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## PACs, Contributions, and Roll Calls: An Organizational Perspective

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*This study uses information about the organizational arrangements of five major political action committees to develop an explanation for the extent to which PAC contributions are capable of influencing congressional voting decisions. The explanation claims that the processes by which PACs raise and allocate money must be understood before the impact of money on roll call decisions can be appreciated. In contrast to some previous studies, this analysis demonstrates with marked clarity the limited nature of PAC influence.*

Concern about the effects of campaign contributions on congressional voting has stimulated a growing collection of studies on contributions and roll calls. Scholarly interest in this issue is a natural outgrowth of representatives' increased dependence on money for electoral survival. From 1974 to 1980, political action committee (PAC) expenditures increased by 500%, and average total contributions to congressional candidates tripled (Jacobson, 1983). During just the 1981-1982 election cycle, 2665 nonparty PACs contributed over \$87 million to federal candidates (Malbin & Skladony, 1984).

Because of the prominent role of money in congressional elections, a relationship between PAC contributions and congressional voting is often claimed.<sup>1</sup> The validity of such assertions, however, has been difficult to establish. More often than not, these claims have not been confirmed through rigorous empirical analysis, and even when they have been, researchers have failed to identify any theoretical forces that might con-

strain or limit PAC influence. Unfortunately, because such theoretical considerations are absent, our understanding about PACs and their ability to influence roll calls is extremely tenuous.

In the research reported here, I begin to examine organizational arrangements in the PACs of five national associations that affect the ability of these PACs to influence roll call votes. Although organizational arrangements are thought to be important considerations in understanding interest groups generally (e.g., Berry, 1977; Truman, 1951; Wilson, 1973), the consequences of organizational arrangements in PACs have not been explored.<sup>2</sup> As a result, an important constraint on their activities and influence has been overlooked.

My objective in this article is to point out a fundamental paradox about an organizational arrangement common to many political action committees. The contradiction is that the organizational arrangement *most* conducive to raising money from individual contributors is also the organizational arrangement *least* conducive to influencing congressional voting. Paradoxically, the factors that allow some PACs to become very rich are the very same factors that undercut their potential influence. As a consequence, organizational arrangements are capable of limiting the ability of PACs to influence roll calls through money. This argument is assessed in light of empirical evidence drawn from a qualitative study of PAC organizations and a quantitative analysis of contribution patterns and roll calls.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Representative Downey, Democrat of New York, for example, claims, "You can't buy a congressman for \$5000. But you can buy his vote. It's done on a regular basis" (Isaacson, 1982, p. 20). Barber Conable, Republican of New York, suggests that "These new PACs not only buy incumbents, but affect legislation as well. It's the same crummy business as judges putting the arm on lawyers who appear before them to finance their next campaign" (Green, 1982, p. 18). Additional support for these positions can be found in Drew (1982).

<sup>2</sup>Organizational arrangements have not been ignored altogether (e.g., Eismeier & Pollock, 1984; Sabatini, 1984; Sorauf, 1982), but the importance of organizational arrangements for congressional decision making has not received attention.

<sup>3</sup>Naturally, roll call votes are only a rough indicator of the overall influence that contributions might have.

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## PAC Contributions

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### PAC Contributions and Roll Calls

Empirical evidence about the influence of PAC contributions on congressional voting is filled with ambiguity and apparent contradiction. On the positive side, Silberman and Durden (1976) found that an increase in total labor contributions in 1972 led to a significant increase in congressmen's support for the minimum wage in the 93rd Congress. Chappell (1982), too, discovered a significant positive connection between contributions and votes: a connection between contributions from Rockwell International and votes on the B1 bomber. In a study using aggregate data, Kau and Rubin (1982) reported that total labor contributions in 1978 were significantly related to votes on such issues as the debt limit, the windfall profits tax, and wage and price controls in 1979. Frendreis and Waterman (1983) uncovered a significant relationship between contributions from the trucking industry and voting in the Senate on trucking deregulation, and Brown (1983) concluded that contributions from the National Automobile Dealers Association and the American Medical Association had "substantial" effects on votes pertaining to those two groups in the 97th Congress.

In contrast, however, Chappell's (1981) work indicates that the effects of campaign contributions from several maritime unions on votes in the 96th Congress were "unavoidably ambiguous." More conclusively, Welch (1982) has asserted that "contributions by dairy PACs were *not* a major influence" (p. 491) on votes for dairy price supports in 1975. Finally, in an analysis of the effects of PAC contributions on House votes for the Chrysler loan guarantee and the windfall profits tax, Yiannakis (1983) has concluded that the influence of money was "very limited."

This diversity in findings is not particularly surprising, because different researchers have analyzed different groups and different votes. Unfortunately, because of the excessive costs involved, a representative sample of PACs and roll calls has not been collected and analyzed, and as a result, the meanings of the existing findings are difficult to interpret.<sup>4</sup> Are there really significant discrepancies in the various findings? Which findings are the aberrations—those that ascribe a positive and significant influence to PAC con-

tributions or those that do not? How substantial is a "substantial" effect? Can even larger effects be expected?

The strategy of this research is to examine just five PACs, but five PACs that appear to have considerable influence on roll call decisions. Because this sample is both so small and skewed, it will not be possible to make generalizations about the influence of all PACs, or even a "typical" PAC. Yet an analysis of some of the most powerful PACs will permit generalizations about the upper bounds of PAC influence on roll call decisions. Given the present state of knowledge, an attempt to specify the range of possible empirical results, along with an explanation of why the range is as restricted as it is, represents a clear step forward in generalizing about PACs and roll calls.

### Data on Five PACs

The five PACs included in this study are: The American Medical Political Action Committee (AMPAC), affiliated with the American Medical Association; the Dealers Election Action Committee (DEAC), affiliated with the National Automobile Dealers Association; BANKPAC of the American Bankers Association; the Realtors Political Action Committee (RPAC) of the National Association of Realtors; and the Associated General Contractors Political Action Committee (AGCPAC), affiliated with the Associated General Contractors.

