“Party Warriors: 
The Ugly Side of 
Party Polarization in Congress”

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Public approval of Congress, even before the showdown over the budget and debt ceiling, is at an all-time low. So, too, is comity in Congress. Pundits, politicians, and political scientists too frequently discuss these trends under the broad rubric of party polarization. In this paper, I tease out a dimension different from party polarization, that I call “partisan warfare.” While the concepts are, undoubtedly, related, I argue that their distinction is critical for understanding the current congressional dynamics. I show that roll-call votes on senators’ amendments can give us insight – though not perfectly – into partisan warfare in the current Senate.

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The double financial fiascos of the government shutdown and the near breaching of the debt ceiling caused unprecedented anger at the U.S. Congress by not just the American citizens, but also governments around the globe. In Mexico City, for example, the crises were known under the all-encompassing term of “berrinche” – literally translated as “spoiled little rich kids.”¹ In a recent poll, 78 percent of Americans wanted to “throw out [the] entire Congress and start over.”²

After viewing a poll that would look rosy by this low benchmark, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) concluded that the only congressional supporters these days include “blood relatives and paid staff.”³ In an article titled, “Our Broken Senate,” Norman Ornstein, the dean of political pundits, argued that “the Senate had taken the term ‘deliberate’ to a new level… In many ways, the frustration of modern governance in Washington – the arrogance, independence, parochialism – could be called ‘The Curse of the Senate.’” He concludes that the problem with the Congress is the “the culture” and that “is not going to change anytime soon.”⁴

This chorus of dysfunction is given its clearest voice as members of Congress are on their way out the door. When Senator Evan Bayh, whose father also served in the Senate, announced his retirement in 2010, he complained:

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For some time, I’ve had a growing conviction that Congress is not operating as it should. There is much too much partisanship and not enough progress; too much narrow ideology and not enough practical problem-solving. Even at a time of enormous national challenge, the people's business is not getting done… I love working for the people of Indiana. I love helping our citizens make the most of their lives. But I do not love Congress.5

Two years later when Olympia Snowe announced that she would retire at the end of 2012, she commented, “Unfortunately, I do not realistically expect the partisanship of recent years in the Senate to change over the short term.”6

When they were announcing their retirement from the Congress, it is my contention that Bayh and Snowe were criticizing the institution on two different, though related, underlying dimensions. First, the members serving today are more ideologically polarized than their predecessors. While Congress has always had both extreme conservatives and extreme liberals, today’s Congress seems to have more of them than it did before. As the members have become more ideologically polarized, the moderate middle has shrunk, which has impeded the compromises necessary for solving public policy problems.

While some may think that the growing ideological divide between the parties is reason enough to criticize the institution, a second complaint seems to bother Snowe, Bayh, their fellow members, political pundits, and congressional scholars even more. That complaint, while it has its roots in party polarization, is combative in nature and requires more than what can be revealed in voting patterns on the floor. I call this second dimension, “partisan warfare.” The partisan warfare dimension taps into the strategies that go beyond defeating your opponents into humiliating them, go beyond questioning your opponents judgment into questioning their motives, and go beyond fighting the good legislative fight to

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destroying the institution and the legislative process in order to serve not only your ideological goals, but also your electoral goals.

The rise of warfare within a polarizing Congress certainly suggests a link between the two. Indeed, polarization may be necessary for warfare, but it is not a sufficient cause of it. Parties that are divided over policy can have a serious and honest debate, which can even become heated. In the first half of the famous idiom, the opposing sides can “agree to disagree.” Quite apart from the serious policy disagreement, though, the debate between the opposing sides can degenerate into a shouting match where the policy proscriptions are lost in a fight over legislative games where the combatants question the motives, integrity, and patriotism of their opponents. Under such a situation, the second half of the idiom – “without being disagreeable” – is never realized.

This partisan warfare dimension is harder to quantify, though it most certainly exists. What I call, “partisan warfare,” is what Barbara Sinclair (2006, 364) called “ugly politics” in a book titled, Party Wars. She defined ugly politics as “politics descending to personal attacks that are inflammatory and untrue.” Frances Lee (2009), loosened up this definition in recasting it as “beyond ideology” in her book of the same name. Lee argues that only so much of the divide between the parties can be understood as a difference in ideology. The rest of the divide – by some accounts, the lion’s share of the divide – is motivated by some other goal. Lee (2009, 193) defines this behavior as “partisan bickering” and offers the following description:

If partisanship has roots in members’ political interests, then political parties actually exacerbate and institutionalize conflict, rather than merely represent and give voice to preexisting policy disagreements in the broader political environment. In their quest to win elections and wield power, partisans impeach one another’s motives, question one another’s ethics and competence, engage in reflexive partisanship, and—when it is politically useful to do so—exploit and deepen divisions rather than seeking common ground.
I argue that it is this portion of the divide that causes the angst of those participants and observers of today’s Congress. Lee restricts her evaluation of the combat that is beyond ideology to an examination of roll-call votes, which is an appropriate first step. Partisan warfare, though, can operate in contexts beyond the “yeas” and “nays” on the floor. In fact, it is frequently other actions in the legislative and electoral processes that are better exhibits of partisan warfare.

