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Legislating Versus Campaigning: The Legislative Behavior of Higher Office-Seekers

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Abstract

How does a campaign for higher office affect legislators' behavior on the floor of the House? I argue that legislators with progressive ambition have incentives to demonstrate policy specialization; however, these incentives are mitigated when ambitious legislators campaign for higher office. I develop a measure of policy specialization from floor speeches and test hypotheses with data from the careers of five classes of representatives in the U.S. House. Results show that higher office-seekers demonstrate greater specialization, except when they run for higher office.

Keywords

House of Representatives, progressive ambition, legislative behavior, floor speeches, U.S. Congress, electoral incentives

How should we expect strategic legislators who campaign for higher office to adjust their legislative behavior? On one hand, we know that representatives with ambition for higher office tend to be highly active legislators—so

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perhaps we should expect them to maintain their eagerness for being a successful legislator while they simultaneously pursue a higher legislative office (Herrick & Moore, 1993). On the other hand, a legislator who attempts to solicit a new set of constituents while providing representation to a smaller subset of these constituents, may face some dilemmas in determining which set of constituents to heed. Indeed, House members who seek higher office may be torn between their desire to demonstrate their policy expertise by showing their depth of knowledge on subjects and their need to reveal their breadth of interests so they can appeal to wide swaths of a new electorate. How can such legislators display depth and breadth simultaneously?

While we should expect there to be considerable overlap in the preexisting incentives associated with a legislator's current position and new incentives associated with a higher office, it is conceivable that such legislators could face conflicts between what would be best for her current constituents and what would be the best strategic move for the campaign for statewide or national office. Therefore the primary question of this research is "How does a legislator's ambition for higher office affect her legislative behavior?"

While all legislators have incentives to demonstrate themselves as highly competent and interested in pursuing policies that are relevant to constituents, higher office-seekers' incentives vary from the less-ambitious because they take the policy interests of their *potential* constituents into account. In this article, I argue that it is electorally advantageous for legislators to demonstrate their competence by exhibiting policy specialization throughout their career and that progressively ambitious legislators have stronger incentives to develop these positive reputations than those who never seek higher office. The highly structured institutions of the U.S. House make it difficult for individual legislators to stand out and to develop widespread, positive reputations; therefore, we should expect motivated legislators to seek opportunities to exhibit policy specialization and find evidence of such in their legislative behavior (Hall, 1996). Moreover, when a sitting legislator actively *campaigns* for higher office, she will strategically alter her legislative behavior to appeal to a broader audience. Therefore, I expect that higher office-seekers should demonstrate greater policy specialization than those who never seek higher office throughout their career, *except* in the term in which they actively seek (campaign for) higher office. During a campaign for higher office, we should expect these ambitious legislators to engage in legislative and electoral behavior that will appeal to a constituency that is larger and more diverse than a single congressional district. Legislator-candidates can do this by displaying a wide breadth of policy knowledge.

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Progressive Ambition and Legislative Behavior

While scholars have learned a great deal about the *causes* of ambition for higher office, we know less about the *consequences* of progressive ambition.[1] Legislators who seek higher office have an electoral incentive to court a constituency that is larger, and likely more diverse, than their congressional district. To do so, they change their legislative behavior. Hibbing (1986) shows that the progressively ambitious alter their roll call voting behavior in anticipation of a run for higher office (but see also Herrick, 2001). We also know that senators who seek the presidency will change their voting behavior to be more in line with the party median (Van der Slik & Pernacciaro, 1979). Those with ambition for higher office have been shown to be more responsive to public opinion than those who do not seek higher office (Maestas, 2003). In addition, a study by Herrick, Moore, and Hibbing (1994) shows that members running for election, but not necessarily higher office, are more legislatively active than those not running. Likewise, Rothenberg and Sanders (2000) find empirical support for both ideological and participatory shirking (voting differently and less often) when members are known to be leaving office (see also Lindstadt & Vander Wielen, 2010; but see Carson et al., 2004).

The most relevant study on this topic shows that those with progressive ambition introduce more bills, engage in more floor activity, demonstrate more legislative specialization, and find less legislative success than those without ambition for higher office (Herrick & Moore, 1993). Notably, Herrick and Moore's finding about the relationship between legislative specialization and progressive ambition goes against their initial expectation, and they surmise that progressively ambitious legislators may seek policy expertise to garner greater media attention (Herrick & Moore, 1993, p. 773; see also Cook, 1989). In this article, I reconcile the sound logic of Herrick and Moore's expectation that the electoral incentives associated with a constituency that is larger and more diverse than a single congressional district should drive the behavior of ambitious legislators, with their finding that such legislators also have strong incentives to display their policy specialization.

There is, however, some controversial evidence over whether legislators change behavior in response to changes in constituency. There is considerable evidence, for example, that political markets will sort out of office those legislators who deviate from their constituents' interests (Kau & Rubin, 1993; Lott & Davis, 1992; Wright, 1993). More importantly, evidence has shown that legislators who retire or seek higher office do not have statistically

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different voting indices in their last term of office (Lott, 1987; Lott & Bronars, 1993). In addition, there is abundant evidence that legislators' ideologies, as measured by their voting patterns, are remarkably consistent over time (Poole, 2007; Poole & Rosenthal, 2007). Is it therefore reasonable to assume that legislators will change their behavior in anticipation of a change in constituency? While there is some controversy in the literature on this topic, the abundance of literature that shows the variety of ways in which legislators respond to constituent demands through their voting, campaign, social, and other behavior (discussed in detail below) is consistent with the theoretical claim that electoral incentives contribute to representatives' behaviors. Moreover, it is possible that legislators are both individually responsive to constituents through various activities *and* that there is stability in aggregate legislative voting over time. Therefore, while the implications of the "market sorting" studies stand in disagreement with the representation literature, there is both empirical and theoretical support for the claim that legislators will respond to constituents; it may be worthwhile, however, to primarily examine nonvoting legislative behavior to further understand these relationships.

To summarize, the extant literature shows that it is important to understand all types of legislative behavior to best understand the legislator-constituent link—or representation. Hall (1996) argues that legislators generally face three decisions: how to vote, how active to be, and how to allocate their activity among issue areas. The study of representation must look at all of these (Schiller, 2000; Sulkin, 2005). Moreover, the legislative behavior of ambitious legislators qualitatively differs from that of the nonambitious in ways that have implications for representation. It is therefore important to understand how a legislator's penchant for, and campaign for, higher office affects his behavior.