The focus is on the PACs of national associations because many observers think they are among the most active and successful of all PACs in influencing roll call voting. Several factors contribute to this reputation. First, the national associations are generally well known for their strong lobbying organizations, and these organizations are alleged to work closely with the PACs (Malbin, 1979).<sup>5</sup> Second, the PACs of national associations tend to be among the largest PACs in terms of total dollars contributed to congressional candidates. As of 1982, RPAC was the largest of the association PACs; AMPAC ranked second; BANKPAC and DEAC ranked fourth and fifth, respectively; and AGCPAC was seventh largest among the association PACs. Moreover, RPAC, AMPAC, and DEAC were among the ten largest PACs, regardless of type (Cohen, 1983). If

on legislative outcomes. Contributions may have considerable effects on other aspects of the legislative process, such as decisions to report bills out of committee, or strategic considerations in scheduling.

<sup>4</sup>Although Sabato (1984) has surveyed a random sample of 399 PACs, his data do not include roll call votes.

<sup>5</sup>Even though many of the labor unions also have strong lobbying organizations, the labor PACs appear to be more interested in using their campaign contributions to influence election outcomes than the voting decisions of incumbent members of Congress (e.g., Budde, 1980).

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county levels.<sup>10</sup> Interviews with PAC officials in Washington indicated that when local recommendations are made concerning the amount of money that the national office should allocate to different federal candidates, some 80 to 90% of these recommendations are approved without modification. Within AMPAC, for example, 80% of all local recommendations are approved. For RPAC, the approval rate is 92%; and for DEAC, 95 to 98%.

Furthermore, there is very little evidence that PAC staffs and lobbying staffs work closely together. Historically, lobbying has been an activity of the parent organizations, not the PACs; and thus the two staffs have developed separately. Of the five PACs studied here, only in the case of the AGC does a single individual oversee both the lobbying activities and the PAC activities. Even physical distance often separates the PAC officials from the lobbyists. The NADA maintains an office for its lobbyists in downtown Washington, but the PAC operations are located in the organization's headquarters in McLean, Virginia. The headquarters for AMPAC have been located in Washington only since 1982; before 1982, the AMPAC offices were located in Chicago.

So, in light of the conventional view about PAC contributions and lobbyists, these findings are indeed surprising, and, as with most unexpected results, they raise important questions. Why is it that allocation decisions are dominated so strongly by local officials rather than Washington lobbyists? Who are these individuals at the local levels whose recommendations carry so much weight? Answers to both of these questions require a short digression into the process by which political action committees raise money for distribution to political candidates.

### Organization and Fundraising

A continual and pressing problem for political action committees, as for any interest group, is the establishment and maintenance of a large contingent of active, dues-paying members (e.g., O'Brien, 1975; Olson, 1965/1971). Under federal law, corporations, labor unions, and other membership organizations are allowed to draw on their general treasury funds (e.g., funds from the parent organization, such as the AMA) to raise money for their PACs, but they are prohibited from drawing on their general treasury to make

campaign contributions to federal candidates. National associations, as well as other organizations, must establish a "separate, segregated fund" (i.e., a political action committee) and make campaign contributions from this separate fund rather than from the general treasury. As a result, a separate membership must be established for the PAC, and this membership is itself a subset of the membership of the parent organization.

The fact that the PAC draws its members from the parent association puts the PAC at a severe disadvantage, relative to the parent, in providing selective material incentives to attract contributors or members. Members of the parent association can enjoy all of the selective incentives provided by the parent without ever contributing a dime to the political action committee, and because PACs are nascent political organizations, generally having been formed some 50 or 60 years after their parents, they lag far behind their parents in the provision of material benefits to prospective members. The American Medical Association, for example, was founded in 1846, but AMPAC was not added until 1961; the National Automobile Dealers Association was founded in 1917, but DEAC was not established until 1975; and the National Association of Realtors was formed in 1908, but RPAC was not founded until 1969. The parent associations, therefore, have had a great deal of "lead time" in testing and adopting those incentives that are most efficient for encouraging membership. In effect, then, the parents have established a virtual monopoly on material incentives, posing a formidable problem for the PACs in their fundraising efforts.

The way the PACs have managed to overcome this obstacle is to take advantage of their basic organizational structures. A common characteristic of the five PACs of this study is that the organizations with which they are affiliated are federated, or decentralized, organizations. Because the PACs were formed so much later than their parents, the organizational lines of the PACs tend to run parallel to the organizational lines of their parent groups.<sup>11</sup> Under the aegis of each of the five national PACs of this study are state-level PACs which, in turn, comprise officials from congressional districts, counties, and, where appropriate, individual corporations.<sup>12</sup>

The federal, or decentralized, structure of the

<sup>11</sup>For a more detailed description of organizational arrangements, see Wright (1983, pp. 50-56).

<sup>12</sup>Member banks of the ABA generally, but not always, have their own political action committees. However, individual corporations of the AGC generally do not have their own PACs, although there are exceptions.

<sup>10</sup>Handler and Mulkern (1982) make a comparable finding with respect to allocation decisions of corporate PACs. In 14 of 70 PACs surveyed, allocation decisions were said to be made by "nonspecialist amateurs."

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association PAC provides an extensive grassroots  
network through which contributions can be  
raised. Each national PAC has, in effect, a  
dedicated core of local activists who bear much of  
the responsibility for soliciting individual con-  
tributions. These local activists are neither profes-  
sional lobbyists nor full-time, salaried officials of  
the PAC, but rather political amateurs, such as  
professional bankers, physicians, and realtors,  
who happen to have a strong interest in politics  
and who take an active role in the local PAC  
organization.