More often than not, congressional scholars have opted to merge these two dimensions for a couple of reasons. First, there is no doubt that they are related. The distinction between party polarization and partisan warfare can easily be masked as the same or at least similar enough to collapse on to one dimension. Second, the second dimension of partisan warfare, especially in comparison to the first, is much harder to isolate, operationalize, and analyze. Nonetheless, real analytic leverage can be brought to our understanding of how the current Senate operates and how it is evaluated if these dimensions are pulled apart.

In this article, I tease out these two dimensions through an examination of the U.S. Senate. First, I argue that the Senate, because of its loose rules, provides for fertile ground to explore this second dimension. I also briefly outline the first dimension – party polarization in the Senate. In the second section, I present three anecdotes that clearly show behavior consistent with partisan warfare. In the third section, I undertake a more systematic examination of partisan warfare by examining senators’ amendments that result in roll-call votes. I find that the number of roll-call votes on senators’ amendments provides material for assessing partisan warfare, but that the measure needs to be refined to capture more fully this second dimension. Before concluding, I put both dimensions back together to assess the utility of separating partisan warfare from party polarization.
I. Party Polarization in the U.S. Senate

A surprising result from the polarization studies is not that the gap between the parties is bigger in the House (Theriault 2008; Fleisher and Bond 2004), it is that it is even as close as it is. Because the House is a simple majoritarian institution, good reasons exist for the parties to reveal distinctly different voting patterns. Ironically, instead of impending the passage of legislation, party polarization in the House actually fosters it (Sinclair 2006). A clear distinction between the majority party and the minority party compels the majority party to endow their leaders with more power to pass the party’s program (Rohde and Aldrich 2010).

A. The Fertile Ground of the Senate

When senators removed the motion to order the previous question from their rules in 1806, they began down a path that required senators to be more collegial if they hoped to pass bills. The 60-vote cloture requirement and the ability of any one single senator to virtually bring the entire institution to a halt nurtures senators to treat their institution more gingerly than representatives do the House, where the minority party has little recourse. Indeed, the one big difference between Asher’s (1973) norms of the House and Matthews’s (1960) folkways in the Senate is that the latter includes “loyalty to the institution”; there is no such House norm.

For these reasons, the Senate presents more fertile ground for examining the distinction between party polarizers and partisan warriors. Before turning to measures of the
latter, I establish the bedrock for the former in the following section. I then turn to a more explicit consideration of the second dimension – partisan warfare.

B. The First Dimension of Party Polarization

The recent congressional elections have brought about the most polarized Congress since at least the early 1900s. I analyze Poole and Rosenthal’s (1997) DW-NOMINATE data in this section to show how polarized the parties inside the Senate have become. These data, which are generated from all non-consensual roll-call votes, range from -1 for extremely liberal members to +1 for extremely conservative members.

The congresses after the 1964 election and into the 1970s were some of the least polarized in modern history. In the congresses during the Johnson administration, the Senate Republicans were less conservative than the Senate Democrats were liberal. By the time the Republicans took back the Senate in Clinton’s first midterm election, though, the Senate Republicans became more ideologically extreme than the Democrats. In the 112th Congress (2011-2), the Republicans’ votes were 32 percent more polarized than the Senate Democrats (see figure 1). Such disparity in the parties gives credibility to the arguments offered by Hacker and Pierson (2005), Mann and Ornstein (2012), Theriault and Rohde (2012), and Theriault (2013) that the Republican members are primarily responsible for the growing divide between the parties in Congress.

Since Johnson’s reelection in 1964, the Senate Democrats have become only 27 percent more polarizing – the Senate Republicans, on the other hand, have become more than 70 percent more polarizing. Both parties in the Senate are heading toward their ideological
endpoint, but they are not moving at the same rate. For every step that the Senate Democrats are taking, the Senate Republicans are taking three steps!

II. Partisan Warrior Anecdotes

While roll-call votes provide a relatively easy way of measuring party polarization, measuring partisan warrior behavior is much more difficult, especially in a comprehensive and systematic fashion. Before engaging in that arduous task, I motivate the partisan warfare dimension with three recent anecdotes. In the following section, I offer a more systematical analysis.

A. Changing Positions – The Budget Commission

On December 9, 2009, Senators Kent Conrad (D-North Dakota) and Judd Gregg (R-New Hampshire) introduced S. 2853, a bill to establish the Bipartisan Task Force for Responsible Fiscal Action. The bill had 29 cosponsors, including 12 Democrats and 17 Republicans. Over the next week, 5 more senators signed on as cosponsors (1 Democrat and 4 Republicans). At introduction, President Barack Obama was skeptical of the proposed commission.

On January 20, 2010, Obama changed his mind and fully endorsed the idea of the commission. Within hours of Obama’s announcement, John McCain (R-Arizona) and Jim Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) withdrew as cosponsors of the bill. The next day, Conrad and Gregg formally introduced the language of their bill as an amendment to the debt-limit bill, which
was currently being debated on the Senate floor. On the same day, Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and Sam Brownback (R-Kansas) withdrew as cosponsors. On the following day, Kay Baily Hutchison (R-Texas) and John Ensign (R-Nevada) withdrew as cosponsors.