Members of the House with electoral ambitions beyond their current post should logically wish to expand the audience with whom they frequently make contact. Various forms of nonvoting legislative behavior provide effective means of reaching such constituents. According to Schlesinger (1966), "the central assumption of ambition theory is that a politician's behavior is a response to his office goals" (p. 6). Furthermore, he notes that an "ambitious politician must act today in terms of the electorate he hopes to win tomorrow" (p. 6). A member of the House who wishes to become senator, governor, or president must therefore engage in action that will win notice from a constituency much broader and larger than a single congressional district.

Legislators have an electoral incentive to be effective legislators (Fenno, 1978; Matthews, 1960) and to develop reputations for competence (Grant, 1973). Legislators who are more successful at getting their sponsored bills enacted into law are more likely to receive PAC money (Box-Steffensmeier &

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Grant, 1999). Legislators who demonstrate their legislative quality via analytical capacity are rewarded (Esterling, 2007). Legislators who act on issues the public considers to be salient are rewarded with being perceived as being effective (Weissert, 1991). Effective legislators get promoted to committee and leadership posts more quickly, seek higher office more frequently, and are more electorally successful than less effective legislators (Miquel & Snyder, 2006).

Legislators' electoral incentives mean not only that they seek to be perceived as competent, effective, and expert but also that they hope constituents will notice their hard work and reward their policy specialization. It is obvious that members have strong incentives to do all they can to advertise their activities to constituents in their attempts to be reelected (Mayhew, 1974), and media coverage is correlated with electoral success (Prior, 2006; Schaffner, 2006). Moreover, legislators have strong incentives to reveal the intensity with which they care about, and are willing to act on, an issue (Hall, 1996). Legislators' revealed intensities over policy, Hall argues, are demonstrated through their nonvoting legislative behavior. Legislators can reveal to current or potential constituents the extent to which they are impassioned about a topic by spending time "working" on a policy and devoting legislative effort to it.

Significant evidence exists to support the claim that legislators have strong incentives to display policy specialization (Anderson et al., 2003). As far back as the 1960s, scholars have used surveys and other measures to show that legislators tend to be specialists in fields that are relevant to their constituents' interests (Buchanan et al., 1960). Indeed, the institutional structure of Congress itself encourages policy specialization through the committee system (Gilligan & Krehbiel, 1997; Zwier, 1979). While there is mixed evidence regarding legislators' penchant for becoming policy entrepreneurs, which is perhaps an extreme form of specialization (Wawro, 2000), there is hearty empirical and theoretical evidence for the need and incentives for policy specialization in Congress.

In her study of issue attention in Congress, Sulkin shows that all parts of the political process are opportunities for legislators to provide representation to constituents. She examines legislative sponsorship, cosponsorship, and floor speeches and finds that while bill sponsorship is a higher cost means of signaling policy interest than cosponsorship or floor speeches, House candidates who use their bill sponsorship and floor speeches to signal that they care about policies (even those brought up by the member's *opponent* in the last campaign) have greater electoral success (Sulkin, 2005, pp. 140-141). Therefore, since legislators are electorally rewarded for engaging in legislative behavior that emphasizes a legislator's policy interests and a legislator's

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links to her constituents, all legislators have incentives to engage in a variety of activities that display their policy specialization.

While all legislators have incentives to be perceived as effective, competent, expert, and intense, those who seek higher office face even greater incentives to compete for such reputation building than those who never seek higher office. As demonstrating policy specialization is one of the best ways to win such attention, we should expect higher office-seekers to engage in more of this behavior than their less ambitious counterparts.

Hypothesis 1: Legislators who seek higher office at some point during their House careers demonstrate greater policy specialization than legislators who never seek higher office.

Even while I expect ambitious legislators to exhibit qualitatively different legislative behavior than those who never seek higher office, this expectation must also be conditioned on whether a legislator is *actively* campaigning for higher office. If the legislator-constituent link drives ambitious legislators to display greater policy specialization than those without progressive ambition because of electoral incentives, then we should expect these incentives to shift during an active campaign. This is because, for most House members, a campaign for higher office necessarily means a campaign to win over a different, and larger, constituency. A campaign for statewide office means a campaign message that appeals to a population more diverse than a single congressional district. While the incentive to promote oneself as competent and effective does not diminish, a legislator-candidate for higher office also faces (perhaps competing) incentives to address a broader set of issues than would be necessary for a campaign to a single district. Therefore, the incentives to appear to have specialized policy interests are mitigated during a campaign for higher office because during a campaign for higher office candidate-legislators are faced with the challenge of signaling salient policy interests, and expertise, to a larger and diverse set of citizens. To do so candidate-legislators must advertise the range of policy topics on which they are interested (Herrick & Moore, 1993, pp. 767-768; Prewitt & Nowlin, 1969; Soule, 1969). We should therefore expect candidate-legislators who are actively engaged in a campaign for higher office to display *less* policy specialization than those who are not campaigning for higher office.

Hypothesis 2: Legislators who are actively running for higher office in a given term demonstrate less policy specialization than legislators who are not actively running for higher office.

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Research Design

In the spirit of Joseph Schlesinger's (1966) classic study of political ambition, this research takes the perspective that it is necessary to examine the whole of a legislator's *career*, rather than solely her rise to power, personal attributes, or constituencies' preferences, to gain an understanding of a legislator's behavior. The data for this study are made up of the entire populations of five classes of freshmen members of the House elected in the 1970s. The data set includes the legislative floor behavior of these members over the course of their service in the U.S. House of Representatives until 2004—thus capturing the entire careers of members. The freshmen classes of the 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, and 96th Congresses include 379 members of Congress.[2] This study differs from previous studies of ambition because the sample population is cohorts of legislators, rather than cross-sections of complete congresses. The cohort approach provides the advantage of being able to draw inferences about behavior across legislators' complete careers rather than samples of incomplete careers across all congresses. The disadvantage to this approach is that the five classes of legislators may not be representative of all legislators, insofar as there could be confounding variables that affected MCs elected in the 1970s. However, given that the goal is to make inferences about the relationship between behavior and ambition over legislators' careers, the trade-off is worth it. The unit of analysis for this study is the legislator-congress.

