

The Senator's Strategic Use of Time in Representation

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Abstract:

Remaining time to reelection serves as a constraint and an opportunity for senators to adapt constituency preferences for their legislative decision making. The relatively long length of terms may allow senators to change their ideological positions over the course of their terms. Given long terms of six-years, senators may be able to seek first to vote in favor of party discipline and personal policy motivation and then to take a strategy to keep step with constituency preferences as their reelections approach. This study finds that the long length of the term serves as an opportunity for senators to seek to achieve their preferred policy and maximize the chances of reelection.

Keywords: senator, representation, ideological congruence, constituency, reelection

1. Introduction

The incumbent's legislative voting and her constituent preferences are a key component of the representative process. In casting roll call votes, legislators are able to appease their constituents by reflecting the ideological dispositions of constituencies (Mayhew 1974; Rothenberg and Sanders 2000). The senator's faithful ideological positions which are consistent with constituent preferences are considered good representation in the eyes of constituents. Furthermore, the electoral connection thesis asserts that elections serve to constrain the senator's activities in Washington (Herrick, Moore, and Hibbing 1994; Rothenberg and Sanders 2000; Carson and Engstrom 2005). The incumbent who fails to represent constituent interests and preferences is presumed to gain less electoral support in the next election. In this regard, it is reasonable to believe that senators beholden for the desire for holding office unquestionably fear losing elections by taking positions against the preferences of constituencies on important issues.

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Constituency ideology in this sense acts as a critical constraint to structure the senator's ideological position, because the senator can enhance her electoral prospects in the next election by casting their roll call votes consistent with the ideological preferences of her constituents.² However, congressional scholars have often observed the senator's ideological deviations on roll call votes, thereby suggesting the need to assess whether senators' positions on roll call votes are congruent with the preferences of their constituents and, if not, to investigate the factors that inhibit the senator from keeping step with her constituents. I assert that the considerable variation of the extent of ideological congruence between the incumbent senator and her constituency is ultimately shaped by the remaining time to reelection.

The unique institutional feature imbedded in the Senate can serve as a constraint as well as an opportunity for senators to seek their preferred policy and appease moderate constituents in their states as well. For senators, policy goals and securing reelection are both important objectives to be achieved through their legislative activities. Given that constituency preferences are located on relatively more moderate points than partisan extreme preferences, it is hard to seek both goals at the same time, particularly if senators are elected to represent ideologically moderate states. Such a situation often causes senators to choose whether they stand on party line or with constituency (Masket and Noel 2012; Harden and Carsey 2012). Does a long length of the senatorial terms help the senator to seek preferred public policy without being constrained by constituents' pressures? Can the senator utilize long senatorial terms to achieve two different goals, one motivated by seeking reelection and the other shaped by party discipline and personal policy motivation, while in office?

The argument underlying my theory about the nature and extent of ideological congruence is based on the theoretical foundation that senators are responsive to constituent preferences when they have both the incentive and capacity to do so. Senators are attuned to constituent preferences and represent them in the Senate only when it is politically beneficial. Once elected, senators behave with self-interest. A senator's ideological position is deliberately taken on the basis of rational calculations for maximizing her payoffs in the representational process. The U.S. Senate's institutional arrangements can both benefit and constrain representation. These arrays provide senators with incentives to represent constituents, and at the same time, the capacity to strategically shirk that responsibility. In order to find factors to promote or inhibit the senator's ideological congruence, this study takes a close look at the long length of the senatorial term that works to promote and restrain faithful representation that advances constituency preferences.

²See Abramowitz and Segal (1992), Krasno (1994), Erikson and Wright (2001), Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan (2002), Fowler (2005), Ansolabehere and Jones (2010), Carson et al. (2010), and Kassow and Finocchiaro (2011).