On January 26, Conrad and Gregg were able to get a majority, but not the 60 votes that the bill’s unanimous consent agreement required for the underlying bill to be amended. Only 53 senators supported the commission; the only absent senator was Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who remained a cosponsor of the proposal. The Democrats voted 37-23 in favor of the amendment; The Republicans voted 16-23 against the amendment. Those voting “no” included the six Republicans who withdrew as cosponsors of the bill as well as Robert Bennett (R-Utah), who would withdraw as a cosponsor on the bill two days later. After its defeat in the Senate, Obama created the commission through an executive order. It would come be known as the Simpson-Bowles Commission.

Various reasons could explain why the seven Republicans who voted against the amendment after signing on to the bill. Perhaps the easiest explanations are for Bennett and Hutchison, who were involved in tough primary fights that they would ultimately lose. McCain, too, was involved in a tough primary, but he ultimately prevailed by 24 percentage points. Such obvious rationales do not exist for the remaining four Republicans – all of whom are Gingrich Senators. None of the others faced serious or imminent electoral reprisals. Given that 22 Democrats also voted against the amendment, something other than ideology motivated the 7 Republicans to withdrawal their support from the bill.

B. David Vitter and the “Saxbe Fix”

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7 Hutchison challenged incumbent Governor Rick Perry, but lost in the primary. Bennett was seeking reelection, though the convention process, which Utah uses, denied him renomination.
To protect the people from a corrupt system where members could create plush government jobs for themselves, the U.S. Constitution explicitly prohibits lawmakers from serving in an executive branch position for which they voted either to create or to increase the salary thereof. This restriction, called the Emolument Clause, has befuddled presidents and their potential appointees for years by erecting barriers for members to serve in the president’s cabinet after they have voted to raise the cabinet secretaries’ pay. The current workaround strategy was first used in 1973 when President Nixon wanted Senator William Saxbe (R-Ohio), who had earlier supported a pay increase for cabinet officials, to be his Attorney General. Nixon asked Congress to pass a law reducing the attorney general’s salary to the level it was before the raise that Saxbe supported. The reduced salary would last until the Senate term for which Saxbe was elected ended at which point Congress would pass another law increasing the attorney general’s salary to that of all the other cabinet officials. This workaround had passed muster by both the courts and Congress ever since.  

When Senators Hillary Clinton (D-New York) and Ken Salazar (D-Colorado) took their seats in the Obama Cabinet in 2009, their pay was cut to what the Secretaries of State and Interior, respectively, made on the day before the term to which they were currently elected. As Clinton’s Senate term would not have ended until 2013, Salazar would first face the prospect of having his salary raised as a consequence of the second half of what has become known as the “Saxbe Fix.” When Salazar’s Senate term would have ended in 2011, Majority Leader Harry Reid and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell worked out a unanimous consent agreement to pass a bill that would have increased Salazar’s pay by $19,600 to $199,700, the same that all the other cabinet secretaries made with the exception of Clinton.  

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8 President Jimmy Carter used the Saxbe Fix to install Senator Muskie as Secretary of State and President Bill Clinton used it to install Lloyd Bentsen as Secretary of the Treasury.
On May 23, 2011, David Vitter (R-Louisiana) announced that he was placing a hold on the bill raising Salazar’s pay until the Interior Department started “issuing new [deepwater drilling] permits at the same rate as before the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.” Vitter argued that it was his “way of keeping the ‘boot on the neck’ of Interior until they get the job done.”

Reid, who was blind-sided by the move, criticized Vitter’s move: “It is wrong for Sen. Vitter to try to get something in return for moving forward on a matter that the Senate has considered routine for more than a century.” He vowed to keep fighting for Salazar’s raise.

In a letter to Reid and McConnell the following day, Salazar asked them to “set aside any effort to address” the inequality in his pay. He feared that he needed to take the issue off the table because of Vitter’s actions, which he interpreted as an apparent bribe. A Vitter spokesperson retorted that charging Vitter of bribery would only “make my boss a Louisiana folk hero.” Vitter’s response was a bit more temperate, “I’m glad the secretary has dropped his push for a pay raise… Now I hope he starts earning what he already makes and properly issues new permits for much-needed drilling in the Gulf.” Salazar, until the day he retired in 2013 made nearly $20,000 less than the rest of the Cabinet.

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9 From a Vitter press release (http://vitter.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressRoom.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=1e453722-cbf2-c8f2-461c-11474e0559a6; accessed on December 18, 2011). The “boot on the neck” quote is the same one that Salazar used in reference to BP as it started cleaning up the Gulf.


13 A Senate Ethics Committee, in dismissing a complaint by the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, chastised Vitter in a letter written by the Chair Barbara Boxer (D-California) and Vice Chair Johnny Isakson, “While the committee found that there was no substantial credible evidence that you violated the law or Senate rules, it did conclude that it is inappropriate to condition support for a Secretary’s personal salary increase directly on his or her performance of a specific official act.” Quoted in Darren Goode, March 30, 212, “After Ethics Ruling, David Vitter Vows to Keep Blocking Ken Salazar's Pay Raise,” politico.com (http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0312/74689.html;
It has become common for senators to put holds on bills to force a presidential administration to take a particular action. It is not even that unusual for a hold to be placed on a bill that had cleared both the minority and majority leader. It is precisely because bills like this get held up that the leaders circulate their unanimous consent agreements before they offer them on the Senate floor. What is extraordinary about Vitter’s actions is the lack of senatorial courtesy with which they were carried out. The actions are even more out of step because they, in effect, punished a former senator, who was well respected on both sides of the aisle as witnessed by his unanimous confirmation vote. Again, ideology does not seem to be the primary factor motivating Vitter’s hold.