Because these activists operate at the local level  
through small constituent groups, solidary incen-  
tives (e.g., Salisbury, 1969) can be used effectively  
to stimulate membership. Instead of offering  
selective material incentives (e.g., Olson,  
1965/1971), the basic approach to fundraising is  
to make persuasive appeals to an individual's  
sense of *citizen or professional* duty—the oppor-  
tunity and obligation to join with other members  
of one's profession in order to create and sustain a  
political environment that is favorable to the  
maintenance and growth of the profession or in-  
dustry. One PAC official characterized this ap-  
proach as "an appeal to professional responsibil-  
ity," and he stated that "it's how you market that  
approach that determines how successful you are  
going to be."

Persuasive appeals are made in a variety of  
ways: through direct mailings, presentations and  
speeches at small gatherings of staff and  
employees, phone calls, and personal visits.  
Because persuasive appeals of this sort are most  
effective when made in person, or in small group  
settings, the basic fundraising approach of the  
association PACs is ideally suited to a decentral-  
ized organizational structure. In fact, it is doubt-  
ful whether such an approach could be im-  
plemented successfully in any arrangement other  
than a decentralized one.

But in addition to persuasive appeals, the PACs  
also emphasize the effectiveness and legitimacy of  
contributing money to the PAC. PACs, it is  
argued, can and do influence election outcomes,  
and PACs frequently publish figures that em-  
phasize the percentage of winning candidates they  
have supported. PAC officials also are quite sen-  
sitive to the perceived legitimacy of PACs, and  
they devote considerable effort—through  
speeches, cooperation with the news media, writ-  
ten editorials, and similar means—to stimulate  
contributions by portraying PACs in a positive  
light.<sup>13</sup>

The notion that large groups can be organized

<sup>13</sup>Additional discussion of the fundraising methods of  
the association PACs can be found in Wright (1984).

on the basis of factors other than selective  
material incentives is certainly consistent with the  
theoretical work of other scholars. Even Olson  
(1965/1971) has pointed out that federal groups  
may be able to bring about collective action  
through social incentives in the small constituent  
groups, and Moe (1980) has argued that

[It] would be a serious mistake to "understand"  
organizational politics by automatically pointing  
to whatever organizational structures exist for  
the production and distribution of economic  
selective incentives. Organizations can do much  
more than this to attract members, and attention  
must clearly be given to other means of  
generating support: e.g., the ideological appeals  
of leaders; peer and leader emphasis on respon-  
sibility or fairness; the structuring of meetings,  
committees or social activities; the organiza-  
tional generation of social pressure; leader ef-  
forts to convince individuals that their contribu-  
tions make a difference; and the role of news-  
letters and informal communications networks in  
shaping member perceptions and values.

### Implications for Allocation Strategies

The great dependence on local activists of the  
PAC for raising money significantly enhances  
their influence over decisions about how to  
allocate money to political candidates. National  
officials of the PAC are acutely aware of the need  
to respect local recommendations when allocation  
decisions are made. To do otherwise would reduce  
the incentives of local officials to raise money. In  
an outline of guidelines for establishing an effec-  
tive state PAC organization, one national PAC  
makes the following suggestion.

Although [statewide] contribution decisions  
must finally be made by the state PAC, proper  
recognition of the role of leaders of local PAC  
support groups and others should be given. *This  
is the key to a harmonious PAC program, and an  
important stimulus to membership development.*  
(emphasis added)

The national executive director of another PAC  
explained that:

If we have someone who raised 10,000 dollars at  
the local level, but wants to support someone  
who we don't think is especially deserving, we  
will usually go along with him. If we didn't, he  
might not raise that kind of money for us the  
next time around.

And an official from still a different PAC sum-  
med it up this way: "They [the local officials]  
raise the money; they ought to be the ones who  
spend it."

These observations suggest that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the best allocation strategy for the association PACs is a Type I rather than a Type II strategy. The dominance of local inputs emphasizes electoral considerations rather than lobbying considerations, because local PAC officials are much more likely to be familiar with electoral politics of geographic constituencies than with the mechanics of influencing legislation in the Congress. In addition, because allocation decisions are shaped largely by local PAC officials, congressmen who desire campaign contributions are better advised to cultivate favorable relationships with prominent local PAC officials than with Washington lobbyists. This arrangement tends to undercut substantially the value of money as a bargaining tool for professional lobbyists, thereby undermining the effectiveness of a Type II allocation strategy.

#### Contribution Patterns in Five PACs: Empirical Analysis

The fact that allocation decisions are dominated by local officials leads to testable propositions about allocation strategies and the impact of campaign contributions on congressmen's voting decisions. Specifically, the weak influence of Washington lobbyists relative to the strong influence of local PAC officials suggests that PACs' campaign contributions will be used to elect ideologically sympathetic candidates in close races rather than alter the policy positions of not-so-sympathetic candidates in safe races. As a consequence, campaign contributions are not likely to carry substantial weight in congressmen's roll call voting decisions. These two propositions are examined in this section and the next with the use of data on campaign contributions during the 1979-1980 and 1981-1982 election cycles, along with roll calls from the House during the 97th Congress.

In the analysis that follows, inferences about PACs' allocation strategies are made from information about the characteristics of the candidates to whom the PACs contribute. Under a Type I strategy, as defined previously, priority for contributions is given to congressmen who have the "correct" ideology and to those who face tough electoral competition. Under a Type II strategy, priority for contributions is given to likely winners who are influential within Congress. Theoretically, then, these three factors—ideology, institutional influence, and electoral security—can be used to distinguish between allocation strategies.

The measurement of institutional influence is accomplished through a cluster of variables indicating committee assignments and leadership positions within the party. The relationship be-

tween this cluster of variables and a Type II allocation strategy has been recognized by Green (1979).

Special interest investors, who would not dream of pouring their money into dud stocks, are equally careful when it comes to choosing their legislative portfolios. A freshman legislator with a seat on a dull committee won't cost much, but won't yield much return either. The logical result is that the money goes to the men who rule Congress—the members of key committees, the party leaders of each of the houses, and the committee chairmen (pp. 10-11).

