ISSUE VISIBILITY AND THE EFFECTS OF PAC MONEY

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This study examines the effects of party, ideology, and labor contributions on pro-labor voting in the House of Representatives. Party and ideology have more explanatory value on more visible issues. The relative influence of the PAC contributions is stronger on issues which receive less media attention.

The literature on the political influence of political action committees tends to agree that campaign contributions are more likely to affect the legislative process on the less visible issues (Etzioni, 1984; Malbin, 1984; Sabato, 1985; Welch, 1982). Issues which draw headlines and television coverage are likely to be ones where there are stronger pressures for members of Congress to vote on the basis of ideology, party, or constituency interest. Partisan loyalties or long-held beliefs are more easily activated. Taking a public position in opposition to a moneyed interest even might help a member more in the next election than would any large campaign contribution (Sabato, 1985:132–35). On the less publicized decisions, the field of forces influencing the legislator is more likely to be in the PACs favor. Any access which has been gained is likely to be a greater opportunity to exert influence. And it is easier to exchange political favors under these circumstances.

Much of the research on roll call votes has reported that ideological factors, party allegiances, and constituency characteristics have a much greater impact on legislative behavior than does the campaign money which PACs distribute to officeholders (Chappell, 1981; Kau and Rubin, 1982; Welch, 1982; Wright, 1985). Nevertheless, isolated examples have been cited as evidence that campaign contributions make more difference under conditions of low visibility. The U.S. Senate vote on the deregulation of the trucking industry was a decision which departed from the normal pattern (Frendreis and Waterman, 1985). In this case, campaign contributions were more closely associated with the legislative results. There also is evidence that contributions from the American Medical Association and American Dental Association helped to produce the margin of victory on a

vote in the House of Representatives to exempt the professionals from Federal Trade Commission regulation (Brown, 1983).

Even observers who have expressed skepticism about the efficacy of campaign funds as a means of purchasing either votes or access to legislators admit that campaign contributions might make more difference under conditions of low visibility (Malbin, 1984:248–49). As a general rule, interest groups should be expected to be more effective when their goals and actions receive less public attention. The group use of money simply follows the general rule.

One way to more systematically test the hypothesis that the PAC influence increases when there is less publicity is to examine the relationships between a group's contributions and relevant legislation under different conditions of television and newspaper exposure. The network news coverage of the legislative branch is episodic and, aside from rival committee hearings, chiefly reports about final actions on the floor (Robinson and Appel, 1979; Hess, 1981). Newspapers, on the other hand, provide a more complete account of the legislative process and include more information about the debates and events which occur prior to the final passage of bills. On those issues which receive some television coverage or substantial newspaper attention, liberal and Democratic members of Congress should be expected to be committed to their ideological and partisan coalition and vote on the side of labor even when they have received little union money. On other such issues, other liberal Democrats might vote in opposition to labor even when they have benefited greatly from union support. In contrast, on those matters which do not attract network or newspaper coverage, it should be expected that those legislators who have benefited more from labor unions' campaign contributions will be the ones who most strongly support labor.

Data and Methods

The research used regression analysis to ascertain the determinants of 20 votes in the House of Representatives which affected the concerns of organized labor during the first session of the 96th Congress. The votes were based on the issues which the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education used to evaluate congressional voting in 1979 (Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1980). The sum of a member's pro-labor positions was divided by the total votes cast. The index did not penalize legislators for absences.

To measure the extent of television publicity labor issues received, the measures in COPE's evaluations were classified according to whether or not they had been the objects of attention from the ABC, CBS, or NBC evening news programs.[1] If a proposal was part of an item on one of the network

[1] The daily coverage of events by the network news is reported in the *Television News Index and Abstracts* (Vanderbilt Television News Archives, 1979).

news programs on either the date of the legislative decision or the day following the vote, it was categorized as a high-visibility issue. If the question failed to receive any network attention, it was considered to be a low-visibility issue.

