perfect measure of each party’s true philosophical disagreements on each issue is not possible; however, we can assess the average amount of disagreement the parties have demonstrated. This is measured by calculating the Rice index of party differences on each issue during each Congress. Using data

from the Congressional Bills Project⁷, the Rice index of party difference is calculated on each final passage vote in the House during each Congress. Average scores are then calculated for each of the PAP's 20 issue areas. These issue-average Rice scores are then applied to each deadline based on the issue addressed by the expiring policy or program. The measure generally conforms to expectation. During the time period studied here, the parties were most divided on macroeconomic issues, government operations, and social welfare policy. They were least divided on community development, defense policy, and space, science, technology and communications policy.

In addition to this measure, a dummy variable is included for *economic policies* as Lee (2009, 61-65) shows that the parties are typically most divided on policies dealing with economic issues. Following Lee, economics issues are broadly construed and include policies and programs primarily dealing with macroeconomics; environmental regulation; health care policy; banking, finance, and domestic commerce; labor and employment; and social welfare issues.⁸ Basically it includes policy areas that relate to political fights over the role government should play in reducing inequality.

Divided Government

Divided government authorization indicates whether or not there was divided government the last time the expiring policy or program was authorized. Generally, laws passed under divided government require even more bipartisan support than those passed under unified government. All else equal, laws passed under such circumstances may be less likely to stir partisan controversy and blame politics as more actors will wish to support the program.

Analyses and Results

First, Figure 1 shows the proportions of the 330 deadlines resulting in partisan standoffs, non-

controversial action, or no action whatsoever. Immediately clear is that most deadlines are ignored. Almost three-quarters of expiring authorizations from 2007 through 2012 were never seriously considered, placed on the agenda, or addressed. These deadlines were simply allowed to pass. While some may have been ignored because of bipartisan agreement that the underlying policies or programs should end, the data suggest this is not generally the case. Altogether, 94% of programs and policies with ignored deadlines received discretionary appropriations from Congress the following fiscal year. In general, Figure 1 underscores two points. First, these authorizing deadlines are largely paper tigers. They can be, and are, ignored at no real cost. Second, and following from the first point, this means the decision to do something with any deadline is a matter of strategic choice.

[FIGURE 1 about here]

The question then remains: what factors underlie these choices? Table 2 presents the results of a multinomial logistic regression predicting the outcome of each deadline.⁹ For the purposes of the analysis, ignored deadlines form the base outcome so the coefficients show the impact of each variable on the likelihood that either a partisan standoff or non-controversial action occurs, rather than the deadline being ignored. Taken as a whole the results indicate that policy dynamics influence whether a deadline is addressed in either manner, and both policy and partisan dynamics influence whether a deadline results in a blame-casting standoff or non-controversial action.

[TABLE 2 about here]

Looking first at policy dynamics, the results demonstrate that a policy's significance, measured as the natural log of its annual cost, is a major driver of the outcome of a deadline. Simply put, policies and programs that utilize large sums of federal money are more likely to be

addressed rather than ignored. As shown in Figure 2, the policies requiring the smallest amounts of federal spending have nearly a 100% likelihood of being ignored. However, the most costly programs and policies have less than a 20% chance of being left unaddressed. The likelihoods of partisan standoffs and non-controversial action generally increase with annual cost. However, at the highest end of cost, it becomes especially likely that a standoff will ensue. The costliest deadlines have a better than 60% likelihood of a standoff, while the likelihood of non-controversial action hovers around 20-25%.

[FIGURE 2 about here]

The attention of interest groups is also important, particularly for standoffs and blame-casting. The coefficient for interest group interest is positive for both outcomes, but only significant for partisan standoffs. As shown in Figure 3, the likelihood that non-controversial action occurs stays relatively flat, around 15-20%. However, as interest group interest increases, the likelihood of a standoff occurring increases considerably. Deadlines attracting the least attention from interest groups have an almost nonexistent likelihood of ending in a standoff. By contrast, deadlines attracting the most attention have almost a 30% likelihood.

[FIGURE 3 about here]

Salience with the public, measured using Gallup's "most important problem" question also influences the outcomes of deadlines, but it appears deadlines addressing more salient policies and programs are more likely to be ignored. As shown in Figure 4, as the percent of respondents indicating an issue is the most important increases, the likelihood of a deadline resulting in a standoff reduces quickly, and the likelihood that a deadline is ignored rises. Apparently, all else equal, congressional parties would rather not stir up controversy over an issue of significant public concern.

[FIGURE 4 about here]

All together, these results regarding policy dynamics largely indicate that the decisions of congressional parties to either take action or ignore authorizing deadlines is strongly influenced by the significance and political and public salience of the policy or program set to expire. Large, costly policies and those attracting the attention of interest group are likely to be addressed in some manner. However, those with a lot of negative public attention, such as those addressing issues mentioned frequently in response to Gallup's "most important problem" question are likely to be ignored. Among these dynamics, interest group interest appears to be a differentiator between non-controversial action and partisan standoffs. Deadlines that draw the attention of groups are more likely to result in a standoff. All else equal, the political interest shown in these deadlines, it seems, increases the attractiveness of a deadline for blame-casting and scoring political points.