C. No Reindeer Games for the Gingrich Senators

The 112th Congress was difficult for most senators. Democrats were frustrated that the Republicans made legislating exceedingly difficult. The Republicans were frustrated that the Democrats would not consider important legislation passed by the House. Furthermore, they were frustrated that Obama was still in the White House and the Democrats were still a majority in the Senate.

Shortly after Thanksgiving in 2011, Senator Al Franken (D-Minnesota), who is Jewish, decided that the Senate needed to institute a new tradition to ease tensions. In conspiring with Senator Mike Johanns (R-Nebraska), he sent an email around to his colleagues asking them to participate in a Senate version of Secret Santa. As Franken explained: “I remember one year [as a child] I picked this kid who used to intimidate me on the playground. Turns out after we got to know each other and we became friends. So, I thought Secret Santa would be a good way to cut through the partisan divide here in the
Senate. And who knows, maybe it will create some unlikely friendships.\textsuperscript{14} Franken and Johanns set the limit at $10 and picked December 13 as the date that they would exchange gifts.

The trick for the Secret Santa to work, though, was for the senators to participate. They did. At least 58 – and, perhaps, as many as 61 – senators offered their names up for the possibility of increasing comity (and, perhaps, comedy) in the Senate.\textsuperscript{15} The participation rate varied by party. While at least 45 percent of the Republicans participated, 70 percent of Democrats did.\textsuperscript{16} Secret Santa participation cannot be explained by ideology. The average DW-NOMINATE of the Republicans who did participate was 0.46 compared to 0.50 for those that did not participate. The difference was even smaller for the Democrats. Participating Democrats had an average ideology of -0.35 compared to 0.37 for those that did not participate. Neither of these differences nears statistical significance.\textsuperscript{17}

Not only was one senator unwilling to participate, but he ridiculed the entire enterprise. Pat Toomey scoffed at the gift exchange. When Ginni Thomas, wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, asked him what he would give Majority Leader Harry Reid if he were to have participated, Toomey replied, “I would give him the inspiration to do a budget. I think I would try to inspire him to take responsibility that the majority party in the United States Senate ought to accept, which is to lay out to the American people just what

\textsuperscript{15} On the day of the drawing, 58 senators participated. At the day of the gift exchanged, news accounts indicated that as many as 61 senators exchanged gifts. All news accounts said that either 21 or 22 Republicans participated. Through a extensive search of the internet, including news articles, press releases, and blogs, 21 Republican senators and 29 Democratic senators could be identified.
\textsuperscript{16} The proportions are statistically significantly different from one another (p = 0.015)
\textsuperscript{17} P = 0.55 for Republican and p = 0.47 for the Democrats
they intend to do with American taxpayer dollars.”

Perhaps if he had participated, he would have gotten lumps of coal from Senator Joe Manchin (D-West Virginia). Instead, Manchin chose to give those lumps of coal, which were carved into a donkey and an elephant, to Senator Chuck Schumer (D-New York).

III. A More Systematic Look at Partisan Warfare

The anecdotes from the previous section help motivate the existence of a second dimension. I try to measure that dimension more systematically in this section by examining the number of roll-call votes on senators’ amendments. Admittedly, this metric cannot possible encapsulate the entirety of the second dimension of partisan warfare in the way that roll-call votes can capture the first dimension of party polarization. Nonetheless, the metric can begin to scope out the distinction between party polarization and partisan warfare – of if you like “ugly politics” or the stuff that is “beyond ideology.”

Senators may have a variety of reasons for offering an amendment on the Senate floor. The most obvious reason is that they hope to move the bill closer to their preferred policy. Indeed, I suspect a good number of amendments on the Senate floor have exactly that purpose at heart. The debate on the Affordability Care Act (aka, “Obamacare”) presents other reasons why senators may offer amendments.

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19 To learn more about the gifts given and received, see Ann Gerhart, December 13, 2011, “Senate’s Secret Santas Make Their Rounds,” The Washington Post, p. xx. Interestingly, the article was published in the Style section, not the Front Page.
On March 24, 2010, Senator Coburn (R-Oklahoma) introduced an amendment that prohibited sex offenders from using the health insurance that was being established in Obama’s health care reform package to pay for Viagra. Especially given that existing law explicitly forbade it, what senator would possibly vote against such an amendment? As it turned out, 55 out of 57 Democrats did.\(^\text{20}\) During this particular debate, the Democrats were orchestrating a complex legislative maneuver that could lead to the passage of health care reform without explicitly overcoming a Republican-led filibuster. By passing the measure through the reconciliation process, the Democrats only needed a majority, but they could not change a word in the bill or the entire process might unravel. As such, the Republicans had the Democrats in the difficult position of voting down amendments that might otherwise seem constructive or reasonable.