The unique institutional feature imbedded in the Senate provides the senator the unique opportunity to maximize their payoffs by strategically taking positions in the Senate. Specifically, senators are able to strategically use their time in office to closely keep in step with their constituents. With regard to the length of electoral terms, the federalists expected the House of Representatives to be most responsive to the people within governing bodies. Through regular elections held every two years, the voters have the opportunity to hold their representatives accountable. In the absence of short terms of office, by contrast, the Senate was intended to be insulated from public pressures, thereby making deliberate representation possible. Longer terms may give the senator greater freedom from constituency influence than representatives of the House, allowing for a different level of responsiveness from senators. Given long terms of six-years, senators are able to first vote in favor of party discipline and personal policy motivation during their first four years and then to take a strategy that keeps step with constituents in the last two years.

Given that the substantial influence of constituency ideological preferences on legislators' roll call behavior varies by the remaining time to reelection, it is very important to assess this institutional attribute that works to shape the extent of individual senators' ideological congruence to constituent preferences. Indeed, investigating the role of remaining time to reelection in accounting for the senator's responsiveness to constituent preferences provides a powerful analytical leverage to gaining fruitful insight into the senator's ideological representation. Despite the theoretical significance of the nature and extent of ideological congruence in explaining representation and legislative behavior, systematic investigations of how remaining time to reelection shapes the individual senator's incentive to follow constituent preferences remain remarkably absent in the previous literature. By focusing on the individual senator's incentive and capacity to reflect constituent preferences, I examine how reelection approximation shapes individual senator's incentives to enhance constituency preferences in representation and test if the senator strategically changes the extent of ideological congruence to her constituency preferences.

This paper proceeds as follows. In the next section, I illustrate the theoretical relevance of the long length of the senatorial term in explaining the senator's responsiveness to constituent preferences. In the third section, I explain the measurements used to assess the representational role of remaining time to reelection, by highlighting how I have generated the degree of the senator's ideological congruence. The fourth section presents empirical results showing that reelection approximation acts to drive the senator to faithfully advance constituent preferences. In the fifth section, I conclude by discussing theoretical implications of the long length of the senatorial term in representation.

2. Constituent Preferences, Reelection Approximation, and Legislative Voting

Constituency preferences are perceived by the legislators as a crucial guide to lead them to decide whose priority to put first on a bill or issue in question. The importance of constituent preferences is more profound when dealing with highly salient issues to constituents, because by taking a position congruent with constituent preferences, the incumbent could enhance her chances of winning reelection (Erikson and Wright 2001; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002; Griffin 2006; Kassow and Finocchiaro 2011). To achieve reelection goals, legislators need to strengthen the ideological representational attachments with the preferences of constituencies.

Indeed, members of Congress as “single-minded seekers of reelection,” as articulated by Mayhew (1974, 5), are expected to advance district ideological interests by casting roll call votes in accordance with overall ideological preferences in which a substantial portion of constituents are aligned on the liberal-conservative ideological continuum. A critical inference can be made about the impact of ideological positions on reelection prospects: legislators who are more faithful to constituency preferences tend to be reelected. Though the incumbent enjoys the incumbency advantage in elections and electoral defeat by a challenger is a rarely occurring event, the fear of an electoral loss is a threat to the incumbent, eventually leading to the end of political careers. By taking a position congruent with ideological dispositions of their constituencies, the incumbent seeks to enhance her chances of winning the election. This theoretical proposition suggests that legislators are required to deliberate on whether or not to follow, or at least to represent, ideological preferences of their constituencies.

The distinguished institutional features imbedded in the Senate can serve as a constraint as well as an opportunity for senators to seek their preferred policy and appease moderate constituents in their states as well. For senators, policy goals and securing reelection are both important objectives to be achieved through their legislative activities. Given that constituency preferences are located on relatively more moderate points than partisan extreme preferences, it is hard to seek both goals at the same time, particularly if senators are elected to represent ideologically moderate states. Such a situation often causes senators to choose whether they stand on party line or with constituency. If senators choose to advance party preferences, then ideological incongruence might occur. How can senators reconcile different preferences and interests primarily from constituencies and their preferred policies in casting roll calls? I draw attention to the representational role of the remaining time to reelection. Senators serve for staggered six year terms, as opposed to the two year terms served by members of the House.