The likelihood of a standoff is also driven by the partisan dynamics of each deadline. Specifically, deadlines that advantage the minority party in Congress are likely to result in a partisan standoff. The coefficient for *minority party advantage* is positive and statistically significant for such an outcome. As shown in Figure 5, the likelihood of a standoff increases sharply as the minority's advantage increases. Deadlines that did not advantage or only slightly favored the GOP during the time period studied here were very likely to be ignored. However, as the Republicans' advantage increases, the likelihood of a standoff increases substantially. Among deadlines dealing with the GOP's most advantaged issues, the likelihood is almost equal to that of the deadline being ignored. Basically, it appears the minority party acts on opportunities that should be ripe for casting blame on the majority, drawing out negotiations into a standoff in order to make the majority look incompetent. As shown in Table 2, the same does

not occur among majority advantaged issues. The coefficients for *majority party advantage* are insignificant for both outcomes, suggesting the responsibility the majority feels to pass policy restricts their strategic blame-casting behavior.

[FIGURE 5 about here]

In contrast, the interest group pressure felt by the majority party is important. As shown in Table 2, while the amount of interest group pressure felt by the minority does not significantly affect the likelihood of a partisan standoff, it does affect the likelihood of non-controversial action. Namely, the more pressure on the minority, the less the likelihood of such action. Since the inverse of this measure represents pressure on the majority party it suggests such pressure strongly influences the likelihood of non-controversial action. As shown in Figure 6, it appears that, all else equal, non-controversial action is more likely to occur as the pressure swings toward the majority. Holding the reins of power, the majority party feels pressure to take real action when there are groups in their coalition with concern over a looming deadline.

[FIGURE 6 about here]

Notably, these results are found despite controlling for the typical level of disagreement between the parties on each issue. The coefficient for the average Rice index of party difference variable is positive for the partisan standoff outcome and negative for the non-controversial action outcome, but both are insignificant. This suggests that the level of disagreement between the parties on each issue is important, but not important enough to explain the type of action taken, or the dynamics under which blame politics becomes important.

Altogether, these results indicate that the decisions over which issues and deadlines Congress will address, and how they will be addressed, are influenced in part by the dynamics of partisan blame politics. In particular, blame-casting partisan standoffs are likely to result when

the policy or program is large and political significant, and when it is over an issue that provides a good opportunity for the minority party. From 2007 to 2012, some of these deadlines included those over the Department of Defense in 2010, 2011, and 2012, over federal trade adjustment assistance policies in 2007 and 2011, over the government's intelligence programs, FISA programs in 2008, and some PATRIOT Act provisions. Republicans during this time period worked to create spectacles over these deadlines and these issues in order to cast blame on the Democrats and try to score political points.

By contrast, blame politics is less influential on smaller policies and programs, on issues that are considered a "problem" by significant proportions of the public, and on issues that the majority party feels pressure from within their coalition to take action on. From 2007 to 2012, these cases included deadlines over various small federal programs and policies that were simply ignored, such as the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act, the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006, and the Special Olympics Sport and Empowerment Act of 2004. It also included deadlines that were acted upon in a non-controversial fashion. These are largely deadlines over policies and programs important to key Democratic groups, including the Higher Education Act, the Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act, and various environmental laws and programs such as the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain Act of 2002.

The most notable takeaway of these findings is that the manner in which legislative deadlines and legislative issues are addressed, and the degree to which they are addressed at all, is influenced heavily by the dynamics of partisan blame politics. This suggests blame plays an important role in party politics, gridlock, and action in Congress, and can help improve our understanding of the dynamics of each.

Conclusions

The findings presented above highlight the importance of partisan blame politics in Congress. Specifically, the data show that when an authorizing deadline is ripe for blame-casting, particularly for the minority party, the parties are likely to end up engaged in a partisan standoff that delays action and may ultimately result in gridlock. By contrast, when a deadline is less advantageous for the minority, it is likely to result either in congressional action that is relatively non-controversial or in being left off of the agenda entirely.

Analyzing action over authorizing deadlines, rather than other forms of congressional action, made it easier to identify strategic behavior because the deadlines are substantively meaningless (Tollestrup and Yeh 2011). But it is unlikely that the results found here are true only for such deadlines. Rather, they underscore that the patterns of action and gridlock we observe in Congress are often driven by the strategic political calculations of the parties and their efforts to cast blame across the aisle. Understanding the strategic nature of partisan politics improves our understanding of action and gridlock in several ways that go beyond the lessons that can be culled from research focusing just on policy disagreement and ideological polarization.

First, these findings suggest a reason why parties sometimes fail to take action on things that they agree upon. As shown above, the overwhelming majority of authorizing deadlines were simply ignored. On many of these, it is safe to assume the parties were in agreement that the policy or program should continue or should even be reauthorized, expanded, or bolstered. In fact, a number of the expiring programs and policies that were ignored during one Congress were taken up in subsequent congresses and addressed through bipartisan action. The politics of these deadlines simply did not warrant action at the time.