To ascertain the extent of newspaper publicity, the measures in the COPE rankings were classified according to whether or not they had been written about in *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post* during the week before the floor action on the matter. If a proposal was covered in one or both of the papers, it was classified as a high-visibility issue. If the matter received no newspaper attention within the time period, it was categorized as a low-visibility issue.[2] The indexes for the high- and low-visibility issues were constructed in the same way as the initial index was created.

To measure the impact of campaign contributions, the total amount of contributions which members of the House of Representatives had received from union-approved political action committees in 1977–78 were collected from Federal Election Commission reports (FEC, 1979). The ideological positions of the representatives were calculated by dividing their conservative coalition support scores by the sum of their conservative support scores and conservative opposition scores—the best measure of ideological voting (Poole, 1981).[3] Since the House was divided between Democrats and Republicans, party was treated as a dichotomous variable.

[2] The televised legislation included Congressional Quarterly Vote 251 to provide for the implementation of the Panama Canal treaties; Vote 261, an amendment to prevent the Big Eight oil companies from receiving government contracts to produce synthetic fuels; Vote 279 providing for a windfall profit tax rate of 60 percent; Vote 280 to amend the windfall tax and extend the tax on oil discovered before 1973; Vote 281 to add a plowback tax credit to the windfall profit tax; Vote 282, an amendment to terminate economic sanctions against Zimbabwe-Rhodesia; Vote 289 to establish the Department of Education; Vote 341 proposing a constitutional amendment to ban school busing for the purposes of integration; and Vote 495, an amendment to prohibit the use of authorized funds for expenditures related to lifting energy price controls.

The nontelevised votes included Vote 36 to increase the debt limit; Vote 120, an amendment to reduce the budget outlays for food stamps; Vote 123, an amendment to eliminate Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements for rehabilitation projects carried out by nonprofit neighborhood organizations; Vote 269, an amendment to reduce the appropriation for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration; Vote 305, an amendment to waive the Davis-Bacon wage requirements for the Washington Metro; Vote 407 to place a ceiling on the amount of benefits which future workers can receive from Social Security Disability Insurance; Vote 410, an amendment to authorize a public service subsidy for the U.S. Postal Service; Vote 436, an amendment to restrict the export of cattle hides; Vote 462, an amendment to allow the export of Alaskan oil; and Vote 473, an amendment to allow price differentials in defense contracts to relieve economic dislocations.

The newspapers gave attention to more issues. The matters which lacked newspaper coverage were about Davis Bacon requirements for rehabilitation projects, OSHA appropriations, disability benefits, postal subsidies, the export of cattle hides, the export of Alaskan oil, and price differentials in defense contracts.

[3] The conservative support and opposition scores were obtained from the Congressional Quarterly, Inc. (1979).

TABLE 1

Multiple Regression Analyzing the Effects of Party, Ideology, and Labor Contributions on Pro-Labor Voting

	Unstandardized Coefficient	Beta	*F* Ratio
Party	33.9201	.5130	(213.275)*
Ideology	−0.1173	−.2855	(73.917)*
Contributions	0.0004	.2877	(70.878)*
R^2		.7650	(199.460)*
(N = 428)			

* Significant at .001 level.

Findings

In general, as is illustrated in Table 1, labor votes tend to split along partisan lines, with Democrats voting for the AFL-CIO-supported legislation and Republicans voting against it. Even though organized labor in the time of Gompers wanted to reward its friends and punish its enemies in each party, the modern labor movement discovered that most of its political allies were in one party and many of its adversaries in the other party. The policies which labor has sought to place on the political agenda, especially the question of governmental regulation of the economy, are the kinds of issues which divide Democrats and Republicans.

The association between political party and support for AFL-CIO positions was the strongest relationship which was revealed. In addition, the impacts of ideology and campaign contributions also were statistically significant. Members of the House with higher conservative coalition support scores were more likely to oppose labor in their voting. And members who received larger amounts of campaign contributions from unions were likely to be more supportive.

The connection between labor union campaign funds and pro-labor voting held steady among members who had experienced close elections as well as for those who had won their races with ease. Some evidence exists to show that labor unions, seeking to exchange campaign money for political favors, contribute larger amounts to likely winners (Welch, 1979). Whatever campaign strategies are used, however, it appears that labor receives similar levels of support from all legislators, whether they have been in highly competitive, moderately competitive, or noncompetitive elections.