In *Federalist Papers* No. 62, James Madison was referring to the Senate when he wrote “It ought moreover to possess great firmness, and consequently ought to hold its authority by a tenure of considerable duration (Madison 1961 [1788], 419).”

This institutional feature opens the door for the possibility of systematic variations in senatorial responsiveness to constituent preferences over the course of the senatorial terms. Specifically, given long terms of six-years, senators are able to seek first to vote in favor of party discipline and personal policy motivation for up to the first four years of the senatorial term and then to take a strategy to keep step with constituency preferences in the remaining two years.

Indeed, the long length of the term may give the senator greater freedom from the representation of constituent preferences than representatives of the House. However, senators are not immune from deviation from constituent preferences. Since they still face reelection, they are aware that an ideological defection from constituency preferences may increase the risk of losing reelection. Knowing the potential for electoral punishment in their reelection bids, senators may feel pressured to closely reflect constituent preferences in the latter years of their terms. As a consequence, the last two years of the term prior to reelection can function as a constraint on the senator's achievements of preferred policies close to their party's ideological extreme points.

For senators, one possible way to mitigate cross-pressured situations, and correspondingly, appease often conflicting preferences is to make strategic shifts over different time periods of the term when locating ideological positions in legislative voting. The rationale behind senator's strategic shifts lies in electoral uncertainty. Senators elected from electorally competitive states cannot be certain of securing reelection. Senators with the desire of holding office may want to respond to the demands and exigencies of their environment in a way that maximizes the probabilities of reelection. For instance, legislators who feel the "survival instinct" strategically place themselves on moderate ideological positions (Kousser, Lewis, and Masket 2007). If the senator is able to enhance her electoral prospects by taking the positions that keep step with constituents when making legislative decisions in the Senate, then she will attempt to strategically shift her ideological stance in the last congress in an attempt to ensure reelection. In particular, senators feeling electoral insecurity can be tempted to strategically shift their ideological positions closer to the median point of constituents at the end of their terms in order to make their voting records more attractive to their constituents (Elling 1982; Thomas 1985; Wright and Berkman 1986; Bernstein, Wright, and Berkman 1988; Bernstein 1991; DeBacker 2012). In light of this electoral perspective, an upcoming reelection can induce the senator to adjust her ideological position closer to the median point of her constituency as reelection approaches, making it possible to observe the last-period effect in the last two years of the term.³

³ The last-period effect is generally used to indicate that legislators who are not constrained by electoral motivation (i.e., those not seeking reelection or lame-duck legislators) defect from constituent

The previous literature on the strategic shift points out that senators seeking reelection deliberately shift their ideological positions toward those of electoral opponents during the course of their terms. Investigating the case of California's Senate, for instance, Kuklinski (1978) examines whether there exist some variations of ideological positions between senators up for reelection and their counterparts who are not. He finds that senators become more responsive to district preferences in the later legislative sessions than earlier sessions. His findings suggest that the remaining time to reelection functions to change legislative positions. Similarly, previous work examining the change of the linkage between senators and their constituencies over time finds that a senator's voting behavior shifts to a more moderate direction at the end of their terms (Elling 1982; Ahuja 1994; Wright and Berkman 1986; Thomas 1985).

Though the previous literature has examined the role of the temporal proximity of election, it has focused on whether senators change their ideological positions. I focus on how the senator's ideological congruence to constituent preferences changes over the course of the senatorial terms. Building on the theoretical conjecture advanced above, I explore the possibility that, given six-year terms, the extent of senatorial responsiveness changes over different congresses served. Specifically, the six-year senatorial terms enable individual senators to go through three congresses until the expiration of the senatorial term. This study tests whether the extent of the senator's ideological congruence to constituent preferences shifts over three congresses served during the course of the term. I expect that senators will become more responsive in the last two years of their six-year terms. In the next section, I provide the utility function to show the senator's incentive to strategically change the extent of ideological congruence to her constituency preferences and then present empirical results to test my theoretical arguments.