The committee variables included in the present analysis are: AGRICULTURE, APPROPRIATIONS, BANKING, COMMERCE, JUDICIARY, and WAYS AND MEANS. These six committee variables were selected on the basis of the interviews with the PAC officials, who were asked explicitly whether or not members of certain committees were targeted routinely for contributions. Officials of BANKPAC mentioned Banking, Ways and Means, Agriculture, Commerce, Judiciary, and Appropriations, in that order of priority. An official of the realtors' PAC indicated that Ways and Means was sometimes important, and Commerce was mentioned by an official of DEAC. Neither AMPAC nor AGCPAC claimed to give special consideration to members of any particular committee. In addition to membership on these committees, institutional influence is also measured by whether or not a representative is a party leader (REP LEADER, DEM LEADER) or a committee or subcommittee chairman (CHAIRMAN). Complete definitions of these and other variables are given in the Appendix.

The ideology factor is operationalized through another cluster of variables—the congressman's party affiliation (PARTY) and his score on the Americans for Democratic Action index of voting in 1979 (ADA79). And the electoral competition factor is measured by the closeness of the candidate's race and the electoral experience of his or her challenger (NEED).<sup>14</sup> In addition, the NEED variable involves the interaction between ideology and competition, because ideology should be a more important factor under a Type I strategy when competition is strong.

<sup>14</sup>A congressman was determined to have had strong competition if he or she received less than 60% of the vote in a two-way race in 1978, or if the challenger in 1980 had held any elective office before the 1980 congressional election. Information on the experience of challengers was taken from "The 1980 Elections," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, Supplement, October 11, 1980, pp. 2965-3092.

The importance of fluence, and electoral allocation patterns whether a PAC uses a Type I or Type II strategy. Under a Type I strategy, campaign contributions should be larger for PACs with greater electoral net ADA scores. If a Type II strategy is used, coefficients for PACs should be large and positive, and ADA79 scores denominated by the institutional influence coefficients for the PACs should all be negative. Larger contributions should be associated with institutional influence positions, and less so with the coefficient for the party leader variable. If positive, it should be dominant. Similar to the party leader variable, it should be small, but all of the coefficients should be large and positive.

These hypotheses are tested using total contributions (in actual dollars) in actual dollars during the 1979-1980 and 1981-1982 election cycles of the explanatory variables in the regression analyses.

Generally, the six variables are more consistent than for the other variables. The six variables are always positive, indicating more money to contribute with them ideologically.

Variable
Intercept
AGRICULTURE
APPROPRIATION
BANKING
COMMERCE
JUDICIARY
WAYS AND MEANS
CHAIRMAN
REP LEADER
DEM LEADER
PARTY
ADA
NEED
R SQUARE
N = 385

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The importance of ideology, institutional in-  
fluence, and electoral security for predicting  
allocation patterns should vary depending on  
whether a PAC uses a Type I or a Type II alloca-  
tion strategy. Under a Type I strategy, larger cam-  
paign contributions should be associated with  
greater electoral need and more conservative  
ADA scores. If a Type I strategy is dominant, the  
coefficients for PARTY and NEED should be  
large and positive, and the coefficient for ADA79  
should be large and negative (because high  
ADA79 scores denote liberalism). Also, the coef-  
ficients for the institutional influence variables  
should all be negative. Under a Type II strategy,  
larger contributions should be associated with in-  
stitutional influence, less conservative ideological  
positions, and less competitive races. Although  
the coefficient for ADA79 will not necessarily be  
positive, it should be small if a Type II strategy is  
dominant. Similarly, the NEED coefficient  
should be small, but not necessarily negative, and  
all of the coefficients for institutional influence  
should be large and positive.

These hypotheses were tested by regressing the  
total contributions (minus independent expen-  
ditures) in actual dollars for each of the five PACs  
during the 1979-1980 election cycle on all twelve  
of the explanatory variables. The results of the  
regression analyses appear in Table 1.

Generally, the signs of the coefficients in Table  
1 are more consistent for the ideology and need  
variables than for the committee and leadership  
variables. The sign of the NEED coefficient is  
always positive, indicating that all five PACs gave  
more money to candidates who generally agreed  
with them ideologically and who faced tough elec-

tion fights. Similarly, the sign of the ADA coeffi-  
cient is always negative, which indicates a clear  
preference among all five PACs for conservative  
candidates. Also, with the exception of DEAC, all  
five PACs gave more money to Republican than  
to Democratic candidates. The coefficients for the  
committee and leadership variables, however, do  
not exhibit such clear patterns. As expected,  
BANKPAC favored members of the Banking and  
Ways and Means Committees, and DEAC clearly  
favored members of the Commerce Committee.  
But otherwise, there is little clear evidence that  
committee and leadership positions elicited larger  
contributions.<sup>15</sup>

Overall, then, the results of the regression  
analyses tend to provide greater support for a  
Type I allocation strategy than for a Type II  
strategy. The general pattern is for larger con-  
tributions to go to sympathetic candidates who  
need money rather than to candidates who are on  
influential committees or in positions of party

<sup>14</sup>Tests of statistical significance have been omitted  
here because there is no reason to believe that they  
would be meaningful. Significance tests are meaningful  
only when observations have been selected randomly  
from a larger population or when it can be assumed that  
the universe from which they have been selected is nor-  
mally distributed. The universe of interest here is all  
Congresses from 1974 to 1980, because 1974 marked the  
first year that the FEC required full disclosure of cam-  
paign expenditures. But the observations of this study  
have not been selected randomly from this universe, and  
the Congresses since 1974 are certainly not normally  
distributed with respect to relevant variables, because  
they have all been controlled by Democrats.