Dependent Variable

This research concentrates on members' *nonvoting* legislative behavior because the intensity of legislators' policy interests is observable in nonvoting behavior as opposed to roll call votes (Hall, 1996). It is critical to examine nonvoting legislative behavior to evaluate the theoretical claim that higher-office-seekers attempt to signal their policy specialization. It is more likely that a measure of nonvoting legislative activity could capture the type of behavior legislators aim at constituents and potential constituents as they attempt to demonstrate policy specialization. Arguably, there are several forms of nonvoting behavior that could capture one's specialization, such as bill sponsorship or cosponsorship, activity in Washington versus the district, or perhaps content analysis of speeches, press releases, or other forms of communication. In this study, I use legislators' speech behavior on the floor of the House to discern their policy specialization. Prior studies have used bill sponsorship to measure policy specialization and ambition and found conflicting results (Herrick & Moore, 1993). Also, research shows that legislators use both sponsorship and floor speeches as a means of signaling their

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policy priorities to constituents (and presumably potential constituents; Sulkin, 2005). Here, I argue that speech behavior is the most likely forum in which to find evidence of policy specialization since voting, sponsorship, and the like do not allow for expression or nuance in legislators' positions. Moreover, although content analysis of speeches or other forms of communication would undoubtedly be superior and more sensitive measures of policy specialization, they are much more expensive data to collect. We can discern, I argue, a legislator's policy specialization by observing the patterns of speeches she gives on the House floor.

Legislators have incentives to use floor speeches to communicate their policy priorities, preferences, and intensities. Floor speeches provide an opportunity to engage in classic advertising, position taking, and credit claiming, noted by Mayhew (1974). Members might assume the audience for floor speeches is their colleagues, the visiting audience in the chamber gallery, C-SPAN viewers, lobbyists or others who read the congressional record, hometown constituents, or some combination of all of these depending on the topic or time of day. Regardless of the assumed audience, floor speeches provide an excellent opportunity for position taking and promotion of oneself as a policy specialist (but see Maltzman & Sigelman, 1996).[3] If legislators are rewarded for their policy specialization, then we should observe the effect on legislators' distribution of floor speeches.

To that end, I have used *The Congressional Record Index* (Superintendent of Documents, n.d.) to develop a unique indicator of legislators' expression of their policy priorities. I analyze the quantity and topics of each speech given by each member of the sample across 34 years. The index catalogues all forms of legislative behavior, at the member's request and provides an excellent accounting of the types and frequency of substantive legislative activities in which a member voluntarily engages.[4] "Remarks" is a ubiquitous category in the index, has been chronicled consistently over time and for all legislators, and it is conveniently organized into topics.[5] From this, I develop a measure of members' policy specialization that is a normalized function of the total number of remarks a legislator gave on the floor of the house relative to the number of topics those remarks addressed. The function can be expressed as the following:

$$Policy\ Specialization = 1 - \left(\frac{\#\ of\ topics\ addressed}{total\ remarks} \right) \quad (1)$$

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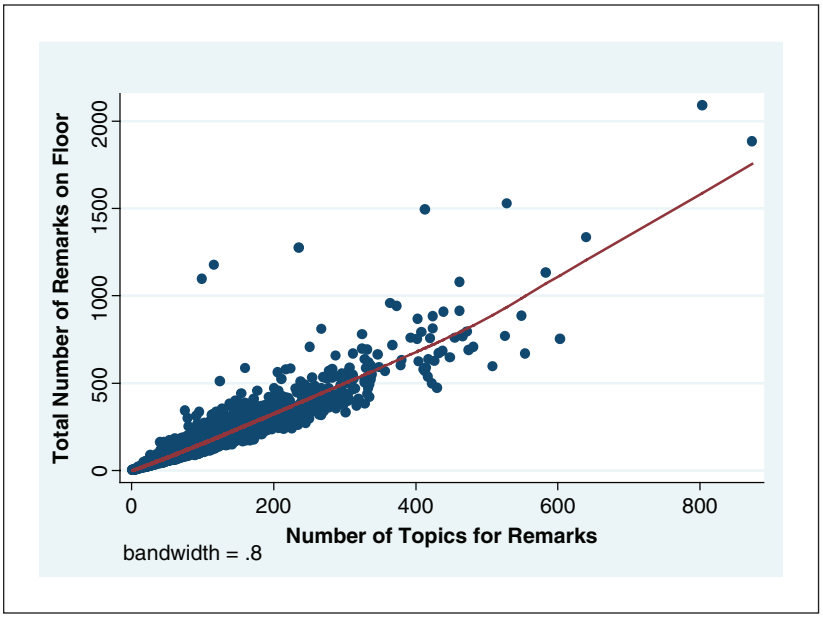


Figure 1. Total remarks versus number of topics
Note: The graph shows a positive relationship between the number of remarks made on the floor and the number of topics legislators spoke about. These are the two indicators used to create *legislative specialization*.

The ratio component of this function (the number of topics addressed divided by total remarks) captures a legislator's degree of policy generalization. As the number of topics increases to approach the total number of remarks, the ratio approaches 1. One could think of this as a generalist—someone who talked about as many topics as she gave speeches (or, every time she went to the floor, she spoke on a different topic). As I am interested in specialization rather than generalization, I subtract the ratio from one so that numbers closer to 1 imply legislative specialization and numbers closer to 0 imply legislative generalization.[6] I predict that the specialization measure will be higher (closer to 1) for ambitious members than for nonambitious members because an ambitious member has an electoral incentive to demonstrate policy specialization. The measure allows me to control for the overall level of activity between legislators.

As this measure of policy specialization is both unconventional and not entirely intuitive, I provide two graphics to help the reader develop a better sense of these data. Figure 1 plots the raw number of topics addressed by each

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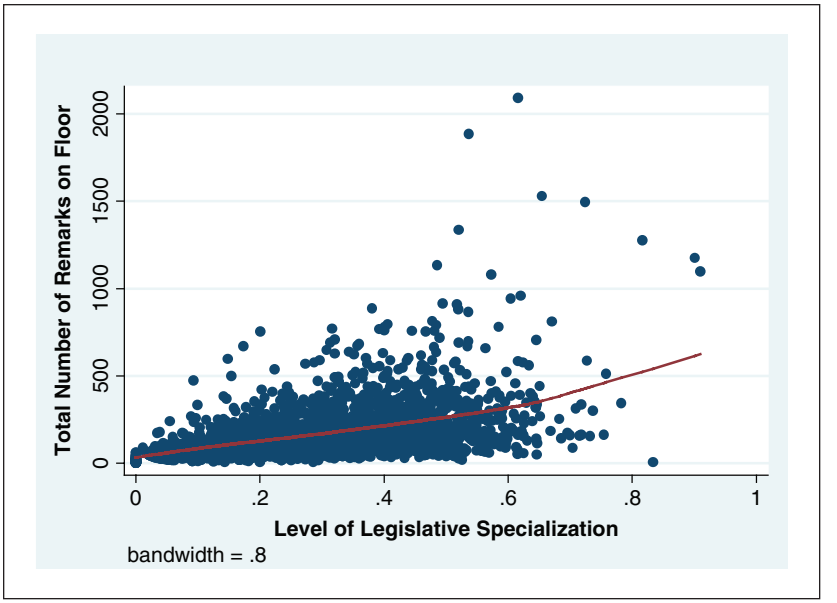


Figure 2. Total remarks versus policy specialization
Note: The graph shows a positive relationship between the number of remarks made on the floor and a legislator's level of specialization. Generally, legislators who give more speeches tend to be more specialized.

legislator against the total number of speeches. These are the two variables used to construct the specialization measure. The figure shows a strong positive relationship between the variables, as indicated by the Lowess smoother included in the plot. Figure 2 plots the measure of specialization against the total number of speeches. The Lowess smoother is again included in this graph and shows the positive general relationship between number of speeches and specialization. Notice that there are no instances of legislators who gave many speeches but have very low levels of specialization. There are few outliers of legislators who gave very few speeches and have relatively high specialization scores.