The relative influence of party and campaign money varied sharply under different conditions of media attention. Where the network news programs gave television exposure to an issue—such as in the cases of the windfall

profit tax on oil companies, the creation of the Department of Education, and a constitutional amendment to prohibit school busing—the members of the Congress tended to vote on the basis of party (see Table 2). Under these conditions, the beta score between labor money and the legislative voting was small, even if it was statistically significant.

Very different results were found for the part of organized labor's political agenda which did not gain the attention of network television. On these less visible measures—such as a cap on social security disability benefits, Davis-Bacon "prevailing wage" requirements for federally supported construction projects, and price differentials in defense contracts to relieve economic dislocation—the voting choices of the members were more strongly linked to levels of campaign contributions than to party loyalties. In the absence of television publicity, money made the most difference. And conservatives who received union contributions showed more inclination to support labor's positions.

Money also made the most difference under conditions of minimal newspaper coverage. None of the three variables—party, ideology, or labor

TABLE 2

Media Exposure and the Determinants of Pro-Labor Voting

	Television		Newspapers	
	Beta	*F* Ratio	Beta	*F* Ratio
High-Visibility Issues				
Party	.5019 (35.45)[a]	148.17*	.5436 (38.21)	273.43*
Ideology	−.1983 (−0.086)	25.82*	−.3120 (−0.135)	100.62*
Contributions	.1854 (0.0003)	21.37*	.2758 (.0004)	74.45*
R^2	.6573	106.75*	.7994	248.43*
Low-Visibility Issues				
Party	.4193 (43.80)	130.47*	.1161 (16.45)	4.96
Ideology	.3324 (0.2148)	91.60*	−.1445 (−0.127)	8.57
Contributions	.4255 (0.0009)	142.05*	.1967 (0.0006)	18.04*
R^2 ($N = 425$)	.7415	171.44*	.3013	14.00*

[a] Numbers in parentheses are unstandardized regression coefficients.

* Significant at .001 level.

contributions—were powerfully related to the voting on these least visible of issues. But PAC funds clearly made the strongest impact. The relationship between labor money and the voting was the only statistically significant correlation in this part of the analysis.

Conclusion

Those who receive campaign contributions are likely to support the interest group giving the money on less visible issues. Still, both the supporters and opponents of campaign finance reform can continue to debate the political significance of such a relationship. Some observers might suggest that PAC funds only are able to increase a group's political influence at the margins of policymaking. Yet, legislation concerning social security disability benefits and price differentials in defense contracts might have consequences for the public which are just as serious as the impact of the establishment of a new department or a constitutional amendment on busing. In fact, the policy implications of campaign funds might be less symbolic and more tangible. **SSQ**

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INTERDEPENDENCE AND DIFFERENTIATION AS COMPONENTS OF THE DIVISION OF LABOR[1]

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Within the human ecological tradition, the nature of the relationship between interdependence and differentiation in employment at the societal level is examined. Industrial input-output data and industrial employment data provide empirical evidence for a positive relationship between industrial interdependence and differentiation in industrial employment.

Durkheim's (1933) concern with the nature of social solidarity is legend. He observed that as societies grow the individual members of the society tend to become more specialized (differentiated) in their sustenance activities, and in turn more interdependent. The division of labor and the relationship between the two components, differentiation and interdependence, has been treated theoretically (Kemper, 1972) and has been examined in the context of formal organizations (Chauvenet, 1972; Raillard and Saussois, 1974). The relationship between the two components, however, has not been adequately addressed at the societal level. The present research is an examination of the relationship between the two components of the division of labor, conducted within the human ecological perspective.

Background

Much of the literature on the division of labor is concerned with job specialization and interdependence in formal organizations. Gibbs and Poston (1975) called this the formal context of the division of labor. Alternatively, there is the inclusive context, the "'symbiotic mode of production' or differentiation in sustenance activities and functional interdependence (at the

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