Second, these findings suggest a reason why parties may work together on things they are

typically divided on, or why bipartisan action can occur even with highly polarized parties. For example, among the deadlines this dataset, non-controversial action was taken on a number of policies and programs that often sharply divide the parties, including Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), trade adjustment assistance, the Federal Aviation Administration, and of course, FISA. In fact, each of these programs was also subjected to a partisan standoff in a different Congress within the dataset. Given that the time period studied here is narrow, it is unlikely the parties became more or less divided over these issues between the two instances. Rather, the blame politics around each issue must have been more or less appealing for the minority at different points in time.

Third, these findings also help us understand variation in action and gridlock within a single Congress. Existing scholarship linking party polarization and gridlock clearly demonstrates the importance of polarization for the aggregate productivity of a Congress and for variations in rates of gridlock over time. But it cannot tell us why some issues result in congressional action and some result in partisan stalemate within a single Congress. Partisan blame politics suggests at least one reason: issues that the minority feels will provide a fruitful means of casting blame on the majority often result in prolonged standoffs, and sometimes gridlock.

Fourth, these findings help us separate the influence of preference disagreement and political disagreement in congressional action and gridlock. The motivating effects of blame politics clearly differ from those of policy preferences. By looking at action over authorizing deadlines, we can see that this type of gridlock does not occur just on policies that the parties typically have ideological disagreements over, nor did action just occur over policies on which the parties are less likely to fundamentally disagree. In fact, some of the partisan standoffs

studied here took place over policies we typically understand as either non-ideological or that typically cut across partisan dividing lines. These include standoffs over reauthorizing the Farm Bill, extending and reauthorizing various policies and programs under the Small Business Administration, and reauthorizing the Department of Defense. While some might conclude that the extension of partisan conflict to these issues is evidence of an ever-growing ideological divide between the parties, the results here suggest that instead it was instead good blame politics to create a partisan spectacle.

Future research into partisan blame politics may help us understand other patterns of congressional action and party politics. For instance, further investigation may help us understand the conditions under which one or both parties give in or acquiesce to the demands of the other party during standoffs, accepting proposals they previously rejected. For example, the standoff over FISA policies in 2008 saw Democrats reject proposals in the spring that they accepted in the summer. In general, further research into the role blame plays in party politics should help us better understand patterns of action and inaction in Congress.

Appendix

TABLE A.1
MATCHING OF CENTER FOR RESPONSIVE POLITICS' ISSUE INDUSTRIES AND POLICY AGENDAS
PROJECT'S MAJOR ISSUE AREAS

CRP Issue Sector	CRP Issue Industry	PAP #1	PAP #2
Agribusiness	Agricultural Services & Products	4	
Agribusiness	Crop Production & Basic Processing	4	
Agribusiness	Dairy	4	
Agribusiness	Food Processing & Sales	4	
Agribusiness	Food Products Manufacturing	4	
Agribusiness	Food Stores	4	
Agribusiness	Forestry & Forest Products	4	21
Agribusiness	Livestock	4	
Agribusiness	Meat processing & products	4	
Agribusiness	Poultry & Eggs	4	
Agribusiness	Sugar	4	
Agribusiness	Tobacco	4	
Agribusiness	Vegetables & Fruits	4	
Communications/Electronics	Books Magazines & Newspapers	17	
Communications/Electronics	Cable & Satellite TV Production & Distribution	17	
Communications/Electronics	Commercial TV & Radio Stations	17	
Communications/Electronics	Computer Software	17	
Communications/Electronics	Computers/Internet	17	
Communications/Electronics	Motion Picture Production & Distribution	17	
Communications/Electronics	Printing & Publishing	17	
Communications/Electronics	Recorded Music & Music Production	17	
Communications/Electronics	Telecom Services & Equipment	17	
Communications/Electronics	Telephone Utilities	17	
Communications/Electronics	TV / Movies / Music	17	
Communications/Electronics	TV Production & Distribution	17	
Construction	Architectural Services	15	
Construction	Building Materials & Equipment	15	18
Construction	Construction Services	15	18
Construction	General Contractors	15	18
Construction	Home Builders	15	18
Construction	Special Trade Contractors	15	18
Defense	Defense Aerospace	16	
Defense	Defense Electronics	16	
Defense	Miscellaneous Defense	16	
Energy/Natural Resources	Alternative Energy Production & Services	8	
Energy/Natural Resources	Coal Mining	8	
Energy/Natural Resources	Electric Utilities	8	
Energy/Natural Resources	Mining	8	21
Energy/Natural Resources	Natural Gas Pipelines	8	7
Energy/Natural Resources	Oil & Gas	8	
Energy/Natural Resources	Waste Management	8	7
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Accountants	15	
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Commercial Banks	15	18
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Credit Union	15	
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Finance / Credit Companies	15	18
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Hedge Funds	15	
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Insurance	15	
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Mortgage Bankers & Brokers	15	14
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Payday Lenders	15	
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Private Equity & Investment Firms	15	
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Real Estate	15	14
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Savings & Loans	15	
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Securities & Investment	15	18
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Student Loan Companies	15	6
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	Venture Capital	15	
Health	Chiropractors	3	
Health	Dentists	3	
Health	Health Professionals	3	
Health	Health Services/HMOs	3	
Health	Hospitals & Nursing Homes	3	

TABLE A.1 CONTINUED...