Independent Variables

The primary independent variable of interest is political ambition. Here, I code ambitious members of Congress as those who *ever* made a run for higher office, regardless of the outcome of the attempt. This is a broad definition

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of ambition intended to capture any member of Congress who has demonstrated ambition for higher office because one should observe changes in members' behavior as a result of the attempt to reach higher office, not the attainment thereof; in other words, those who run and lose should still be considered ambitious. Therefore, each 1970s freshman is determined to have been ambitious or not based on whether he sought higher office at some point in his career. If the member was ambitious, a separate variable codes the term in which he sought higher office (Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, 2003-2004; ICPSR, 1997). The data set is a cross sectional time series that is truncated on the front end by the congress in which a member first entered congress and on the back end by the event that caused a legislator to leave office (retirement, higher office, death, resignation, etc.). There are 379 legislators in the sample and a possible 17 terms served for the longest serving legislator. There are 2,232 total observations. Of these 379 members, 94 made a run for higher office (defined as a winning or losing a race for senator, governor, vice-president, or president) at some point during their congressional career (25%).[7] I expect the variable for progressive *ambition* to be positive and statistically significant because ambitious members should demonstrate greater specialization in their policy interests than nonambitious members.

The second independent variable of interest is the one labeled *campaigning* that is a dichotomous variable coded "1" in terms when a legislator was actively campaigning for higher office. I expect the coefficient for this variable to be negative and statistically significant, because even highly specailized legislators should be less able and less willing to demonstrate such specialization during terms in which they seek higher office.[8]

It may be additionally helpful to know when during their careers legislators tend to run for higher office. If a legislator spends 15 election cycles in the House before seeking the Senate, should we really expect to see any evidence of this in his early career? Figure 3 shows the incidence of progressive ambition of the 94 ambitious legislators in this sample broken down by the number of terms they served. Legislators who run for higher office tend to do so after three election cycles—relatively early in their careers.[9]

To further test the robustness of my argument, I use an indicator of district and state ideology. I have argued that politically ambitious legislators who are actively campaigning for higher office should display *less* policy specialization than those not running, even though I have the overall expectation that higher office-seekers will tend to display greater policy specialization. The mechanism behind this effect is that a member campaigning for higher office has an electoral incentive to gain the attention of a set of voters that is much larger and more diverse than the population of the member's

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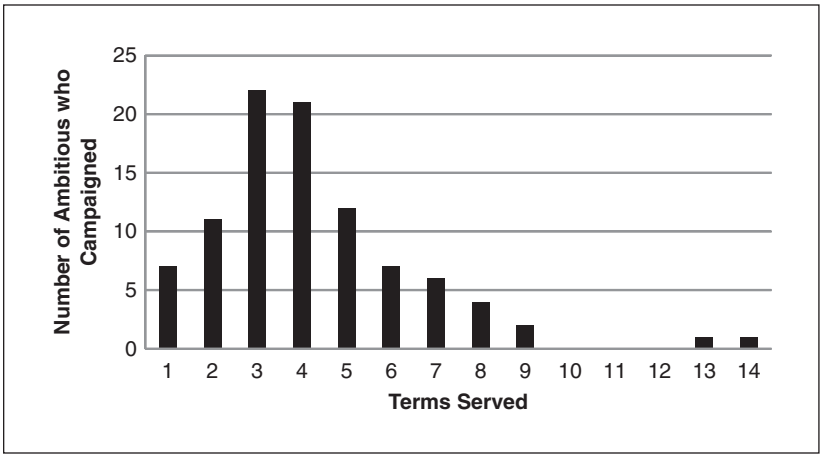


Figure 3. When in their careers do ambitious members campaign for higher office? Note: The graph shows the term in which ambitious legislators sought higher office. Most House members who seek higher office do so by their 3rd or 4th term in office.

district. If there is evidence in the data for this hypothesis, then it should be the case that legislators whose congressional district is ideologically similar to the entire state should exhibit less of a change in behavior than a legislator whose district and state are vastly different. Therefore, the extent to which higher office-seekers will adjust their legislative behavior during a run for higher office will depend on the relative ideological difference between the legislator's district and the population of the state. The greater these differences, the greater the expected change in legislative behavior. To capture this effect, I use the Democratic share of the two-party vote for president in the prior presidential election year as a proxy for the aggregate ideology of a region. The measure is the squared difference between the ideology of the state and the ideology of the district. I interact this term with the campaigning variable to test the robustness of the claim that legislators campaigning for higher office have an electoral incentive to make themselves more appealing to a broader electoral constituency.

I also assume that members who serve in states with at-large House districts, such as Wyoming, may behave differently than legislators from states with many congressional districts because an at-large representative's House constituency is equivalent to their potential Senate (or governor) constituency. I therefore include a control for the number of congressional districts in

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each member's state, which simultaneously accounts for state population size. This is important because of a small but important relationship between constituency size and legislative behavior (Squire, 1993). A legislator from a state with fewer districts would need to change their legislative behavior less when seeking higher office than a legislator who comes from California, for example. However, I have no theoretical expectations about the direct relationship between the number of congressional districts and policy specialization.

Finally, I include a control for the percentage by which the member won her last election. This is because of a small but positive effect that Herrick and Moore (1993) find between electoral marginality and legislative specialization. I therefore expect that legislators who win elections by greater margins will display greater policy specialization.

