

women's rights), and the rising political strength of churches and religious organizations, a development directly aided and encouraged by Republican party leaders seeking to build a majority coalition.

Overall, however, *Republican Women* makes a stellar contribution to the literature on American politics, political parties, and gender politics in history, political science, and sociology by helping to recover the often invisible political activism of women in the twentieth century. As Rymph shows, women were not just subjects of political rule and debate. They were important independent actors who shaped their party and, indeed, the path of American politics into the twenty-first century.

—Christina Wolbrecht

SUPERMAJORITY CONSTRAINTS AS MAJORITY CHOICE

Gregory J. Wawro and Eric Schickler: *Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S. Senate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006 Pp. 308. \$29.95.).

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Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S. Senate is an impressive and provocative account of the Senate filibuster and its persistence over time. Gregory Wawro and Eric Schickler offer a theoretical account of the Senate filibuster, aiming to explain why legislative majorities would ever create—and maintain—rules that require supermajorities to limit debate. Wawro and Schickler's account will be widely read—and debated—by congressional scholars, as *Filibuster* provides an alternative perspective to prevailing views about the institutional development of the Senate.

Filibuster explores the dynamics of lawmaking and obstruction before and after the senate's adoption of its supermajority cloture rule in 1917, with an eye to explaining the stability of Senate rules that allow a minority to filibuster legislative measures and nominations they oppose. By creating Rule 22 in 1917, the Senate for the first time since 1806 had a formal means of ending debate and bringing the chamber to a vote on a pending matter. (As amended in 1975, Rule 22 today requires a three-fifths vote to end debate.) Taking advantage of a quasi-natural experiment before and after 1917, Wawro and Schickler ask a series of creative and important questions: First, how did the Senate legislate before 1917 if the chamber lacked a formal means of ending debate? Why didn't obstruction by the minority effectively require unanimous coalitions to legislate? Second, if slim majorities were generally able to pass salient legislation throughout much of the nineteenth century before adoption of Rule 22, why did senators design a cloture rule that required supermajority support? To answer these questions, Wawro and Schickler offer a theoretical account of obstruction and an empirical analysis of lawmaking and institutional innovation across Senate history.

Wawro and Schickler's key empirical claim—that Senate majorities were able to perform their legislative functions even in the absence of rules limiting debate before 1917—gives rise to the central theoretical puzzles of the book: “Why did obstruction not consume the institution despite the wide latitude given individual senators?” (p. 25), and why today do majorities continue to maintain supermajority rules? Wawro and Schickler explain the stability of the Senate's lax limits on debate by advancing a provocative thesis in chapter 2: A credible threat of a “rules revolution”—in which a majority would use rulings from the chair to put new precedents into place that limited obstruction—has historically tamed minorities who would otherwise exploit their procedural rights to block majorities from securing their policy goals. With the threat of a rules revolution bolstering norms of restraint that limited filibusters to issues of true intensity for legislative minorities, the precloture Senate functioned as if by majority rule—even in the absence of formal rules of debate allowing simple majorities to end debate in the Senate.

Why, then, was a cloture rule adopted in 1917? The authors argue in chapters 2 and 9 that debate limits were established only after expansion in the size and workload of the Senate at the turn of the century that contributed to the breakdown in the stability of the Senate's world of “relational legislating” (p. 28). By establishing a supermajority cloture threshold, senators reduced the uncertainty that plagued legislating at the turn of the century, particularly at the end of each Congress when the fixed adjournment date made it less costly for filibustering senators to block a majority. Institutional rules are, thus, the object of rational design. Since the adoption of cloture, the benefits to senators of such lax limits on debate have convinced Senate majorities to maintain the chamber's supermajority rules. Senate majorities, Wawro and Schickler conclude, have the rules they want, suggesting that “supermajority requirements are a remote majoritarian choice” (p. 275). In short, the Senate has evolved to serve the collective interests of its members.

This is a provocative argument with which students of the Senate and institutional choice will want to grapple. The authors provide an impressive array of qualitative and quantitative evidence in chapters 4 through 7 to bolster their claims about the majoritarian character of lawmaking in the precloture Senate. Their multipronged approach (bringing both historical breadth and depth to their empirical tests), their appropriate caution in developing measures of obstruction and lawmaking for the historical Senate, and the variety of empirical methods employed—these are hallmarks of good social science and clearly the strong suits of the book.

The book's theoretical claim in chapters 2, 9, and 11—that remote majoritarianism accounts for the historical stability of the Senate's supermajority rules and practices—is likely to be viewed as a more controversial contribution of the book. That argument differs strongly from accounts of institutional choice and change that point to the element of path dependency in sustaining existing institutions (such as Paul Pierson's *Politics in Time*, [Princeton, NJ]: Princeton

University Press, 2004]). When applied to the Senate, such a path-dependent account would suggest that the modern Senate is not entirely what majorities have wanted. Instead, it is the institution with which majorities are stuck, since minorities have periodically exploited the filibuster to block Senate majorities from reforming chamber rules (see Sarah A. Binder and Steven S. Smith, *Politics or Principle? Filibustering in the United States Senate*, [Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997]). Rather than viewing Senate rules as a product of majority choice, as suggested by Wawro and Schickler, the alternative approach highlights the unintended consequences of institutional change and the reinforcing character of inherited rules.

How might one arbitrate between the competing accounts? The two accounts are ultimately observationally equivalent: both accounts generally predict the stability of Senate rules. This means that scholars will continue to debate the theoretical undercurrent of the Senate's institutional development. Wawro and Schickler provide nuanced accounts of important junctures—including reform efforts and obstruction in 1837, 1891, 1917, and 1975—seeking to establish the credibility of the threat of a rules revolution and how it tamed excessive obstruction by the minority party, forestalling institutional reform. This is precisely the type of evidence that one would want in order to establish such claims, and the authors certainly offer an impressive array of historical evidence. This challenge, however, is extremely difficult because, as Wawro and Schickler argue, these are episodes in which a majority for reform did not emerge. If majorities for change did not materialize in those instances, it may be difficult to establish the credibility of the threat of reform by majority ruling. The alternative interpretation of such events is that filibustering senators may have held the upper hand, untamed by a legislative majority.

Filibuster is theoretically and empirically ambitious. Although a scholar rarely sings the praises of a book that directly challenges his or her own work, I believe *Filibuster* deserves such praise, even if the jury is still out on its provocative argument. For good reason, *Filibuster* will be widely read by students of the Senate and legislative institutions seeking to develop theoretical accounts of the Senate's institutional past and its potential future change.

—Sarah A. Binder

ACCENTUATE THE NEGATIVE

John G. Geer: *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006. Pp. xvii, 201. \$47.50, cloth; \$19.00, paper.)

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We are all well acquainted with the typical assessments of and charges against negative advertising in political campaigns—negative ads depress