Health	Medical Devices & Supplies	3	
Health	Nurses	3	
Health	Nutritional & Dietary Supplements	3	
Health	Pharmaceutical Manufacturing	3	
Health	Pharmaceuticals / Health Products	3	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Abortion Policy/Anti-Abortion	2	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Abortion Policy/Pro-Abortion Rights	2	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Candidate Committees	n/a	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Democratic Candidate Committees	n/a	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Democratic Leadership PACs	n/a	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Democratic/Liberal	n/a	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Environment	7	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Foreign & Defense Policy	19	16
Ideology / Single-Issue	Gay & Lesbian Rights & Issues	2	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Gun Control	2	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Gun Rights	2	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Human Rights	19	13
Ideology / Single-Issue	Leadership PACs	n/a	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Pro-Israel	19	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Republican Candidate Committees	n/a	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Republican Leadership PACs	n/a	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Republican/Conservative	n/a	
Ideology / Single-Issue	Women's Issues	2	
Labor	Air Transport Unions	5	10
Labor	Building Trade Unions	5	
Labor	Industrial Unions	5	
Labor	Misc. Unions	5	
Labor	Postal Unions	5	20
Labor	Public Sector Unions	5	20
Labor	Teachers Unions	5	6
Labor	Transportation Unions	5	10
Lawyers & Lobbyists	Lawyers / Law Firms	n/a	
Lawyers & Lobbyists	Lobbyists	n/a	
Misc Business	Advertising/Public Relations	15	18
Misc Business	Beer Wine & Liquor	15	18
Misc Business	Business Associations	15	18
Misc Business	Business Services	15	18
Misc Business	Casinos / Gambling	15	18
Misc Business	Chemical & Related Manufacturing	15	18
Misc Business	Clothing Manufacturing	15	18
Misc Business	Food & Beverage	15	4
Misc Business	Funeral Services	15	
Misc Business	Indian Gaming	15	
Misc Business	Lodging / Tourism	15	18
Misc Business	Misc. Manufacturing & Distributing	15	18
Misc Business	Miscellaneous Services	15	18
Misc Business	Professional Sports Arenas & Related Equipment & Services	15	
Misc Business	Recreation / Live Entertainment	15	
Misc Business	Restaurants & Drinking Establishments	15	4
Misc Business	Retail Sales	15	18
Misc Business	Steel Production	15	18
Misc Business	Textiles	15	18
Other	Civil Servants/Public Officials	20	
Other	Clergy & Religious Organizations	2	
Other	Education	6	
Other	For-profit Education	6	
Other	Non-profits Foundations & Philanthropists	n/a	
Other	Retired	13	
Transportation	Air Transport	10	
Transportation	Airlines	10	
Transportation	Auto Manufacturers	10	18
Transportation	Automotive	10	
Transportation	Car Dealers	10	
Transportation	Car Dealers Imports	10	18
Transportation	Cruise Ships & Lines	10	
Transportation	Railroads	10	
Transportation	Sea Transport	10	18
Transportation	Trucking	10	

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TABLE 1
PARTY ADVANTAGED ISSUES AND POLICY AGENDAS PROJECT CODING

	Size of advantage	Policy Agendas Project Issue Topics
<i>Democratic Party advantaged issues</i>		
Environment	26%	all of issue area 7
Health Care	14%	all of issue area 3
Poverty	12%	1302
Social Security	10%	1303
Energy	10%	all of issue area 8
Education	7%	all of issue area 6 (except 609)
Jobs	7%	103, 500, 502, 503, 506
Foreign affairs	4%	all of issue area 19 (except 1927)
Economy	3%	100
<i>Republican Party advantaged issues</i>		
Domestic security	16%	1615, 1927
Trade	14%	all of issue area 18
Military	12%	all of issue area 16 (except 1609 and 1615)
Crime	9%	1202, 1203, 1205, 1206, 1207, 1209, 1210, 1211
Immigration	5%	all of issue area 9
Taxes	2%	107 , 2009

Sources: Party advantaged issues taken from Egan (2013)