Empirical Tests—Legislative Activity

Before I directly test my hypotheses regarding policy specialization and ambition for higher office, I would like to verify that some obvious and expected relationships exist in the data. Much as Herrick and Moore (1993) do in their article, I would like to investigate the relationship between overall legislative activity and ambition for higher office. If the argument laid out above holds merit, then it should also be true that higher office-seekers tend to engage in *more* overall legislative activity (introducing bills, cosponsoring bills, etc.) throughout their careers and that this behavior might diminish during a run for higher office. I therefore take a first cut analysis of the data in a way that is similar to Herrick and Moore's analysis.

Table 1 presents results from three negative binomial regressions. In these models, the dependent variable is a count of the total number of legislative activities in which a legislator engaged.[10] From left to right, the three columns of estimates represents regressions on three dependent variables: the total number of activities over the course of a congress, the total number of activities in the first session of a congress, and the total number of activities in the second session of a congress. The results show that for all dependent variables those who seek higher office at some point in their career engage in more overall legislative activity (this is demonstrated by the positive and significant coefficient for *ambition*). However, we also observe that the *campaigning* variable is not consistent across models. The results show that campaigning legislators reduce their level of activity in the second session of a congress, but not in the first (this is evident by the negative and significant coefficient on *campaigning* in the third model and the insignificant coefficient

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Table 1. Legislative Activity as a Function of Ambition and Campaigning (Expected Sign in Parentheses)

	All activities—both sessions	All activities—1st session	All activities—2nd session
Ambition (+)	0.23608*** (0.04867)	0.11938** (0.05087)	0.31313*** (0.05306)
Party	0.06311* (0.03806)	0.06497 (0.03951)	0.02802 (0.04125)
Electoral winning percentage	−0.00022 (0.00065)	0.00038 (0.00073)	−0.00238** (0.00093)
Congressional districts in state	0.00503*** (0.00143)	0.00191 (0.00154)	0.00651*** (0.00151)
Campaigning (−)	−0.06275* (0.03671)	0.02998 (0.04326)	−0.25883*** (0.05348)
Constant	2.02528*** (0.08856)	1.82077*** (0.09773)	1.31115*** (0.11918)
ln(r)	1.7665 (0.08689)	1.7766 (0.0924)	1.8713 (0.0987)
ln(s)	5.3924 (0.1032)	5.2532 (0.1100)	5.3035 (0.1198)
N	2,226	2,226	2,226
Number of groups	375	375	375
Wald χ^2	1461.58	703.94	583.87
Prob > χ^2	0	0	0
Log likelihood	−14451.2	−13684.8	−11570.7

Note: Data are assumed to have negative binomial distribution. The numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. Each model was estimated with random effects across individuals and clustered on individual members of Congress. Fixed effects for time (using dummies) were included in estimation but not reported.
*$p(z) < .10$. **$p(z) < .05$. ***$p(z) < .01$.

on *campaigning* in the second model). The coefficients on the campaigning variable also show that ambitious legislators change their legislative behavior in their last term of office. These results conform to the extant literature that higher office-seekers are more active legislators but that legislator-candidates who are actively campaigning engage in less activity. These results, however, tell us nothing about the relative degree of policy specialization. I turn next to this more specialized analysis.

Empirical Tests—Policy Specialization

Looking at the variables of interest in descriptive, bivariate form shows that there is a statistically significant difference in policy specialization between ambitious and nonambitious legislators. Figure 4 displays the average level of specialization for legislators who served equivalent number of terms over time.[11] Legislators who seek higher office have a higher level of policy specialization than those who never seek higher office ($t = 2.27$, pr[difference

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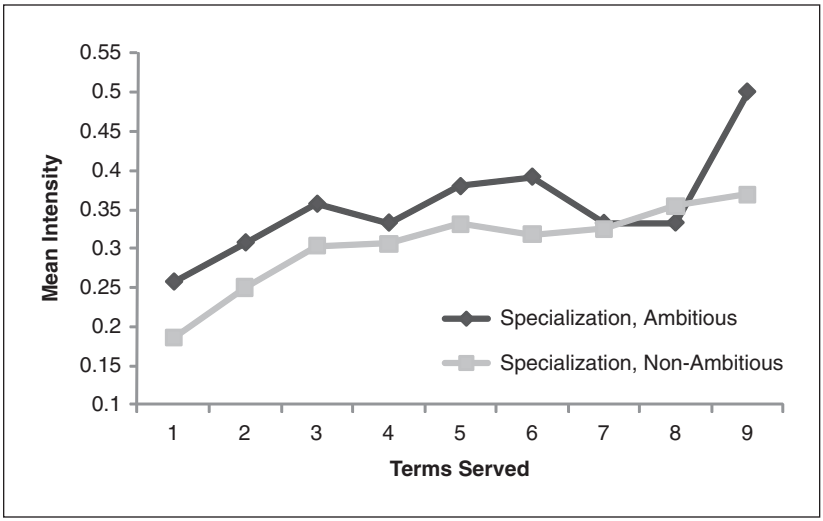


Figure 4. Mean policy specialization for ambitious and nonambitious members
Note: The graph shows that ambitious legislators demonstrate greater levels of policy specialization than those who do not seek higher office.

between means < 0] = 0.012). This indicates support for the primary hypothesis that higher office-seekers tend to have more policy specialization.

By way of example, take Representative David E. Bonior (D-MI). Mr. Bonior was elected to the House of Representatives in 1976 and served there until 2002. During his time, he served as the Democratic Whip from 1991-2002. In early 2002, Bonior decided to step down from his leadership post to pursue the Governor's mansion in Michigan. He ultimately lost in a heated primary battle, but we can observe evidence of his electoral behavior in his legislative activity. In the 95th through 106th congresses, before Mr. Bonior sought higher office, he averaged 732 total legislative acts, compared with the 958 activities he engaged in during the 107th congress. Clearly, he was a more active legislator while seeking higher office, which is typical for the sample. However, Mr. Bonior's average level of specialization in the early period was 0.416, giving an average of 239 remarks on 133 topics, which is slightly above the sample mean but within a standard deviation. However, during his gubernatorial campaign, he spoke 213 times on 157 topics, for a specialization rate of 0.263, which is below the sample mean and more than a standard deviation below his prior specialization mean. Mr. Bonior

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displays remarkable prowess as a legislator throughout his career and during his campaign for higher office, but his level of policy specialization drops off dramatically while engaged in the campaign for governor. This single case from the sample typifies the effect of progressive ambition on legislative behavior.

Next, I turn to a pooled cross-sectional aggregate time-series. Each member is therefore represented multiple times in the data set, equivalent to the total number of Congresses in which the member served. There are 2,226 total observations; each of the 379 members served in an average of 4.8 Congresses. Time is represented in the data set by *Congress*. The unit index in the data set is individual members of Congress.