Table 1. Regression Results for Contributions to Incumbents

Variable	AGCPAC	AMPAC	BANKPAC	DEAC	RPAC
Intercept	245.1	2354.1	864.5	2163.1	3222.8
AGRICULTURE	-51.2	-118.9	409.5	-148.8	555.8
APPROPRIATIONS	-154.0	-365.3	17.2	12.5	-624.2
BANKING	-109.6	-405.8	1281.4	200.8	589.4
COMMERCE	-139.4	172.1	157.8	977.6	-40.7
JUDICIARY	-139.2	580.8	-196.2	86.0	73.7
WAYS AND MEANS	11.8	-225.8	963.6	372.1	-292.4
CHAIRMAN	70.8	-608.2	580.6	575.3	-401.8
REP LEADER	11.6	-475.5	562.4	369.6	195.2
DEM LEADER	178.8	-176.6	-102.2	631.5	-432.8
PARTY	121.5	196.7	13.9	-219.2	84.3
ADA	-2.0	-23.2	-7.9	-22.8	-33.6
NEED	423.6	1739.9	209.8	930.0	1153.0
R SQUARE	.17	.33	.23	.24	.41

N = 385

Table 2. Predicted Contributions to Different Types of Congressmen

	Congressman A (conservative, non-leader, competitive)	Congressman B (moderate/liberal, leader, safe)
	\$ 740	\$ 223
AGCPAC	3709	0
AMPAC	891	2981
BANKPAC	2304	2857
DEAC	3619	0
RPAC		\$1212
Mean	\$2253	

leadership. Only the coefficients for the ideology and need variables, not the influence variables, are consistently strong and in the right direction. These are precisely the results one would expect when allocation decisions are dominated by local inputs.

The results in Table 1 can be carried a step further by using the regression coefficients to make predictions of the actual dollar amounts allocated under each type of strategy. Such an exercise yields a more concrete picture of allocation patterns—a picture in terms of dollar amounts rather than OLS coefficients.

The prediction of actual dollar amounts that follows is based on a conception of two hypothetical kinds of congressmen. One kind, Congressman A, is intended to represent the ideal target for a Type I allocation; the other, Congressman B, the ideal target for a Type II allocation. Let Congressman A be a rank-and-file, conservative, Republican congressman from a competitive electoral district. Let Congressman B be a member of a strategic committee (Ways and Means and Banking for the ABA, Commerce for the auto dealers), a committee or subcommittee chairman, a Democratic House leader, a liberal, and electorally secure. Then, a PAC that uses a Type I allocation strategy should give larger contributions to Congressman A, and a PAC that uses a Type II strategy should give larger contributions to Congressman B.

The entries in Table 2 are the dollar amounts that each PAC, on the basis of its allocation strategy, is predicted to give to each kind of congressman.<sup>14</sup> Of the five PACs, only BANKPAC

clearly places highest priority on a Type II allocation strategy.<sup>17</sup> Even though DEAC is predicted to give slightly more money to Congressman B, the PAC is also predicted to give a substantial contribution to Congressman A. Each of the other three PACs, however, is predicted to give a substantially larger contribution to Congressman A than to a Congressman B, and on average across all five PACs, Congressman A is predicted to receive almost twice as large a campaign contribution as Congressman B. These results are quite consistent with the hypothesis that allocation decisions are a function of local discretion in the allocation process.

### Campaign Contributions and Roll Call Votes

Two necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for PAC contributions to influence roll call votes are that PACs allocate money with the intent of influencing roll calls, and congressmen are aware of that intent. The evidence presented thus far, however, suggests quite clearly that neither of these conditions will be satisfied. The evidence indicates that money is given with the intent of influencing election outcomes, not specific roll calls, and that congressmen and their staffs must cultivate relationships with local PAC officials, not Washington lobbyists. As a result, a strong

provides an appropriate functional form, was also used to estimate coefficients for the independent variables. However, the results did not differ in any systematic ways from the OLS results, so the more familiar OLS results have been presented here.

<sup>17</sup>BANKPAC also has the most centralized structure of the five PACs for making allocation decisions. The Washington office sends out a computer listing to all state PAC organizations with recommended contributions to all candidates. These recommendations are based primarily on the congressman's committee assignment, and local PAC officials usually, but not always, follow these recommendations.

<sup>14</sup>The entries under Congressman B for AMPAC and RPAC have been entered as "0" rather than the negative values (-370 and -216) that actually were predicted. The reason for the negative values is that OLS is an inappropriate functional form when the dependent variable is truncated normal—that is, when there is a lower bound (i.e., zero contributions) with a large concentration of values, but no such concentration at the upper bound. Tobit analysis (Tobin, 1958), which

causal relationship between and roll calls is unlikely.

To assess the influence of roll call decisions in the 97th Congress—or one of the more important—of the five PACs for each of the five PACs, information on analysis. Information on obtained through committee association officials and lobbying priorities of the *Congressional Quarterly*.

The most important vote in the 97th Congress was the Federal Trade Commission's decision to force used-car dealers to inform consumers of defects in used automobiles. The House adopted a resolution to disapprove the FTC's decision.

A crucial vote for the House was a vote on consideration of the Act (HR6211). A close vote on the Ways and Means tax act, and the AGO from fear that an open vote on the act would result in the House adopting a resolution on December 6.

Votes on the Gramm-Latta-II bill were important to the Gramm-Latta-II bill and opposed a rule change. The lower spending cuts 210-217 vote (HR3).

For the AMA, an amendment to exclude in particular—from succeeded in getting passed in the House in December, 1982. Finally, an in (although not as progress) was a vote on taxes on interest.

ABA opposed the 1983 tax bill exclude the with

<sup>18</sup>Unfortunately, realtors as one of the groups of contribution groups. For a Fair (1981).



## Congressmen

Congressman B  
(moderate/liberal, leader, safe)

\$ 223

0

2981

2857

0

\$1212

est priority on a Type II allocation though DEAC is predicted to money to Congressman B, the cted to give a substantial congressman A. Each of the other ever, is predicted to give a contribution to Congressman gressman B, and on average s, Congressman A is predicted wice as large a campaign congressman B. These results are ith the hypothesis that allocation function of local discretion in ss.

## Contributions and Roll Call Votes

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has the most centralized structure making allocation decisions. The ends out a computer listing to all ions with recommended contributions. These recommendations are e congressman's committee assign- officials usually, but not always, endations.

causal relationship between PAC contributions and roll calls is unlikely.