I posit that senators have an incentive to seek both policy goals and reelection by strategically shifting ideological positions over the course of their terms. If the long length of the term serves as an opportunity to achieve two different and often conflicting goals during the senatorial term, then the strategic shift occurs by the function of remaining time to reelection. In this case, the extent of the senator's ideological congruence changes systematically during three congresses. The idea of strategic shifts is needed to explain the incentive that induces the incumbent senator to move into a more moderate point. To elucidate why senators are tempted to adopt strategic shifts, it is useful to draw a figure illustrating how a strategic senator can increase her utility by employing strategic shifts.

preferences in the last congressional session in order to seek their policy goals. In this instance, ideological positions of these legislators tend to become more ideologically extreme toward their own parties. However, the present study uses this term as suggesting that legislators shift their ideological positions in the direction of more moderate ideological points that maximize the chances of reelection.

Figure 1: Relationship between Strategic Shifts and Reelection Approximation

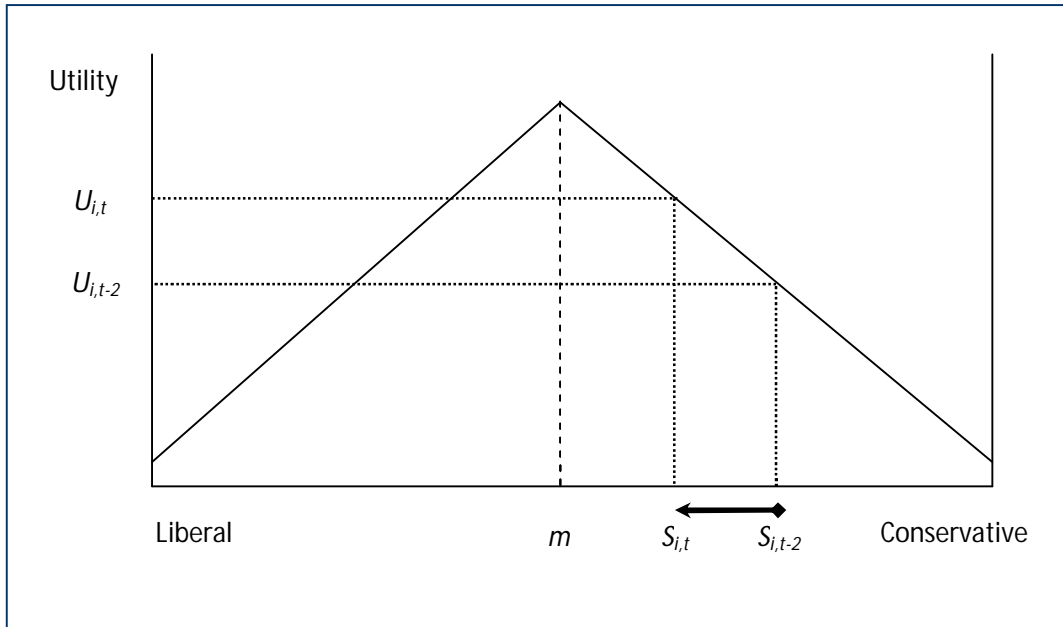


Figure 1 shows the relationship between strategic shifts toward the moderate positions and changing expected utilities. In the figure, m denotes the median voter's ideological point. $S_{i,t}$ is a Republican senator i 's ideological position in congress t , which represents fifth and sixth years of the term facing reelection, and $S_{i,t-2}$ represents the ideological position taken at earlier congress entailing the first four years of the term. This figure also formulates that as a senator i 's ideological position has been strategically moved from $S_{i,t-2}$ into $S_{i,t}$, she gains a higher utility, $U_{i,t}$, rather than the utility, $U_{i,t-2}$, otherwise obtained at the period of $S_{i,t-2}$. As demonstrated in this figure, the utilities that the incumbent senator i would obtain are contingent upon ideological positions taken in the Senate. For instance, this utility function specifies that the senator can increase her utility by moving her position from ideological extremity toward the party line to a relatively moderate point closer to the median voter's preference.