In addition to voting down the prohibition of paying for sex offenders’ Viagra, the Democrats defeated an amendment by Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) that would ensure that no individual making less than $200,000 would be subject to a tax increase as a consequence of the legislation. They also defeated an amendment by John Ensign (R-Nevada) to protect the damages in medical malpractice suits resulting from pro bono cases. By voting against each of these amendments, Democrats could be subject to campaign commercials arguing that they voted to give Viagra to sex offenders, to raise taxes on those making less than $200,000, and to subject pro bono health care providers to exorbitant malpractice lawsuits. No Democrat

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\(^{20}\) The floor mechanics on this amendment are a bit tricky. Instead of subjecting Democrats to an explicit vote on the amendment, Senate Max Baucus (D-Montana) offered a motion to table Coburn’s amendment. Fifty-five out of 57 Democrats voted for that motion, thus the amendment was tabled, which in this instance is equivalent to defeating the amendment.
disagreed when Senator Max Baucus (D-Montana) called Coburn’s amendment, “A crass political stunt aimed at making a 30-second commercial.”

In addition to sincerely trying to move policy closer to the sponsor’s preferred policy, offering amendments on the Senate floor has two other consequences. First, senators can get other senators on the record for controversial policies that might divide senators’ party leadership from their constituencies. Furthermore, so long as 20 senators agree, amendments must be disposed of through roll-call votes, which can take up to a half hour to complete, rather than a ten second voice vote. In comparison to the first – more earnest – reason for offering amendments, these later two reasons are a bit more nefarious.

Coburn’s, Crapo’s, and Ensign’s amendments, while separating Democrats from Republicans, were not manifestations of how conservative the Republicans had become or how liberal the Democrats had become. These amendments highlight warfare, not polarization. In an ideal world, warfare would be measured by the number of holds – or threats of placing holds – that senators make. Regrettably, holds are often secret. No reliable count exists. An examination of roll call votes from senators’ amendments, nevertheless, can provide insight into partisan warfare and obstructionism in the Senate.

Using roll-call votes on amendments as a proxy for partisan warfare is legitimate so long as it correctly answers three questions. First, does it pass the “face validity” test? In other words, are the senators whose amendments receive the most roll-call votes the senators that we think of as generals in the partisan war? Second, do amendments from senators in the minority result in more roll-call votes than senators in the majority? While majority party senators have the responsibility of governing, the minority party senators have the burden of

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trying to become the majority during the next election cycle. Third, are ideologically extreme senators the most likely to offer amendments that result in roll-call votes? If offering amendments were based on sincerely trying to move policy, senators from the middle of the ideological continuum should be the most active in trying to change policy. If, instead, senators at the ideological extreme are offering more amendments that result in roll-call votes, then evidence will exist for the more nefarious reasons for offering amendments.

The Face Validity Test

From the 103rd (1993-4) to the 112th (2011-2), the Senate took 4,324 roll-call votes on amendments, averaging approximately four roll-call votes per senator in each congress. Some congresses resulted in more roll-call votes than others. In the 104th Congress (1995-6), in the wake of the new Republican majority promising a more open and deliberative process, each senator’s amendments resulted in an average of 6.5 roll-call votes. In the 112th Congress, as Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nevada) clamped down on the fully engaged death-by-amendment strategy, each senator’s amendments only resulted in an average of two roll-call votes. Reid blocked senators from even offering amendments by “filling the amendment tree.”

The escalation in the war on the Senate floor is certainly a cause for the substantial drop in roll-call votes on amendments in the last congress.

The partisan warfare proxy of roll-call votes on amendments passes the face validity test. The list of senators whose amendments cause the most roll-call votes looks like a who’s who of partisan warriors in the Senate (see table 1). In addition to his Viagra amendment in

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22 During the first 10 months of the 112th Congress alone, CRS counted 41 times when Reid blocked other senators from offering amendments (see http://www.coburn.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=86a87020-75dc-4335-b192-ced34c6b8bd1; accessed October 25, 2013).
the 111th Congress contributed to his top rank, Coburn makes the list three times, as does John McCain (R-Arizona). Democratic senators Barbara Boxer (D-California), Ted Kennedy (D-Massachusetts), and Paul Wellstone (D-Minnesota) make the list twice – each time while serving in the minority. Partisan warriors Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina), Robert Byrd (D-West Virginia), Jim DeMint (R-South Carolina), David Vitter (R-Louisiana), and Rand Paul (R-Kentucky) are also prominently featured on the list.

A few names on the list are a bit surprising. Byron Dorgan (D-South Dakota) and Dale Bumpers (D-Arkansas) were never considered to be Senate malcontents. Furthermore, we could imagine party leaders being partisan warriors, but it is a bit suspicious that George Mitchell (D-Maine) and Bob Dole (R-Kansas) make the list not when they served as minority leaders, but when they were majority leaders.