To assess the influence of contributions on roll call decisions in the 97th Congress, the most important—or one of the most important—roll calls for each of the five PACs was selected for analysis. Information on important roll calls was obtained through communication with PAC and association officials and through a review of the lobbying priorities of each group as reported in the *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Reports*.

The most important vote for the NADA in the 97th Congress was the vote to overturn the Federal Trade Commission's rule that required used-car dealers to inform customers of known defects in used automobiles. On May 6, 1982, the House adopted a concurrent resolution (286-133) to disapprove the FTC rule.

A crucial vote for the Associated General Contractors was a vote on the rule governing floor consideration of the Transportation Assistance Act (HR6211). A closed rule was assigned to a Ways and Means tax package to be amended to the act, and the AGC supported the closed rule from fear that an open rule might destroy all prospects of passing a highway bill in any form. The House adopted a resolution approving the closed rule on December 6, 1982, by a 197-194 vote.

Votes on the Gramm-Latta budget proposal were important to the National Association of Realtors.<sup>11</sup> The realtors favored as deep a slowdown in the growth of spending as possible and opposed a rule governing consideration of Gramm-Latta-II that would have encouraged lower spending cuts. The rule was overturned by a 210-217 vote (HR3982) on June 25, 1981.

For the AMA, the critical vote was on an amendment to exempt professionals—physicians in particular—from FTC regulation. The AMA succeeded in getting the amendment (HR6995) passed in the House by a 245-155 vote margin in December, 1982, but the amendment subsequently failed in the Senate.

Finally, an important vote to the bankers (although not as important as in the next Congress) was a vote concerning the withholding of taxes on interest income from bank accounts. The ABA opposed a closed rule for consideration of the 1983 tax bill in hopes of amending the bill to exclude the withholding provision. On August 19,

<sup>11</sup>Unfortunately, this issue is not as specific to the realtors as one might wish. It is a more general bill and, therefore, does not provide as strong a test of the effects of contributions as the bills selected for the other groups. For a discussion of the realtors' position, see Fair (1981).

1982, the bankers ended up on the losing side of a 220-210 vote on the rule (HR4961).

Each congressman's votes on these issues was recorded, and various predictor variables, including PAC contributions, were collected in order to examine the impact of campaign contributions on roll call votes, with other factors held constant. The full array of predictor variables fall into four general categories: constituency demographics (URBAN, BLUE COLLAR, INCOME, REAGAN), region (EAST, MIDWEST, WEST, SOUTH), ideology (ADA79, ADA81, PARTY), and contributions. Full definitions of these variables are given in the appendix.

The use of these particular independent variables to predict roll calls can be justified on several grounds. The inclusion of the demographic, or constituency, variables is justified in that demographic characteristics serve as rough indicators of some of the basic needs and concerns of constituents. Fenno (1978), for example, reports that congressmen frequently discuss demographic factors when talking about their constituencies. Even though the basic needs and concerns of a constituency are much more complex and heterogeneous than allowed for by demographic variables, the absence of better measures helps justify their inclusion (Clausen, 1973).

Because the demographic factors are rather firmly fixed, whatever needs or preferences they represent can be assumed to be longstanding. In order to capture some of the more immediate or short-term policy concerns of voters in the district, the variable for support of Reagan in 1980, REAGAN, has been included. Presumably, this variable represents constituency support for the policies of the president or the president's party. Even though it is true that some voters cast their ballots devoid of any policy considerations, congressmen may perceive that the presidential vote percentage is an indicator of voters' policy preferences. If so, congressmen may be reluctant to vote against a bill supported by the president if the president appears to have considerable support in the district, and empirical studies indicate that this is sometimes the case (Erikson & Wright, 1980; Kau & Rubin, 1982).

The region variables have been included to account for differences in outlook and behavior resulting from geographic and environmental constraints. The South, Midwest, East, and West have differed historically with regard to agricultural, environmental, and industrial concerns. Because of the geographic basis of representation in American politics, a congressman's first responsibility is usually to his district, not to the nation as a whole, and as a result, the geographic differences among districts should be



reflected in congressmen's voting decisions (Jackson, 1974).

The ADA variables have been included as general measures of a congressman's ideological orientation. ADA79 is used to predict votes in the first session of the 97th Congress, and ADA81 is used to predict votes in the second session. The ADA score is a composite measure that reflects numerous voting decisions on different types of issues. Because the ADA score used here is always from the session preceding the vote being analyzed, it provides the most recent snapshot of the congressman's voting behavior. This snapshot captures not only a bit of the congressman's own personal ideological leaning, but also reflects the shared ideology of the congressman and his constituents. Because most congressmen have lived a good portion of their lives in the districts they represent, the beliefs of constituents and the beliefs of the congressman are likely to be similar owing to the common roots of both, and the ADA score is presumed to reflect these beliefs.

The contribution variables indicate the actual dollars contributed by each PAC to each congressman. Ideally, these variables should be weighted by their importance to the congressman, because all congressmen are not likely to attach the same significance to each dollar received. But because the factors that make a contribution particularly important are likely to be highly idiosyncratic across all congressmen, no weighting has been attempted in the following analysis. For some congressmen, an early contribution might be important in that it helps stimulate subsequent contributions; but for others, a late contribution might be more important, especially if the race is

close. In some cases, a contribution might stand out if it is one of just a few contributions; but in other cases, if only a few contributions are received, none of them may have any significance.

Each congressman's vote on each of the five roll calls was predicted on the basis of the explanatory variables through a logistic estimation technique. The results of the logit analysis appear in Table 3.<sup>19</sup> The entries in Table 3 are logit coefficients which indicate the change in the log odds of voting "yea" given a unit change in an independent variable, the other independent variables remaining constant. The preferred position was "Yea" for all groups but BANKPAC and RPAC. With the exception of the sign for AGC, all the signs of the coefficients indicate that contributions increased the probability of voting in the direction preferred by the contributing group. One explanation for the reversal of the sign for the AGCPAC coefficient is that the AGC gave

<sup>19</sup>Since the votes for AGCPAC and AMPAC occurred after the 1982 election, during the lame-duck session, 1982 contribution data were used. The Ns for the DEAC and BANKPAC equations include all members of the 97th Congress who were elected in 1980 and voted on the resolutions. The N for the RPAC equation includes only members of both the 96th and 97th Congresses who voted on the motion. Since this vote occurred relatively early in the first session of the 97th, there were not enough votes to construct an ADA score for the congressmen first elected in 1980. Hence they were excluded from the analysis. The Ns for the AGC and AMA equations include all members of the 97th Congress who were elected in 1980 with the exclusion of 54 lame duck congressmen.