A simple but fundamental assumption should be made to validate the utility function presented here. The first assumption is related to the empirical prediction: taking a moderate position increases the utility of the incumbent senator. Compared to extreme party voting positions, taking the ideological position closer to the median point of constituents gives rise to greater electoral benefits.

Indeed, earlier studies find that the incumbent with the extreme party voting record becomes less successful in receiving vote shares during reelection, whereas the moderate position of the incumbent enhances her electoral margins (Erikson and Wright 2001; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002; Kassow and Finocchiaro 2011). The findings offered by these two studies are sufficient to justify the assumption regarding electoral benefits from moderate positioning, hence validating the utility function predicting that the senator may seek to adjust the ideological positions congruent with her constituents' ideological preferences in order to enhance her electoral prospects.

3. Measurement

The primary purpose of this analysis is to assess the role of remaining time to reelection in the senator's representational process. With ideological congruence scores that I have generated using the senator's adjusted ADA scores and her constituency ideological preferences,⁴ this study tests whether the degree of ideological congruence changes over different congresses during senatorial terms as a function of the proximity to reelection. The data about the effects of the senator's time into the term have been collected from 1976 through 2014.

Previous literature has used elaborate statistical techniques to measure ideological distance between the incumbent and her constituents. For example, both works of Brady, Han, and Pope (2007) and Kassow and Finocchiaro (2011) use regression residuals indicating the degree of the incumbent's discrepancy with her constituents. Following this procedure, to measure ideological congruence, I use the ideological distance captured by residuals from the regression analysis of state ideology on the senator's roll call positions. The estimated distance between predicted and observed positions is used to indicate the degree of the senator's ideological congruence to constituent preferences. More specifically, I have taken several methodological steps in order to calculate the ideological distance. First, I have regressed the senator's adjusted ADA scores on state ideological preferences.⁵

⁴ADA scores provide reliable and stable information on the senator's ideological positions between the parties and even within the party (Brunell et al. 1999; Groseclose, Levitt, and Snyder 1999; Burden, Caldeira, and Groseclose 2000; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002). Interest groups use different bills on different issues to estimate the legislator's support scores for their groups. Specifically, ADA rates members of Congress by analyzing 20 key roll call votes on important bills regarding economic and social issues. These support scores have been used to indicate each legislator's ideological position. Using only 20 roll call votes might provide less precise information about each senator's position in the Senate. However, these 20 roll call votes are directly related to economic and social issues and are very salient to voters. The senator's ideological positions are sufficiently captured by these key roll call votes.

⁵To measure state ideology, I have used and updated *State Citizen Ideology* constructed by Robert Erikson, Gerald Wright, and John McIver (Wright, Erikson, and McIver 1987; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 2007).

Given the theoretical assertion that ideological positions are a function of state ideological preferences and party effects in Congress, I also include the incumbent's party affiliation as an important factor in shaping legislative positions.⁶ The importance of the influence of the political party can be found in different ideological positions taken by incumbent senators elected to represent the same state from different parties (Jung, Kenny, and Lott 1994). In estimating the regression, therefore, I have controlled for the existence of party effects.

Second, I have calculated residuals after running the regression. The residuals obtained from regression estimates show the ideological distance between each senator's predicted ideological position and her actual ideological position in the Senate. The distance indicated by residuals captures the "relative" ideological distance to tap into the relative closeness between the senator and her constituency as the underlying senator-constituency linkage.

Third, after calculating the value of the residuals showing the degree of each senator's deviation from her predicted ideological position, I have changed the signs of the residuals calculated for Republican senators. In the original values of residuals, the substantive meaning of higher values of residuals differs by the incumbent senator's party affiliation. Specifically, higher values of residuals for Republican senators show they are less congruent by taking more conservative positions relative to their constituency's preferences, while higher values for Democrats indicate that they are more congruent with their constituents. In order to correct for the meaning of the value of the residuals, I have multiplied the residuals for Republican senators by -1. Through this procedure, the higher value of residuals for both Republican and Democratic senators consistently show the greater degree of the senator's ideological congruence with constituent preferences. In sum, the higher the score, the closer the two ideological positions. In other words, high scores reflect that the senator has by and large voted in a way that closely reflects constituency ideological preferences. In order to produce empirical results, I estimate an OLS model that includes important institutional and electoral factors that influence the extent of the senator's ideological congruence. In addition to time into the term, I include several important variables such as state heterogeneity and electoral strength.