Amendment Roll-Call Votes in the Majority and Minority

If the number of amendment roll-call votes is a valid indicator for partisan warriors, the minority party senators should be responsible for more votes than the majority party senators. Over the 10 congresses, the minority party senators are responsible for two-thirds more amendment roll-call votes than the majority party senators (see table 2). Of the 10 congresses, the pattern reaches conventional levels of statistical significance 8 times. It fails most miserably in the 107th Congress (2001-2), when the Republican majority becomes a minority only after Jim Jeffords (I-Vermont) resigns from the Republican Party six months into the Bush administration.
The trend of minority party senators causing more amendment roll-call votes can be seen not only through a congress-by-congress analysis, but also through the congressional careers of a few senators (see figure 2). Two Democrats – Frank Lautenberg (D-New Jersey) and Barbara Boxer (D-California) – and two Republicans – John McCain (R-Arizona) and Jon Kyl (R-Arizona) – show how minority party status influences the number of roll-call votes caused by the senators. When Lautenberg served in the minority, the roll-call votes caused by his amendments was four times greater than when he was in the majority; Boxer’s amendments resulted in slightly less than three times as many roll calls when she served in the minority. McCain, perhaps indicative of his role as a “maverick,” is active on the Senate floor while serving both in the minority and in majority, though as a minority-party senator, his amendments are responsible for almost 3 additional roll-call votes. His same-state colleague, Kyl, is responsible for almost twice as many amendment roll-call votes when serving in the minority.

A more systematic test of this hypothesis can be performed through fixed effects regression model that controls for both the senator and the congress (see appendix for full regression output). Such a test reveals that minority party status increases the number of roll-call votes on senators’ amendments by two. Considering that the constant is only 1.4, this effect is fairly large. Furthermore, the within $R^2$ of 0.13 suggests that a not insignificant amount of the variation within an individual senators amending activity can be explained by their status in the minority party.

**Amending Activity of Ideologically Extreme Senators**
The number of roll-call votes that come from senators’ amendments passes the first two tests. The third test examines the differences in amending activity based on ideological extremism. If this third hypothesis is true, the two dimensions of party polarization and partisan warfare are correlated. In fact, the truer the relationship between ideology and amending activity, the less distinct the two dimensions become. At the extreme, if the amending activity is perfectly correlated with ideology, than the two dimensions collapse onto the one dimension that has received the bulk of the political science analysis.

Ideology, especially as mediated by the minority party status, has a marked effect on the senators’ amending activity. For a Democrats going from a DW-NOMINATE score of 0.00 (moderate) to -1.00 (liberal), the predicted number of amendment roll-call votes increases by 3 in the majority, but by 22 in the minority (see figure 3, panel A). The differences for Republicans is not quite as dramatic are even more dramatic (see figure 3, panel B). Changing a moderate into an extreme liberal increases their amendments by 3 in the majority to 22 in the minority.

Nonetheless, the relationship is not perfect. The overall $R^2$ for the model is 0.23, which suggests that a good chunk of the amending activity is neither minority party status nor ideology.

IV. A Second Dimension – Partisan Warfare?
With the passing of three tests by the amendment roll-call votes, in this section, I present the two dimensions of party polarization and partisan warfare. The results from the tests as well as the argument itself suggests that partisan warfare will be easier to measure in the minority party. To see if warfare, like polarization, is an asymmetric phenomenon between the parties, I examine a recent congress for each party when they toiled in the minority. The two-dimensional depiction of party polarization and partisan warfare is presented in figure 4. The axes are at the party averages for the respective parties. As such, the quadrants can roughly be thought of as a two-by-two table with data points populated within the “cells” of the table.

The Democrats were last in the minority in the 109th Congress (2005-6). They were particularly embittered because one of their own – John Kerry (D-Massachusetts) – had lost the presidential race to President Bush and by only one state. Furthermore, the Democrats lost four Senate seats, including the one held by their leader, Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota). Democrats were particularly upset that Daschle’s Republican counterpart, Bill Frist (R-Tennessee), broke a long-standing Senate norm when he campaigned in the state.

The Democrats are scattered across the four quadrants relatively equally (see panel A of Figure 4). Six Democrats are party polarizers and partisan warriors. Thirteen Democrats are party polarizers, but not partisan warriors, while 15 are partisan warriors, but not party polarizers. The remaining 9 are neither polarizers nor warriors.

Rather than showing the two dimensions in the 112th Congress (2011-2) when Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nevada) exercised his prerogative of filling the amendment tree on so many occasions, I show the 111th Congress (2009-10) when the practice was
relatively less prevalent. The bitter feelings from the 109th Congress crossed the aisle to the Republican side in the 111th Congress. One of their own, John McCain (R-Arizona), was defeated in the presidential election and shocking to most political observers, they lost their comfortable 8-seat margin to lose the majority. The Republicans were as spread out across the two-dimensional space as their Democratic counterparts were two congresses prior. Eight Republicans were both polarizers and warriors. Just three Republicans were warriors, but not polarizers. Twelve Republicans were polarizers, but not warriors. The remaining 18 Republicans were neither polarizers nor warriors.