FIGURE 1
OUTCOMES OF AUTHORIZING DEADLINES, 2007-2012

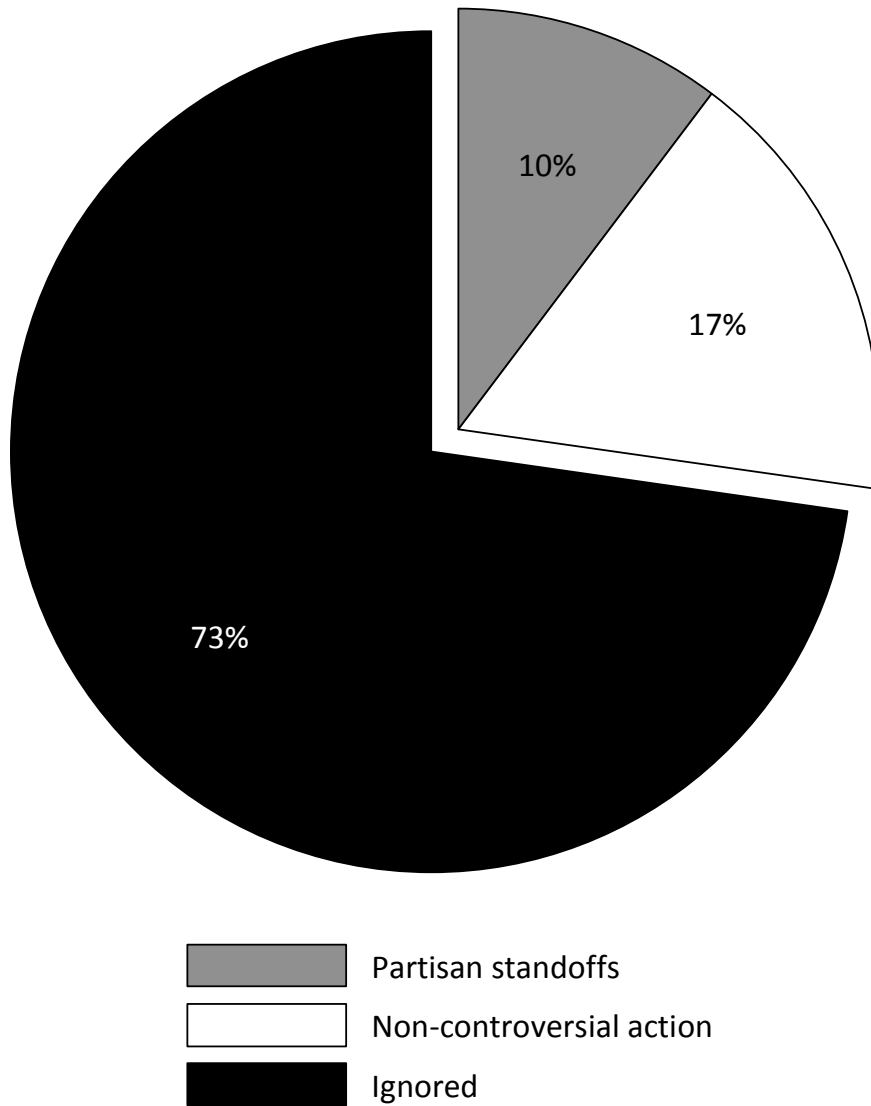


TABLE 2
MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION PREDICTING THE OUTCOME OF DEADLINES, 2007-2012

Outcome: Partisan standoff	
Annual cost (natural log)	0.541*** (0.094)
Interest group interest (natural log)	0.657** (0.291)
Gallup MIP %	-14.969** (7.239)
Majority party advantage	-0.047 (0.059)
Minority party advantage	0.221*** (0.068)
Minority interest group pressure	-1.663 (1.863)
Issue Rice index of party difference	2.874 (1.766)
Economic policy	-0.252 (0.859)
Authorized under divided government	-0.471 (0.539)
111th Congress	-0.054 (0.628)
112th Congress	-0.118 (0.696)
constant	-23.597*** (5.519)
Outcome: Non-controversial action	
Annual cost (natural log)	0.220*** (0.061)
Interest group interest (natural log)	0.165 (0.170)
Gallup MIP %	-0.464 (2.675)
Majority party advantage	-0.011 (0.032)
Minority party advantage	0.004 (0.049)
Minority interest group pressure	-2.393** (1.148)
Issue Rice index of party difference	-0.165 (1.241)
Economic policy	-0.340 (0.603)
Authorized under divided government	0.489 (0.335)
111th Congress	0.009 (0.374)
112th Congress	-0.589 (0.485)
constant	-7.031** (3.037)