In order to measure the levels of state heterogeneity, I have updated and used the heterogeneity index developed by Sullivan (1973) who originally used it to examine the political relationships with social, economic, and religious diversity at the state level.

⁶ There exists party pressure on roll calls, particularly on procedural, organizational, and label-defining votes (Cox and Poole 2002).

The index indicates that larger values in the index represent greater state heterogeneity. I also include the levels of electoral strength by incorporating presidential and congressional electoral results in the states (Whitby and Bledsoe 1986). This measure indicates higher values as less electorally competitive in the state that the incumbent senator represents.

The model estimated controls for the variable indicating whether or not the incumbent is Republican. The difference in responding to constituent preferences between Republicans and Democrats, if it exists, can be captured by this dummy variable. I finally include the senator's length of tenure in the models. Seniority may affect the pattern of roll call votes among senators. Junior senators, lacking information and knowledge of the policy process and constituent preferences, are inclined to find cues to help decide their positions on roll calls (Stratmann 2000). Also senior senators are more likely to vote along their party lines. To control for the possible effects of seniority on ideological congruence, I include the senator's length of tenure. Given expanding knowledge about constituency preferences and diminished reelection rates after reaching two or three terms (Kostroski 1978; Tuckel 1983), the length of tenure is measured as the logged number of the year the senator has served in the Senate.

4. Senator's Extent of Ideological Congruence

Table 1 presents the results for the model that estimates the extent of ideological congruence, showing whether the remaining time to reelection exerts a discernable statistical effect on ideological congruence. OLS results show that even after controlling for state heterogeneity, electoral strength, the length of the incumbent's tenure, and the incumbent's party affiliation, senators respond differently to constituent preferences by the remaining time to reelection. Senators become more responsive to constituent preferences over the course of their six-year terms. To reiterate, I have generated the higher ideological congruence indicating the incumbent's faithful representation of constituency ideology. The positive sign of time into the term therefore indicates that as a reelection approaches, senators become more responsive to their constituent preferences.

The results also show that as a state become more heterogeneous, the senator representing that state cast roll call votes congruent with congruent preferences.⁷ The levels of electoral strength also affect the extent of the senators' ideological congruence. Senators expecting competitive elections become more congruent with their constituency's ideological preferences than their counterparts anticipating noncompetitive elections. In addition to these three important factors that influence the nature of the senator's ideological congruence, the incumbent's seniority exerts a significant influence on ideological congruence.

Table 1: Results for the Senator's Extent of Ideological Congruence

	Ideological Congruence
Time into the Term	1.282*** (0.455)
State Heterogeneity	-2.192*** (0.437)
Electoral Strength	0.582*** (0.049)
Length of Tenure	-0.165*** (0.041)
Republican Incumbent	-5.166*** (0.833)
Constant	-23.056*** (2.846)
No. of Observations	1926
Adjusted R^2	0.0912
F Statistic	39.61***

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$, two-tailed test.