Developing an appropriate model to estimate policy specialization with a panel structure must be guided by theory and data constraints. In these data, the number of cross-sectional units exceeds the number of time units by nearly 23 times ($N = 379$, $T = 17$). The standard approaches in political science to appropriately estimate cross-sectional time series data are designed for data where $T > N$ (e.g., Beck & Katz, 1995, p. 644). Although my data do not fit this standard design, I am still concerned about accounting for heterogeneity in the cross-sections, contemporaneous autocorrelation, and heteroskedasticity. To address each of these issues I have taken the following approaches. First, I account for heterogeneity in the cross-sections by estimating the model with unobserved random effects and clustering the regression on individual members of Congress (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2008). Second, I account for contemporaneous autocorrelation by using timewise fixed effects; the models are therefore estimated with dummies for each Congress. This is an appropriate method for short panels (small T relative to N; see Arellano, 2003, Wooldridge, 2003). Third, I correct for heteroskedasticity by using robust standard errors.

Results

Table 2 presents the results from four models. In each model, the dependent variable is the measure of policy specialization described above. The results in Model I are the closest approximation to the legislative specialization model estimated by Herrick and Moore (1993), albeit with different data. The results are generally consistent with their findings: higher office-seekers indeed show more policy specialization, as measured by position-taking in floor speeches, than those who never seek higher office. The coefficient on the variable *ambition* is positive and significant, as expected. In Model II, I add the variable for *campaigning* and find the expected negative and statistically

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Table 2. Policy Specialization (Speeches) as a Function of Progressive Ambition (Expected Sign in Parentheses)

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV
Progressive ambition (+)	0.05787*** (0.01343)	0.0688*** (0.0141)	0.06804*** (0.01408)	0.06750*** (0.01410)
Intrainstitutional ambition (+)	–0.00216 (0.016)	–0.0027 (0.0159)	—	—
Party (Democrat)	–0.03024*** (0.01112)	–0.0305*** (0.01114)	–0.02933*** (0.01121)	–0.03012*** (0.01124)
Electoral winning percentage	0.00030 (0.00023)	0.00032 (0.00023)	0.00036 (0.00023)	0.00031 (0.00023)
Congressional districts in state	0.00067* (0.00039)	0.00066* (0.00039)	0.00076* (0.00040)	0.00065* (0.00040)
Campaigning (–)	—	–0.0347** (0.01488)	–0.02785* (0.01642)	0.01100 (0.03006)
State-CD ideological distance	—	—	–0.14836 (0.17142)	—
Campaigning × State-CD ideological distance	—	—	–1.18591 (0.81301)	—
Legislative productivity	—	—	—	0.00001 (0.00003)
Legislative productivity × Campaigning	—	—	—	−0.00015** (0.00008)
Constant	0.27498*** (0.0288)	0.2751*** (0.0288)	0.2580*** (0.0285)	0.2756*** (0.0295)
Sigma-u	0.0905	0.0909	0.0909	0.0910
Sigma-e	0.1127	0.1125	0.1125	0.1125
Rho	0.3922	0.3947	0.3949	0.3955
N	2,226	2,226	2,226	2,226
Number of groups	375	375	375	375
Wald χ^2	461.98	466.8	470.84	477.23
Prob > χ^2	0	0	0	0
R^2 within groups	.1583	.1622	.1632	.1628
R^2 between groups	.124	.1222	.1228	.1259
R^2 overall	.1163	.117	.1171	.1182

Note: The dependent variable in all models is policy specialization (speeches), which is equal to 1 minus number of topics addressed/total remarks. The numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. Each model was estimated with random effects across individuals and clustered on individual members of Congress. Fixed effects for time (using dummies) were included in estimation but not reported.
*$p(z) < .10$. **$p(z) < .05$. ***$p(z) < .01$.

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significant coefficient. This shows support for my second hypothesis; higher office-seekers show significantly *less* policy specialization during terms in which they actively seek higher office. This is the key finding of this article: ceteris paribus, legislators who seek higher office demonstrate significant policy specialization *except* when they are in the act of running for higher office.

Somewhat surprisingly, there is a party effect—Republicans display more policy specialization than Democrats. As the theoretical model is a nonpartisan one, this result deserves further investigation in future studies.

In Model III, I further investigate Hypothesis 2. If higher office-seekers reduce their displays of policy specialization through their floor behavior during a campaign for higher office and do so in response to electoral incentives to campaign to a statewide audience of voters who have more diverse policy preferences than a single congressional district, then we should find evidence for this in the data. To test this claim, I include a measure of the squared distance between the ideological makeup of the state versus the ideological makeup of the district, and interact this term with *campaigning*. If the electoral incentive exists, then campaigners from districts that are ideological very different from their state should display a greater change in policy specialization than a campaigner who represents a district that is not unlike the whole state. The results in Model III show that the coefficient for the ideological distance variable and the interaction term are not statistically significant; however, it is important to make a proper interpretation of these terms. Using the methods for appropriate interpretation of interaction terms described by Kam and Franzese (2007) I calculate the marginal effect of a change in state-district ideological distance on the dependent variable for campaigning and noncampaigning legislators. These results are shown in the upper portion of Table 3. For noncampaigning legislators, the effect of greater ideological distance between the state and the district on policy specialization is not statistically different from zero. This is the anticipated result. However, for legislators who are actively campaigning for higher office, the marginal effect of a unit change in state-district ideological distance is negative and marginally significant ($p = .098$). This shows that for those seeking higher office, they are more likely to display a decline in policy specialization when their state and district are ideologically distant.

In Model IV, I test an alternative explanation for these results. It could be the case that those campaigning for higher office display less policy specialization through their floor behavior because they are busy campaigning, and they do not spend as much time legislating. Indeed, the results in Table 1 show that campaigning legislators reduce their legislative activity in the run up to an election. If it is the case that reduced legislative activity is the root

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Table 3. Which affects changes in campaigning members' policy specialization more: state-CD ideological differences or time constraints?

	dy/dP	*SE*	*Z*	*p*(z)	Expectation
Marginal effect of state-CD ideological difference on policy specialization					
Not campaigning	–0.1484	0.1714219	–0.87	0.387	0
Campaigning	–1.3343*	0.8062856	–1.65	0.098	<0
	dy/dL	*SE*	*Z*	*p*(z)	
Marginal effect of legislative productivity on policy specialization					
Not campaigning	0.000006	0.0000254	0.26	0.799	
Campaigning	–0.00015**	0.0000753	–1.96	0.05	

*$p(z)<0.10$, **$p(z)<0.05$, ***$p(z)<0.01$

cause of the decline in specialization, we would still observe a negative coefficient on *campaigning*; however, it would not be driven by the electoral incentives, as argued above. To test this alternative hypothesis, in Model IV, I include a measure of legislative productivity, which is the sum of all bills sponsored, bills cosponsored, and amendments offered, and I interact this term with *campaigning*.[12] The marginal effects of this variable are presented in the lower portion of Table 3. Here, we see that for noncampaigning legislators, the marginal effect of a positive change in legislative productivity is insignificant with respect to policy specialization. However, for campaigning legislators, I find that a positive unit increase in legislative productivity has a negative and significant ($p = .05$) effect on policy specialization.