This analysis of roll-call votes on amendments suggests a few results. First, these roll-call votes seem to be a good proxy for partisan warfare. The fact that Tom Coburn, the writer of the Viagra amendment, had 15 more amendment roll-call votes than the second person on the list in the last 20 years in the Senate speaks to its power. The list of high amendment roll-call vote senators suggests that it is not just the paramount of the list that receives face validity. Furthermore, the data analysis suggests that it is exactly the senators who we would expect to be partisan warriors that are partisan warriors at least as defined by which senators’ amendments result in roll-call votes. Minority party members who are particularly ideologically extreme are most likely to sponsor amendments that receive roll-call votes.

Second, while party polarization seems to be fully engaged by the senators in both parties, the death-by-amendment strategy seems to be carried out explicitly by relatively few senators. In the 109th Congress, the five most liberal Democrats were responsible for 15 percent of the total Democratic party polarization. In contrast, the five Democrats whose amendments resulted in the most roll-call votes, accounted for 31 percent of the Democratic total. The distinction between generals and foot soldiers was even bigger within the
Republican party in the 111\textsuperscript{th} Congress. The five most conservative Republicans were responsible for 20 percent of the total Republican polarization. The five Republicans whose amendments resulted in the most roll-call votes accounted for 47 percent of the Republican total. In fact, the top six had more than the other 35 Republicans serving in the Senate. The Five Star General, Coburn, alone had 17 percent of the total, though he represented just 2.5 percent of the Republican Conference. While party polarizers seem to abound in both parties, partisan warfare appears to be carried out by relatively few minority party members.

Third, though, this measure is not perfect for capturing this second dimension. The strong correlation between roll-call votes on amendments and ideology suggests, in fact, that the two dimensions might not be that distinct. This analysis suggests that the measure needs to undergo further refinement in order to capture more vividly partisan warfare. In future research, I will examine the underlying voting behavior on these amendments. The moderates who are sponsoring more amendments, and thus being called “partisan warriors” maybe doing so for nefarious purposes, but also virtuous ones. If the underlying votes on their amendments are bipartisan, then it would be wrong to characterize their behavior as warfare rather than the normal legislative behavior practiced by actively engaged senators. If their amendments, however, do not receive support from the majority party, we will have more evidence for their partisan warfare behavior.

V. Conclusion
In this paper, I have attempted to tease out a second dimension of party polarization in the U.S. Senate. Most scholars studying this phenomenon in Congress focus only the ideological spread as witnessed by roll-call voting. The disgust registered by not only the American public, but also the participants in the process suggests that something “beyond ideology” – in the words of Frances Lee (2009) – is going on.

While partisan warfare is a difficult concept to quantify, the quotes from Bayh and Snowe suggest something more than polarization is ruining their beloved Senate and while more than ideology is motivating Coburn’s Viagra amendment, no easily quantifiable metric can be gathered to measure warfare. In this paper, I argue that the number of roll-call votes caused by senators’ amendments is a proxy that can be used systematically to understand partisan warfare in the Senate.

Vitter’s attempt to “bribe” Secretary Salazar, the rejection of a bipartisan budget commission by one-time supporters, and the lack of across-the-board participation in the Secret Santa suggest that senators sometimes act not out of their ideological preferences, but out of their desire to win – and to win at almost any cost. The more comprehensive data analysis suggests a systematic explanation with partisan warfare at its roots can explain senators’ actions in a way above and beyond their ideology. This analysis suggests that senator amendment activity maybe used as the basis of getting at partisan warfare, but not without some refinement, which I hope to conduct in future research.
The Appendix