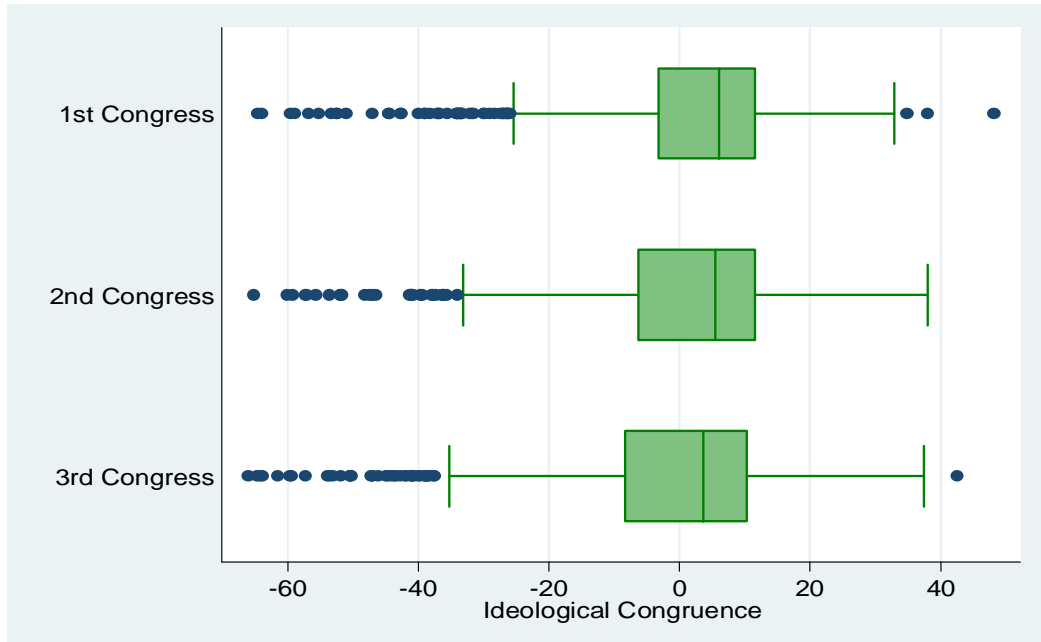
Note: I use an OLS regression with congressional session fixed effects clustered by individual senators. Cell entries are regression coefficients and robust standard errors in parenthesis.

⁷ There is a strong reason to believe that state heterogeneity is correlated to electoral strength (Fiorina 1974; Sullivan 1973; Patterson and Caldeira 1984; Lee and Oppenheimer 1999; Aistrup 2004). If there is a high correlation between two variables, OLS would suffer from biased results. Through the variance inflation factors (VIFs), I have checked the potential problem with multicollinearity in the model. Test results show that the highest values of VIFs are 1.32 for both electoral competition and the Republican incumbent. Given the threshold for VIFs, either the rule of 4 or rule of 10, the test results suggest that multicollinearity does not produce biased OLS results (see O'Brien 2007).

The results indicate that, with seniority, the incumbent is more likely to be congruent with her constituents given that she becomes more knowledgeable about constituent preferences and the optimal ideological positions. The Republican incumbent variable is also a statistically significant predictor of ideological congruence. This parameter showing a negative sign indicates that Republican senators are more congruent with their constituents than their counterparts from the Democratic Party.

Taken together, the empirical results using OLS analysis indicate that senators become more responsive to constituent preferences as a function of remaining time to reelection. The higher level of responsiveness in the last congress of the term reflects the pattern that senators strategically adjust their ideological positions toward the more moderate ideological point, thereby becoming more congruent with their constituents. This empirical evidence exhibits that senators are concerned with the remaining time to reelection and that they strategically change their voting behavior to maximize their chances of reelection.

Figure 2: Changing Senator's Ideological Congruence over Reelection Approximation



I also provide Figure 2 that shows box plots to offer an additional insight on different degrees of the senator's ideological congruence over the three congresses (also see Appendix 1). Drawing box plots is useful to visually compare the median, a spread pattern, and outside values across different periods.

This figure indicates that there is not much difference between the lines within boxes, which stand for the medians of ideological congruence in three categories. This figure also shows that the widths of the right cells in the boxes are almost the same across three congresses. However, the width of the left ones is broader during the 3rd congress than the first and the second congresses. An additional sharp difference of the averaged extent of ideological congruence among three congresses can be found in the widths of two whiskers containing 50% of cases. First, the range of widths is more stretched in the 3rd Congress than the first and the second congress. Second, compared to the left whiskers showing the 25th percentile of the distribution of cases in the first and second congresses, the left whisker in the third congress is located further on the left side.