N = 330
ePCP = 0.661

*p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

FIGURE 2
THE IMPACT OF ANNUAL COST ON OUTCOME LIKELIHOODS

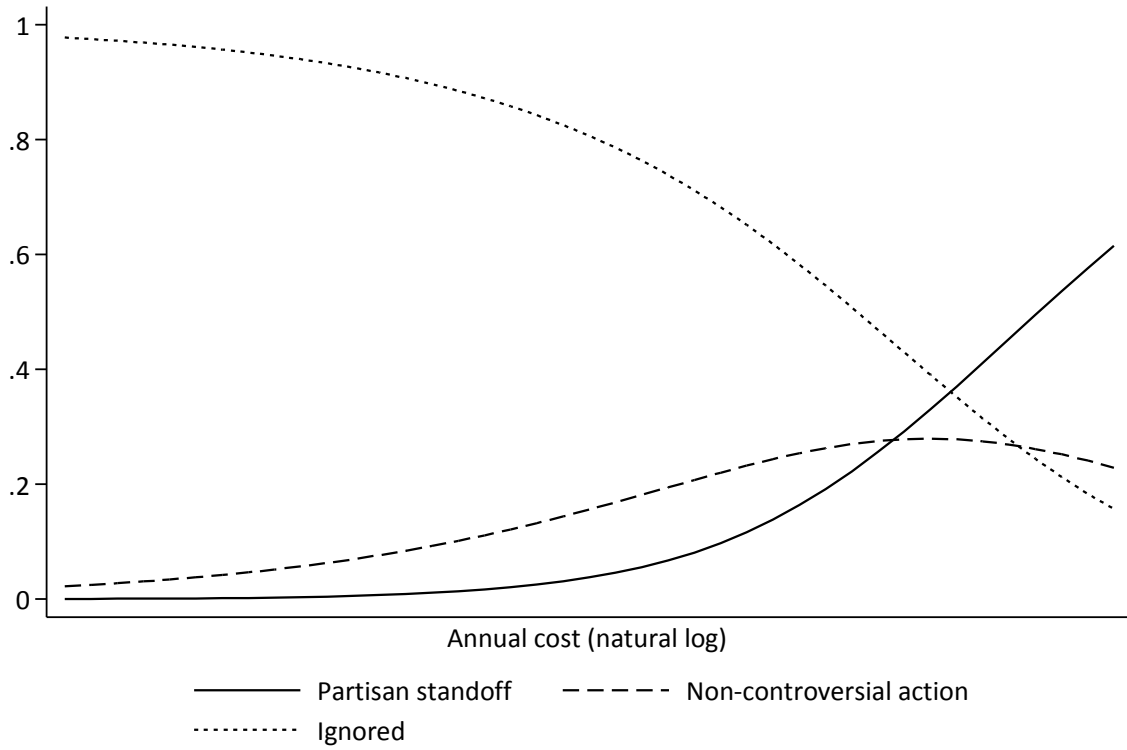


FIGURE 3
THE IMPACT OF INTEREST GROUP INTEREST ON OUTCOME LIKELIHOODS

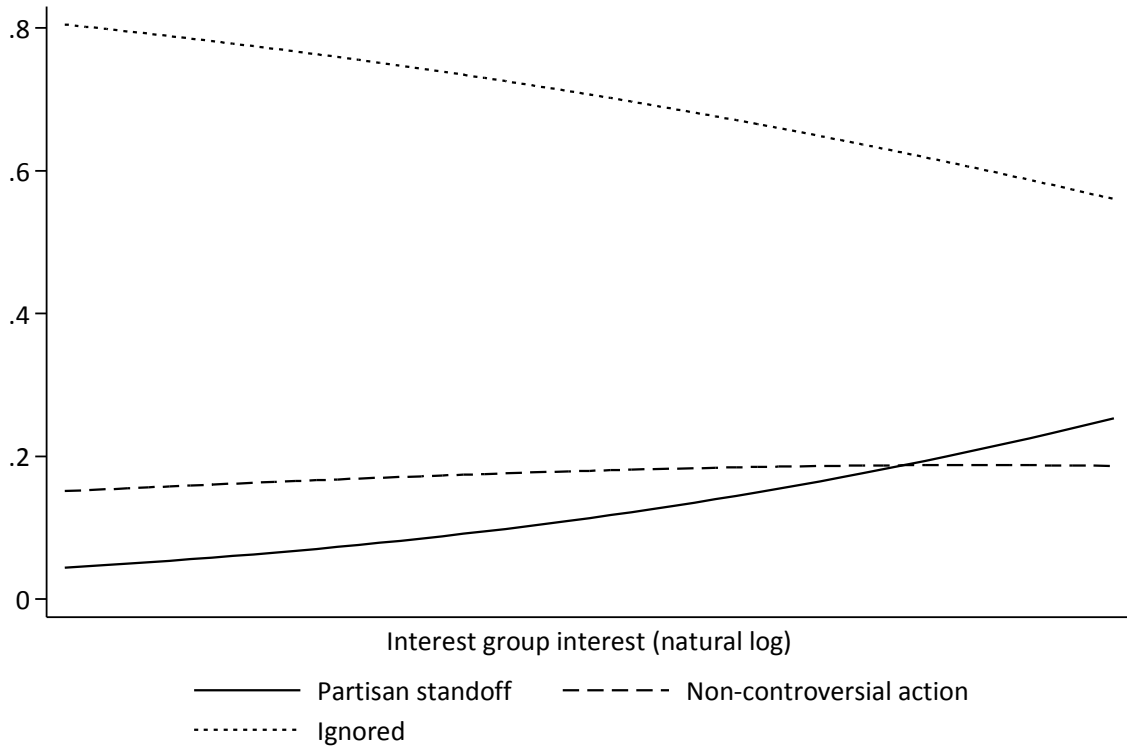