Table 3. Logit Results for Contributions and Roll Calls

Variable	Roll Call Vote for				
	AGCPAC	AMPAC	BANKPAC	DEAC	RPAC
CONSTANT	-5.934	1.423	-2.2992	2.219	8.947
URBAN	0.034	-0.13	0.014	-0.050	-0.009
BLUE COLLAR	0.049	0.034	0.030	0.0006	-0.038
INCOME	0.00019	-0.00002	0.0001	0.00023	-0.0003
REAGAN	-0.006	0.040	0.006	0.066	-0.078
EAST	0.741	-1.326	-0.634	-1.366	-1.746
MIDWEST	-0.139	-1.579	0.031	-0.330	0.480
WEST	0.652	-0.583	0.292	0.531	-1.982
SOUTH	0.567	-0.615	0.524	0.897	-2.204
ADA	0.007	-0.054	0.002	-0.060	0.100
PARTY	-0.838	-0.182	-0.796	-0.507	-7.189
CONTRIBUTION	-0.00023	0.00027	-0.00004	0.00024	-0.00006
N	348	358	419	416	347
-2 log L	369.41	226.4	537.4	211.69	82.96

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for AGCPAC and AMPAC oc- 2 election, during the lame-duck ses- tion data were used. The Ns for the PAC equations include all members who were elected in 1980 and voted. The N for the RPAC equation in- rs of both the 96th and 97th Con- n the motion. Since this vote occur- n the first session of the 97th, there tes to construct an ADA score for st elected in 1980. Hence they were analysis. The Ns for the AGC and lude all members of the 97th Con- ted in 1980 with the exclusion of 58 men.

#### Roll Calls

for	
DEAC	RPAC
2.219	8.947
-0.050	-0.009
0.0006	-0.038
0.00023	-0.0003
0.066	-0.078
-1.366	-1.746
-0.330	0.480
0.531	-1.982
0.897	-2.204
-0.060	0.100
-0.507	-7.189
0.00024	-0.00006
416	347
211.69	82.96

most of its money to conservative Republicans who happened to oppose the rule because of their objections to any tax increases at the time. This finding, however, merely underscores the fact that the congressmen who received money from the AGC voted on the basis of their ideological and partisan convictions, not on the basis of contribu- tions.

With a little manipulation, the logit coefficients can be combined with values of the independent variables to yield predicted probabilities of voting with a contributing group's position. Two prob- abilities of voting with the contributing group were computed for each congressman. One prob- ability was based on the actual contribution re- ceived by the congressman, together with his or her actual values on the remaining independent variables. The other probability was based on a theoretical contribution of zero dollars, with no change in the other independent variables. The difference between these two probabilities in- dicates the theoretical increase in the probability of voting with the contributing group associated with a campaign contribution.

The mean increases in the differences between these two probabilities are reported in Table 4. Each entry in the table indicates the average (over all congressmen in the analysis) change in the predicted probability of voting with the con- tributing group's preferred position as a result of a campaign contribution. For example, if the auto dealers had made no campaign contributions in 1979-1980, then, on average, each congressman's probability of voting to overturn the FTC regula- tion on used cars would have been lowered by .019 (e.g., from a .6 probability of supporting the NADA to a probability of support of .581). Clearly, the changes reported in Table 4 are rather paltry. The mean of the means across all five groups is a mere .0096. Moreover, in none of the cases were the effects of contributions great enough to change the voting outcome.<sup>20</sup>

The actual results in Table 4 are quite consistent with the anticipated results, which were that the relationships between campaign contributions and roll calls would be weak. This is clearly the case. In none of the five cases examined were campaign contributions an important enough force to change the legislative outcomes from what they would have been without any contributions.

Even more important, though, to the extent that the PACs under investigation here are among the most influential PACs, the effects exhibited

<sup>20</sup>This was determined by counting the number of congressmen on each roll call whose probability of support changed from less than .5 to greater or equal to .5 because of the contribution received.

Table 4. Mean Change in Probability of Voting with Contributing Group due to Difference between Zero Contributions and Actual Contributions

Political Action Committee	Change in Probability
AGCPAC	-.022
AMPAC	.038
BANKPAC	.007
DEAC	.019
RPAC	.006
Mean	.0096

by their contributions should be among the largest effects that campaign contributions can exert on roll call voting decisions. Results that scholars have labelled "substantial" or "significant," therefore, are substantial and significant only in the sense that they characterize the upper limits of PAC influence. But these upper limits pale in comparison to the unbounded influence that many scholars, journalists, and politicians have imputed to PACs.

Finally, as I suggested earlier, there is a sound theoretical reason for not expecting campaign contributions to exert effects on roll call voting any larger than those reported in Tables 3 and 4. Very simply, the organizational arrangements in which PACs raise and allocate money impose strong constraints on the ability of PACs to in- fluence congressional voting through their cam- paign contributions. Thus, any time the fund- raising operation and the locus of decision- making are structured as they are in the PACs of this study, contributions are not likely to carry much weight in congressional voting decisions.

#### Conclusions

The major finding of this research is that the ability of PACs to use their campaign contribu- tions to influence congressional voting is severely constrained by the organizational arrangements through which money is raised. Paradoxically, the organizational arrangement that allows PACs to raise and allocate large sums of money also restricts their ability to influence roll calls. Because money must be raised at a local, grassroots level, local PAC officials, not Washington lobbyists, are primarily responsible for making allocation decisions. Consequently, congressmen who desire contributions must cultivate favorable relationships with local of- ficials, and this arrangement tends to undercut the value of contributions as a bargaining tool for professional lobbyists.