So, is it the electoral incentive to appeal to a more diverse set of voters or the time constraints associated with campaigning that is associated with the decline in displays of policy specialization for campaigners? Although I find evidence for both of these effects, the coefficient on the marginal effect in the legislative productivity model (Table 3) is very small (–0.00015) compared to the coefficient for state-district ideological difference (–1.3343). While the standard errors of these estimates suggest that the legislative productivity result is more robust, the size of the coefficients suggests that it is the ideological makeup of the various constituencies that contributes to the decline in policy specialization rather than the onerous campaign workload.[13]

Finally, I seek to verify that my measure of policy specialization as gleaned from floor speeches is a valid measure of policy specialization. To do so, I calculate policy specialization à la Herrick and Moore (1993) for the

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legislators in my sample. Herrick and Moore's measure of policy specialization is calculated by determining the referral committee that received the most bills introduced by each MC and dividing it by the total number of bill sponsorships for that member. The measure is standardized across members for each Congress and not calculated for those who introduce fewer than five bills. If the bill-sponsorship policy specialization measure performs similarly to the floor-speech measure of policy specialization then it will provide some confidence in the floor speech measure. However, I assume that policy specialization demonstrated in floor speeches is qualitatively somewhat different than policy specialization demonstrated in bill sponsorship, as the former is a low-cost and high-visibility activity and the latter is a high-cost and perhaps lower visibility activity (see Sulkin, 2005). The results of this analysis are in Table 4.

Table 4 shows the results of Herrick and Moore's (1993) original model from their published article and the results from two models in which I estimated a model much like theirs, but using my sample and calculating the dependent variable in the same way that they did. Models V and VI are intended to be "improved" replications of Herrick and Moore, using a different sample.[14] There are a number of similarities in the results of Model V and the Herrick and Moore results. First, the key variable of interest, ambition, is positive in all the models; however, it does not achieve statistical significance in Models V and VI. The party leadership variable, or intrainstitutional ambition, which was Herrick and Moore's key variable of interest in their article, is negative and significant in all the models. The remaining variables show no surprises and results are consistent across the models. The party variable, which was coded as 1 = *Democrat* and 2 = *Republican* in the Herrick and Moore model, is positive and significant in my models and insignificant in the Herrick and Moore models. Recall that the Herrick and Moore data covers the period 1954-1984, so the different results in party and for southern states are not surprising. In all models, the results for electoral marginality and state size are consistent. Finally, while Herrick and Moore do not study campaigning, Model VI shows that campaigning is negative and significant, as I expect, even using the bill sponsorship measure of specialization *(the overall R^2 values in models I-IV are greater than in model V, VI, and the Herrick and Moore 1993 model)*.

Overall, the results in Table 4 provide support for using floor speeches as an alternative measure of policy specialization for two reasons. First, although I have a different sample than Herrick and Moore, Model V shows remarkably similar results to Herrick and Moore's results. This means that there is some support for Hypotheses 1 and 2 using a measure of policy specialization

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Table 4. Policy Specialization (Sponsorship) as a Function of Progressive Ambition (Expected Sign in Parentheses)

	Herrick and Moore (1993)	Model V	Model VI
Ambition (+)	0.124* (0.07)	0.019 (0.07)	0.075 (0.073)
Intrainstitutional ambition	–0.194** (0.076)	–0.244** (0.117)	–0.247** (0.1175)
Party (Democrat)	0.019 (0.057)	0.1548*** (0.061)	0.1553*** (0.0605)
Electoral winning percentage	0.006** (0.003)	0.003** (0.0016)	0.004** (0.0016)
Congressional districts in state	–0.001 (0.0004)	0.0033 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)
South	–0.253** (0.062)	0.0900 (0.78)	0.088 (0.078)
Campaigning (–)	—	—	–0.19** (0.087)
Constant	0.177	–0.329 (0.269)	–0.334 (0.269)
Sigma-u		0.4350	0.4350
Sigma-e		0.7401	0.7390
Rho		0.2564	0.2571
N	902	1,969	1,969
Number of groups		365	365
Wald χ^2		73.83	81.36
Prob > χ^2		0	0
R^2 within groups		.036	.0379
R^2 between groups		.06	.0645
R^2 overall	.08	.042	.0441

Note: The dependent variable in all models is policy specialization (sponsorships), which is equal to number of bills to the top committee/total number of bills introduced (for those introducing 5 or more bills), standardized. The numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors. Each model was estimated with random effects across individuals and clustered on individual members of Congress. Fixed effects for time (using dummies) were included in estimation but not reported.
*$p(z) < .10$. **$p(z) < .05$. ***$p(z) < .01$.

that is gleaned from bill sponsorship; however, the results are somewhat weak. Progressive ambition is not statistically significant in Models V and VI, suggesting that ambitious legislators are more likely to use public floor behavior as an electoral activity, than bill sponsorship behavior. Second, the similarities in the results of Models I, V, and Herrick and Moore's results suggest that both measures of specialization are capturing similar, though not identical, relationships in the data. While legislators may both use bill

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sponsorship and floor speeches to demonstrate their policy specialization, each activity provides a slightly different signal about legislators' priorities and interests (one more public, one more work). Moreover, the comparisons between the models suggest that the floor speeches measure of specialization explains more of the overall variance in these models than the bill sponsorship measure of specialization. The newer models have better overall fit and diagnostics than the older specification, providing further confidence in my results.

Generally speaking, the results support both of the hypotheses presented in this article. Hypothesis 1, drawn largely from the literature on progressive ambition and legislative behavior, stated that we should observe progressively ambitious legislators, or those who seek higher office at some point in their career, to displaying greater policy specialization in his floor remarks. This expectation is based largely on Herrick and Moore's (1993) research and Hall (1996), and it is consistent with other research on ambition (see Hibbing, 1991). Ambitious office seekers are ambitious legislators.