FIGURE 4
THE IMPACT OF GALLUP'S MIP % ON OUTCOME LIKELIHOODS

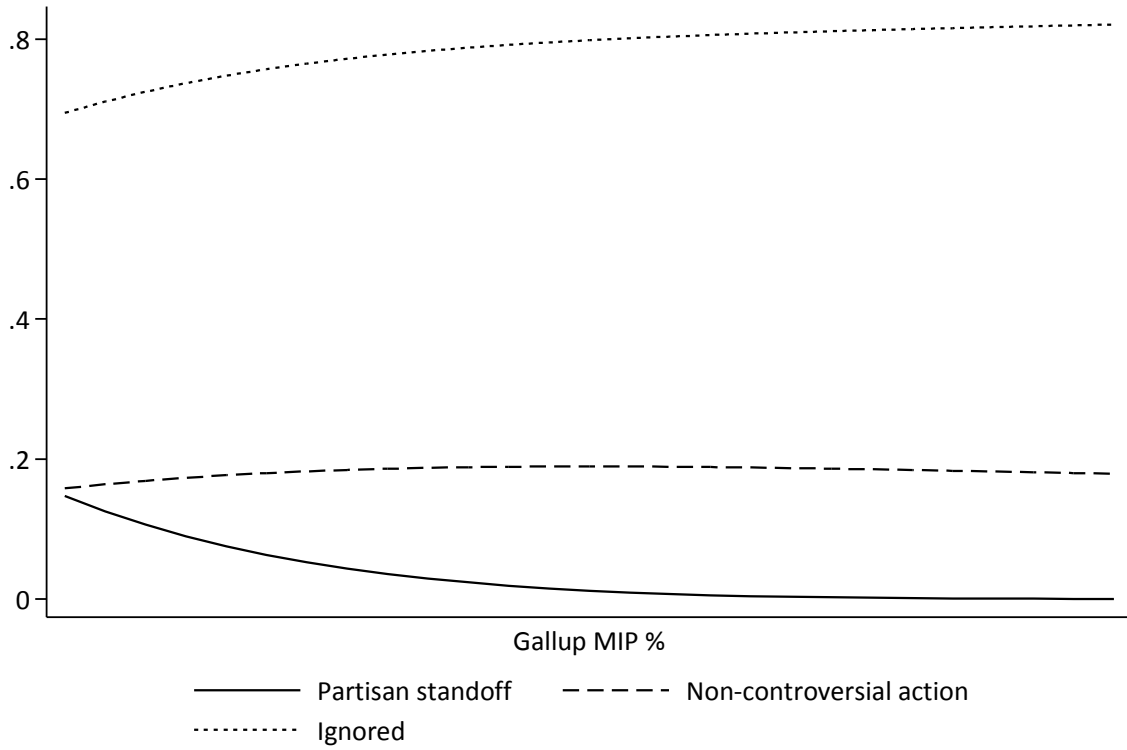


FIGURE 5
THE IMPACT OF MINORITY PARTY ADVANTAGE ON OUTCOME LIKELIHOODS

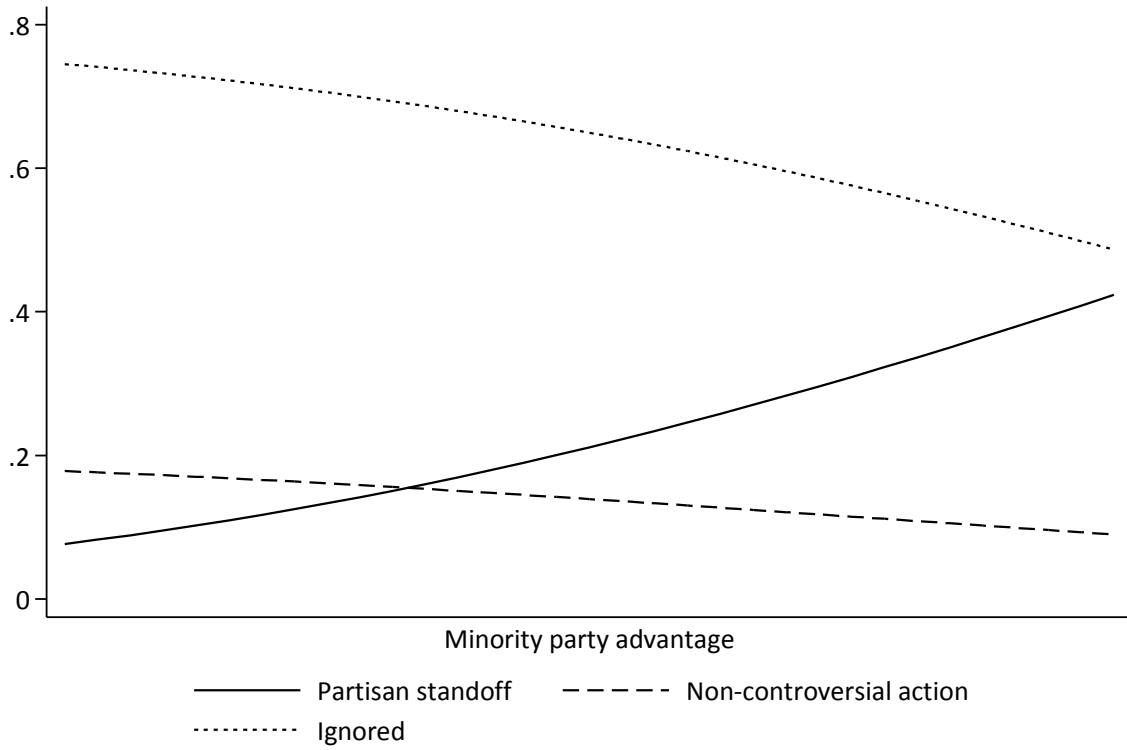
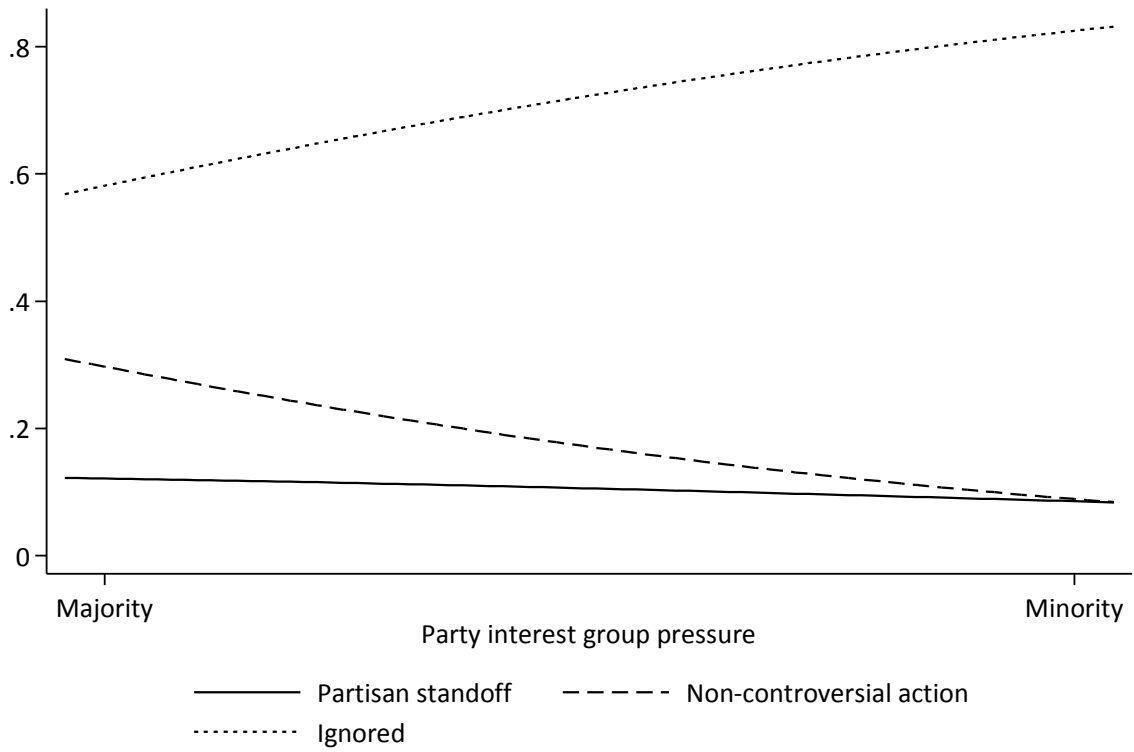