This finding is significant in two respects. First, in contrast to previous analyses, this analysis has

demonstrated with marked clarity the limited nature of PAC influence. Of the numerous variables that influence the voting behavior of congressmen, the campaign contributions of PACs appear to take substantial effect only infrequently. Only when other cues, such as party, are weak can PAC contributions be expected to be important. The results presented here cannot support a claim that PACs never have, or never will, determine voting outcomes, but they do indicate the probable rarity of such influence.

Second, I have formulated an explanation for the limited nature of the influence of PAC contributions. This explanation adds a very substantial degree of confidence to the empirical results. Moreover, it moves the analysis in the direction of a more general understanding of the relationship between PAC campaign contributions and roll calls. Future efforts to understand roll calls in terms of campaign contributions should benefit substantially from a consideration of the organizational arrangements of PACs.

Additional tests of the explanation presented here need to be conducted. Not only is it important to investigate the frequency with which the organizational structures of the five PACs studied

here characterize other PACs, but it is also important to explore the implications of quite different organizational arrangements—for example, the organization of “institutional” groups (Salisbury, 1984) or the differences between nascent and mature organizations (Hayes, 1981). Evidence of systematic and predictable differences across different organizational arrangements would put the explanation on even firmer ground.

Finally, evidence of the relative inability of PACs to determine congressional voting should not be construed as evidence that PACs in no way matter. The growth of PACs may have altered the way congressmen allocate their scarce resources of staff and time. Today, congressmen must spend a great deal of time courting past and potential contributors to their campaigns. If such efforts drain members' resources and energies so thoroughly that they can no longer devote themselves properly to important political issues and to formulating sound public policy, then prevailing methods of campaign finance might be considered highly inappropriate. The purpose of this article, however, has been neither to endorse PACs nor to indict them, but only to improve understanding of them.

### Appendix

Variables Used for Predicting Contributions (Table 1)

#### Institutional Influence

AGRICULTURE

APPROPRIATIONS

BANKING

COMMERCE

JUDICIARY

WAYS AND MEANS

REP LEADER

DEM LEADER

CHAIRMAN

#### Ideology

PARTY

ADA79

#### Electoral Need

NEED

1 if the incumbent was a member of the Agriculture Committee in the 96th Congress; 0 otherwise.

1 if the incumbent was a member of the Appropriations Committee; 0 otherwise.

1 if the incumbent was a member of the Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs Committee; 0 otherwise.

1 if the incumbent was a member of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee; 0 otherwise.

1 if the incumbent was a member of the Judiciary Committee; 0 otherwise.

1 if the incumbent was a member of the Ways and Means Committee; 0 otherwise.

1 if the incumbent was a floor leader, chairman or secretary of the party caucus or conference, a whip, deputy whip, or assistant whip; 0 otherwise.

same as for REP LEADER.

1 if the incumbent chaired a standing or select committee; 0 otherwise.

1 if the incumbent is a Republican; 0 if a Democrat.

the incumbent's score on the Americans for Democratic Action index in 1979; a score of 0 indicates conservatism; a score of 100 indicates liberalism.

1 if the incumbent was ideologically sympathetic to the PAC's policy goals (ADA79 less than or equal to 50) and faced strong electoral competition; 0 if the incumbent was not sympathetic or did not face strong competition.

1985

### APPENDIX (c)

Constituency  
URBAN

BLUE CC  
INCOME  
REAGAN

Region  
EAST

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WEST

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Ideology  
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ze other PACs, but it is also impor-  
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ence of the relative inability of  
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d as evidence that PACs in no way  
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Today, congressmen must spend a  
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er campaigns. If such efforts drain  
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o longer devote themselves prop-  
ant political issues and to for-  
l public policy, then prevailing  
paign finance might be considered  
riate. The purpose of this article,  
en neither to endorse PACs nor to  
only to improve understanding of

able 1)

the Agriculture Committee in the 96th

Appropriations Committee; 0 other-

Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs

the Interstate and Foreign Commerce

the Judiciary Committee; 0 otherwise.

the Ways and Means Committee; 0

chairman or secretary of the party  
ship, or assistant whip; 0 otherwise.

r select committee; 0 otherwise.

a Democrat.

ns for Democratic Action index in  
; a score of 100 indicates liberalism.

mpathetic to the PAC's policy goals  
ed strong electoral competition; 0 if  
did not face strong competition.

# APPENDIX (continued)

## Variables Used for Predicting Roll Calls (Table 3)

### Constituency Demographics

#### URBAN

the percentage of residents in a district living in urban areas (as defined by the Bureau of the Census).

#### BLUE COLLAR

the percentage of blue collar workers in a district.

#### INCOME

the median income of a district.

#### REAGAN

the percentage of the presidential vote in a district in 1980 for Ronald Reagan.

### Region

#### EAST

1 if a district is in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or Delaware; 0 otherwise.

#### MIDWEST

1 if Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas; 0 otherwise.

#### WEST

1 if Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Hawaii; 0 otherwise.

#### SOUTH

1 if Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas; 0 otherwise.

#### (BORDER)

(Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Maryland, West Virginia).

### Ideology

#### ADA79

the congressman's rating from the Americans for Democratic Action during the second session of the 96th Congress.

#### ADA81

the congressman's ADA rating from the first session of the 97th Congress.

#### PARTY

1 if a Republican; 0 if a Democrat.

### Contributions

#### AGCPAC

total contributions from AGCPAC during the 1981-1982 election cycle.

#### AMPAC

total contributions from AMPAC during the 1981-1982 election cycle.

#### BANKPAC

total contributions from BANKPAC during the 1979-1980 election cycle.

#### DEAC

total contributions from DEAC during the 1979-1980 election cycle.

#### RPAC

total contributions from RPAC during the 1979-1980 election cycle.

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