Stata output for the fixed effect model is below. The dependent variable is the number of amendment roll-call votes by senator.

```
. xtreg amendrc minority cong103-cong111 if full==1, fe

Fixed-effects (within) regression Number of obs = 997
Group variable: prpsr Number of groups = 215

R-sq: within = 0.1328 Obs per group: min = 1
between = 0.0730 avg = 4.6
overall = 0.0916 max = 10

F(10,772) = 11.82 corr(u_i, Xb) = 0.0544
Prob > F = 0.0000

------------------------------------------------------------------
amendrc | Coef. Std. Err. t P>|t| [95% Conf. Interval]
------------------------------------------------------------------
  minority | 2.108045 .2530094 8.33 0.000 1.611377 2.604713
  cong103 | 1.935945 .6432591 3.01 0.003 .6732009 3.19869
  cong104 | 3.688171 .6215034 5.93 0.000 2.468134 4.908208
  cong105 | 1.311702 .6029083 2.18 0.030 .1281682 2.495236
  cong106 | 1.84254 .6215034 3.07 0.002 .6662348 3.018845
  cong107 | 1.788478 .5938198 3.01 0.003 .6227845 2.954171
  cong108 | 2.58183 .5856991 4.41 0.000 1.432078 3.731582
  cong109 | 2.033643 .5856991 3.51 0.000 .8956896 3.171597
  cong110 | 1.803382 .5648639 3.19 0.001 .6945308 2.912234
  cong111 | 2.114605 .5452242 3.88 0.000 1.044307 3.184902
     _cons | 1.436366 .4459238 3.22 0.001 .5609992 2.311733
------------------------------------------------------------------
sigma_u | 4.2143217
sigma_e | 3.6460383
  rho | .57192145 (fraction of variance due to u_i)

F test that all u_i=0:  F(214, 772) = 5.00 Prob > F = 0.0000
```
Stata output for the extremism test is below.

```stata
.xtreg amendrc minority republican prx prx_min prx_rep min_rep prx_min_rep cong103 > -cong111 if full==1

Random-effects GLS regression                                 Number of obs      =       997
Group variable: prpsr                                        Number of groups   =       215

  R-sq: within = 0.1852                                        Obs per group: min =         1
            between = 0.2749                                   avg =       4.6
            overall = 0.2303                                   max =        10

Wald chi2(15) = 252.84                                       corr(u_i, X)   = 0 (assumed)
Prob > chi2        = 0.0000

| Coef.   Std. Err.     z     P>|z|       [95% Conf. Interval] |
|---------|----------------------|------|-------------|-----------------|
| amendrc | -2.195692 1.268538  -1.73  0.083     -4.681981    .2905972 |
| minority| 2.187273 1.475089  1.48  0.138     -7.038485    5.078394 |
| republican| -3.322152 2.937936 -1.13  0.258     -9.08047    2.436096 |
| prx     | -19.17944 3.131046 -6.13  0.000     -25.31617    -13.0427 |
| prx_min | 6.845679 3.560815  1.92  0.055     -1.333899    13.82475 |
| prx_rep | -2.035703 1.743657 -1.17  0.243     -5.453208    1.381802 |
| min_rep | 28.81572 3.616597  7.97  0.000     21.72732    35.90412 |
| prx_min_rep| 3.148448  .5672174 5.55  0.000     2.036722    4.260174 |
| cong103 | 1.996871  .5350009 3.73  0.000     1.9482886    3.045453 |
| cong104 | -.6008184  .5235781 -1.26  0.207     -1.687013    .3653758 |
| cong105 | 2.335836  .5428075 4.30  0.000     1.271953    3.39972 |
| cong106 | -.507696  .507734  0.89  0.375     -.5443708    1.44591 |
| cong107 | 2.207741  .5258556 4.20  0.000     1.177083    3.238399 |
| cong110 | 2.273027  .5140816 4.42  0.000     1.265445    3.280608 |
| cong111 | -.3324134 1.157207 -0.29  0.774     -2.600498    1.935671 |
| _cons   | -3.0496961 3.5248584 0.89  0.375     -5.443708    1.44591 |

sigma_u   | 3.0496961
sigma_e   | 3.5248584
rho      | .42810262 (fraction of variance due to u_i)
```

Party Warriors: The Ugly Side of Party Polarization in Congress
Figure 1: Ideology by Party in the U.S. Senate, 89-112th Congresses (1965-2012).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Congress</th>
<th>Senator</th>
<th>Roll-Call Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>111th</td>
<td>Tom Coburn (R-OK)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2T</td>
<td>110th</td>
<td>Tom Coburn (R-OK)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2T</td>
<td>110th</td>
<td>Jim DeMint (R-SC)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>103rd</td>
<td>Jesse Helms (R-NC)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>104th</td>
<td>Paul Wellston (D-MN)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6T</td>
<td>108th</td>
<td>Robert Byrd (D-WV)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6T</td>
<td>104th</td>
<td>Tom Harkin (D-IA)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6T</td>
<td>103rd</td>
<td>John McCain (R-AZ)</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>10T</td>
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<td>Tom Coburn (R-OK)</td>
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<td>104th</td>
<td>Byron Dorgan (D-ND)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Paul Wellston (D-MN)</td>
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<td>George Mitchell (D-ME)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>111th</td>
<td>David Vitter (R-LA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>106th</td>
<td>Ted Kennedy (D-MA)</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>16T</td>
<td>104th</td>
<td>Barbara Boxer (D-CA)</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>16T</td>
<td>103rd</td>
<td>BROWN HANK</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16T</td>
<td>104th</td>
<td>Dale Bumpers (D-AR)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16T</td>
<td>112th</td>
<td>Rand Paul (R-KY)</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>104th</td>
<td>Bob Dole (R-KA)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>21T</td>
<td>111th</td>
<td>John Thune (R-SD)</td>
<td>19</td>
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Table 2: The Difference Between the Minority Party and the Majority Party Amending Activity, 103rd to 112th Congresses (1993-2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congress</th>
<th>Majority Party</th>
<th>Minority Party Average</th>
<th>Majority Party Average</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>Statistical Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>103rd</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.0008</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Republican</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106th</td>
<td>Republican</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.0760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Democrat</td>
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<td>4.7</td>
<td>-1.3</td>
<td>0.0750</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Republican</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109th</td>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110th</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.0990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111th</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>0.0003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112th</td>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.0450</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

103rd-112th  | 5.6  | 3.2  | 2.4  | 0.0000  |
Figure 2: Selected Senators and Amending Activists in the Minority and Majority, 103rd to 112th Congresses

Panel A: Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ)

Panel B: Barbara Boxer (D-CA)

Panel C: Jon Kyl (R-AZ)

Panel D: John McCain (R-AZ)
Figure 3: The Effect of Ideology on Senators Amending Activity

Panel A: Democrats

Panel B: Republicans

In the Minority

In the Majority
Figure 4: The Two Dimensions -- Party Polarizers and Partisan Warriors

Panel A: Democrats

Panel B: Republicans