FIGURE 6
THE IMPACT OF PARTY INTEREST GROUP PRESSURE ON OUTCOME LIKELIHOODS



Notes

¹ Most legislation considered and passed by Congress is either “authorizing” or “appropriations” legislation. Authorizing legislation are bills that set the specifics of policies in place for federal policies, programs, and agencies. Appropriations bills are what are passed to fund those authorized policies.

² “Political Polarization in the American Public,” *PewResearch: Center for the People & Press*. July 12, 2014. Accessed: <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>

³ Compared to reauthorization deadlines, other types of legislative deadlines—including those over government spending, taxation, and debt ceilings—often have more concrete consequences. While congressional parties have a choice to either act expeditiously or engage in long standoffs over these deadlines, action is necessary at the end of the process or real impacts are felt. As such, the decisions to engage in such standoffs is not as clearly a strategic choice as it is over authorization deadlines that can be ignored and addressed at a later date. Nevertheless, see Lee’s (2013b) analysis of the partisan forces at play over debt ceiling standoffs.

⁴ The Policy Agendas Project data were originally collected by Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, with the support of National Science Foundation grant numbers SBR 9320922 and 0111611, and were distributed through the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin. Neither the NSF nor the original collectors of the data bear any responsibility for the analysis reported here. <http://www.policyagendas.org/>.

⁵ Two issue areas were not determined to have the *primary* interest of any of the CRP’s issue industries: “Macroeconomics” (issue area #1) and “Immigration” (issue area #9). Because these

issue areas undoubtedly attract significant interest, the interest group interest values for deadlines addressing these issues were coded to the variable's median.

⁶ Two other ways of coding the majority/minority parties were also used and the regression was re-estimated using each. One coding was to label the party controlling the White House as the majority and the other party as the minority. This made Republicans the majority in the 110th Congress and Democrats the majority in the other two. Another coding put Democrats in the minority in the 112th but in the majority for the other two congresses. Regardless of the coding, the substantive findings for the impact of partisan and policy dynamics were largely unchanged. Minority party advantaged issues significantly influenced the likelihood of a partisan standoff.

⁷ E. Scott Adler and John Wilkerson, Congressional Bills Project: 2007-2012, NSF 00880066 and 00880061. <http://www.congressionalbills.org>.

⁸ These are matched to the PAP's following issue areas: 1, 3, 5, 7, 13, and 15.

⁹ The model presented here meets the requirements of the IIA assumption.