Hypothesis 2 is the less intuitive counterpart to the relationship between progressive ambition and legislative behavior. Given that those who are actively campaigning for an office whose voters comprise a larger geographical area and (presumably) more diverse set of policy preferences, it should be the case that legislators who are actively campaigning for higher office display *less* policy specialization in their attempt to appeal to a broader audience. The data support exactly this claim. Moreover, I find more support for the idea that a higher office-seeker's campaigning is associated with less policy specialization because of electoral incentives, than I do for the idea that the drop-off in policy specialization is due to time constraints.

Conclusion

How can legislators who seek higher office simultaneously prove themselves to be highly competent legislators with expertise on specific subject matters while also appealing to the more diverse policy interests of a broader statewide or national constituency? In this article, I show that they do so by first, displaying policy specialization throughout their legislative career—thus displaying their competence and increasing the likelihood of developing a positive reputation among voters—and, by mitigating this strategy during an active campaign for higher office to a constituency that is larger and more diverse than a single congressional district. Legislators are strategic beings; higher office-seeking legislators may be even more strategic than those without progressive ambition. This article, contributes to the overwhelming

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preexisting evidence that legislators are motivated by elections. Whether seeking reelection, or election to a higher office, the incentives induced by one's desire to obtain elected office are a primary component that drives one's legislative behavior. Legislators seek free media attention to help them develop positive reputations. Higher office-seekers compete more fiercely for this attention than the nonambitious.

Does this have negative normative implications for democracy and representation? If one associates policy specialization with higher quality representation, this research might suggest that a voter would receive a lower "quality" of representation while their representative campaigns for senator. However, I would caution against drawing such dire conclusions from this research. The measure of policy specialization here could be interpreted as a latent measure of quality representation; however, the decline in policy specialization that a higher office-seeker displays while campaigning for higher office does not indicate that he is *in fact* less knowledgeable about policy topics. Rather, we observe a change in behavior that does not likely describe the true ability or nature of the representative. In other words, it is unlikely that campaigning makes a candidate less informed about issues.

This research fills a gap in the literature that helps us to understand the relationship between legislative behavior and ambition for higher office. This research shows that legislators who seek higher office change their legislative behavior when they are actively campaigning for higher office.

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Notes

1. Scholars who have studied the causes of progressive ambition include Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde (1987); Berkman (1994); Brace (1984); Copeland (1989); Fox and Lawless (2005); Maestas et al. (2006); Rohde (1979); and Schlesinger (1966).
2. These Congresses were selected so the sample of legislators would include a "career's worth" of service for many legislators in the same class. I did not choose to go earlier in congressional history because of important institutional changes made in Congress in the 1970s. Using data from these five classes of legislators provides a long time series for the modern congressional era and complete careers of many MCs.
3. Maltzman and Sigelman (1996) examine unstructured speeches on the floor of the House and find no relationship between the use of unstructured speeches (i.e., special orders) and electoral ambition of any kind. Moreover, they argue that one must focus on unconstrained floor time to capture legislators' attempts to make self-initiated appeals to constituents. In my study, I examine structured floor speeches (i.e., remarks) and use them to develop an indicator of legislators' policy specialization. Here, I am not looking for a direct relationship between floor time and electoral ambition; rather, I develop a measure of policy specialization that is based on structured floor time and examine its relationship to ambition. While Maltzman and Sigelman argued that one should only observe electorally driven behavior in unstructured behavior, their results reveal no relationship between such behavior and ambition. It could be the case that there is no relationship between electoral ambition and floor time, or perhaps the metric was flawed. Here, I argue that we should observe electoral behavior in structured remarks because legislators driven by various electoral incentives will develop strategies to become party to the structured debate over any topic—by sponsoring a bill, ushering it through committee, working with leadership to pass or kill a bill, and otherwise making oneself conspicuous with respect that topic. Such behavior can be driven by electoral incentives and would be apparent in structured remarks.
4. Categories that appear in *The Record* include, but are not limited to, amendments offered, articles published, bills introduced or cosponsored, letters written, motions introduced, remarks delivered (both on and off the floor), reports, statements, testimony, and tributes.
5. In this sample, the number of individual remarks used by one member in a single congress ranges from 0 to 2,092.

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6. I could have simply inverted the generalization ratio to create the same relationship effect; however, such a function would be less intuitive than the normalized function stated above because the alternative would range from a minimum of one to a maximum of infinity. The measure described above is bounded by the range (0, 1).
7. Nearly all higher office seekers in this House sample ran for a statewide office (senator or governor) as opposed to national office. Of the 94 instances of legislators seeking higher office only 3 sought national office, Geraldine Ferraro ran for vice-president in the 98th Congress, Richard Gephardt ran for president in the 108th Congress, and Jack Kemp ran for president in the 100th Congress.
8. An alternative way to think about the ambition and campaigning variables is to conceive of them as an experiment, where the experimental treatment is seeking higher office. In the ambition variable, a legislator is coded 1 for being in the treatment group if she was ever "treated" at any point in time. In the campaigning variable, a legislator is coded 1 in the term that treatment was received.
9. A chi-square test between campaigning and terms served among ambitious legislators indicates that I can reject the null hypothesis of independence ($\chi^2 = 42.5$, $pr = 0.00$).
10. These include amendments offered, articles published, bills introduced or cosponsored, letters written, motions introduced, remarks delivered, reports, statements, testimony, and tributes.
11. Results in Graphs 1 and 2 are only displayed for legislators who served 9 or fewer terms. There are fewer than 20 legislators who served 10 to 17 terms and low N makes the results less meaningful and less reliable.
12. An alternative specification might be to include a measure of total remarks on the left-hand side; however, as total remarks is a mathematical function of the dependent variable, such a measure would be endogenous and nearly uninterpretable. Instead, this measure of legislative productivity is relatively uncorrelated with the total remarks or number of topics, $r = .3$ and $r = .38$, respectively.
13. Bear in mind, I make no claims about this being a causal model. Ambition cannot cause specialized speech making, insofar as ambition for higher office is observed at the end of one's House career. Likewise, policy specialization does not seem to cause ambition, given how the nature of one's demonstrated policy specialization changes over the course of a career. It could be the case that legislators who demonstrate policy specialization are more likely to be recruited by party leaders to seek vacancies in higher offices. Although such a reverse specification is plausible, I do not find it to be as compelling an argument as the one presented here, for the same reasons that Herrick and Moore (1993, pp. 771-772) suggested. Investigating the reverse causality would be a useful step for future work.

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14. "Improvements" are methodological. In Models V and VI, I accounted for time series autocorrelation and heteroskedasticity, modeling techniques that were not readily available at the time the original Herrick and Moore model was published.

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