This difference of the variance in the extent of ideological congruence present in Figure 2 can be interpreted as suggesting that senators are not uniformly responsive to constituent preferences and that senators encountering last congresses diverge in locating the optimal ideological positions. Some senators become more responsive to their constituency preferences while others still keep voting along party lines. Consistent with Thomas's (1985) finding that strategic shifts in the last period of the term occurred among only a third of senators, the effect of the remaining time to reelection that shapes the incentive to move toward a more moderate position is not the same for all incumbent senators. Some senators become congruent with constituent preferences in legislative voting in the last congress of their terms, whereas others seek preferred policies and stick to partisan preferences.

The results provide interesting insights into senatorial behavior. Given that strategic shifts occur as an attempt to increase electoral benefits, senators from non-competitive states may feel secure enough to toe the party line at the expense of constituent preferences. Specifically, it is not impossible theoretically and empirically to witness that the incumbent with an extreme party voting record is successful to get reelected under a certain circumstance. For example, senators from states where their party dominates partisan and ideological preferences among voters still prefer to align with their party instead of keenly responding to constituent preferences in their third congresses. However, senators from electoral competitive or ideological moderate states need to become congruent with constituent preferences in order to reduce the electoral uncertainty. It is risky for the senator to strongly support her own party in those states because this legislative positioning can increase electoral support from her partisan base but it may risk losing electoral support from moderate voters. Therefore, to reduce uncertainty and increase reelection prospects, marginal senators from competitive states may defect from the party line in an effort to appeal to the widest spectrum of constituents.

In other words, the senator feeling the survival instinct from electorally competitive states seeks to increase reelection prospects by becoming responsive to constituent preferences during the last periods of their six-year terms. Taken together, the results presented here support my theoretical argument that the relatively long length of terms may allow senators to change their ideological positions over the course of their terms. In other words, remaining time to reelection may serve as a constraint and/or an opportunity for senators to adapt constituency preferences for their legislative decision making. Six-year terms make it possible for senators to seek their preferred policy in earlier congresses and then appease moderate constituents in their states by becoming more congruent with constituent preferences as reelection approaches.

5. Conclusions

This paper has focused on how the institutional arrangement imbedded in the Senate—reelection approximation—drive individual senators to have an incentive to align with their constituents' preferences in the representational process. Senators represent their constituents when they have both the incentive and the capacity to do so.

This study has produced considerable empirical evidence supporting the long length of the senatorial term provides senators with the incentive to closely represent constituent preferences, and at the same time, the capacity to strategically shirk that responsibility. Specifically, the results presented here support my theoretical expectation that the change in the senator's ideological congruence is a function of remaining time to reelection in the senatorial term.

The results presented here show increasing ideological congruence over the course of the senatorial term, revealing the existence of the senator's strategic shift in reflecting constituent ideological preferences in response to remaining time to reelection. This finding suggests that the relatively long length of terms allows senators to change their ideological positions over the course of their terms. In the light of changing responsiveness, the six-year term serves as an opportunity for senators to seek preferred policies or vote along party lines over the first and second congresses and then to enhance her reelection fortunes by keeping step with constituents in the last congress. Conclusively, the long length of the term serves as an opportunity, rather than a constraint, in that senators can make adaptations that achieve their preferred policy and maximize the chances of reelection.

Appendix 1: Relationship between the Senator's Ideological Congruence and Reelection Approximation

Congress during Term	Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
1 st Congress of the term	.286	16.100	641
2 nd Congress of the term	.571	16.695	641
3 rd Congress of the term	-1.857	17.869	644
Total	0.000	17.528	1,926
Prob > $F = 0.0024$			

The p -value (0.0098) calculated from the F statistic makes certain that the difference in the average degree of ideological congruence has not occurred by chance. The F statistic in the ANOVA table tests the null hypothesis that there is no difference of means of ideological congruence among the three congresses. The overall F test ($F(2, 1923) = 6.07$) is statistically significant at the 0.001 level (Prob > $F = 0.0024$), suggesting that there is a statistically significant difference of means of ideological congruence in the sample.

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