The Legislative Matching Game: Committee Matching and Effective Legislating in the States

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Abstract

I argue that the value of a particular set of committee assignments for a legislator is dependent on that legislator's policy interests. By this, I mean that "good" assignments will match committee policy jurisdictions with member policy priorities. I develop this concept of *committee-agenda matching* and present a measure of this match for legislators in 12 state lower chambers. After some brief measure validation, I present a substantive application, demonstrating that this match poses serious consequences for individual legislator's ability to shepherd their bills through the legislative process.

Wilson's (1885, 69) famous quote that "Congress in its committee-rooms is Congress at work" has been used countless times to emphasize the importance of committees in the legislative process. While scholars—to this day—generally accept Wilson's description of committees as the locus of legislative action, they are largely divided in their views of what the committees do, how they do it, and why.[1] Undoubtedly, committees serve to more efficiently process the legislative agenda, but as Wilson (1885, 68) noted, they certainly also "represent something more than a mere convenient division of labor." Scholars have variously argued that committees facilitate a system of logrolls and vote trading (Shepsle and Weingast 1994; Weingast and Marshall 1988) or provide a source of policy-specific information for the chamber

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(Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990). Yet, one of the most important insights regarding committees is their crucial role in advancing policy agendas in the chamber (Cox and McCubbins 1993; 2005). Agendas, however, cannot be advanced by committees alone; they must have members willing and able to pursue (or often impede) policies within the committee's jurisdiction. This project examines the implications of the confluence of these two factors—committee jurisdictions and committee members' individual agendas—by describing and developing a concept I refer to as *committee-agenda matching*.

While, in many contexts, legislative committees can give procedural control over what proposals will be heard and when (e.g., Anzia and Jackman 2012; Cox and McCubbins 2005), committee systems are, also themselves, reflective of a more general agenda (Adler and Wilkerson 2008; 2013; Freeman and Hedlund 1993; Makse 2014). Committees are created to deal with issues important to legislatures or constituents, and the committee system itself is a statement of priorities, where members establish committees to deal with certain issues, while not establishing them for others. While the chamber as a whole might have some semblance of a policy agenda, this is simply an aggregation of individual agendas shaped by experiences, identities, environments, and so on. Legislators arrive in the chamber with their own policy interests and priorities. With these particularized individual agendas, each member has an array of committee assignments that should be the most beneficial to their goals, given the issues with which they will engage. Thus, as Bullock (1972, 997) remarks, "With committees . . . beauty is often in the eye of the beholder." Whether or not they receive these assignments is a function of various factors, including who assigns committees, the way they are assigned, the member's willingness or ability to identify and request those beneficial assignments, and the willingness of leadership to accommodate those requests.[2]

Although a good amount of scholarship has examined the contours of state legislative committee systems (e.g., Battista 2006; 2009; Francis 1989; Hamm 1980; 1982; 1983; Hamm, Hedlund, and Martorano 2006; Overby and Kazee 2000; Overby, Kazee, and Prince 2004), to my knowledge, none have considered the nexus of assignments and individual policy agendas. Previous work on Congress and in the states has focused on the strategic process by which legislators receive their standing committee assignments, outlining the determinants of member assignment requests (Bullock 1976; Fenno 1973; Smith and Deering 1983) and the accommodation of those requests by the party leadership (Gertzog 1976; Shepsle 1978; Westefield 1974). Although this project draws heavily from existing literature on committee assignments, I depart from their traditional line of inquiry by shifting the focus away from member requests for committee assignments to actual, demonstrated legislative policy interests. The contribution of this article, then, is to explicitly develop this concept of the committee-agenda match. In doing so, the research question becomes about how well committee assignments match members' legislative activity and whether this match has consequences for legislators' ability to shepherd their bills through the legislative process. In what follows, I more thoroughly describe the nature of the committee-agenda match, and then I outline reasons why we should expect better matches to improve

legislative effectiveness while also reviewing what we know about legislator effectiveness more generally. After introducing the data, I will present my measure of the committee-agenda match and subject my hypotheses to empirical testing. I find that not only does committee-agenda matching consistently improve legislative effectiveness but that this effect varies in predictable ways based on partisanship and chamber rules.

Matching in the Committee Assignment Process

The committee-agenda match is a function of the requesting behavior of members and the accommodation behavior of the leadership or other assignment authority. By a member's *policy agenda*, I am referring to a collection of policy issues that the member sees as being of particular concern, given their context. What is important here is that an agenda is comprised of issues and not issue positions (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Klingdon 1984; Sulkin 2011) and that individual member's agendas can vary by context and perception.

The committee assignment process plays a significant role in determining if members will receive assignments to those committees conducive to their personal agendas. The literature on legislative committee assignments emphasizes two important points of interest to us. First, in the pursuit of committee assignments, rank-and-file members are largely motivated by policy interests, whether originating from personal or constituent concerns (Bullock 1976; Fenno 1973; Masters 1961; Smith and Deering 1983; 1997). Second, party leadership tends to accommodate member requests in assigning committees (Francis 1985; 1989; Gertzog 1976; Shepsle 1978; Smith and Deering 1983; Ray and Smith 1984; Westefield 1974). These two insights taken together imply that the array of policy committee assignments a member receives should be generally reflective of her policy agenda. Fenno (1973, 1–2) describes this as a "matching process," where individual legislators match their "patterns of aspiration to the diverse patterns of opportunity" presented by the committee system. It has often been assumed that this matching is important for the proper functioning of legislative bodies, as members with committee assignments that match their interests should be more involved in their committees, integrated into the chamber, and able to develop and apply policy expertise (Bullock 1985; Gertzog 1976; Krehbiel 1991).

Discerning readers may find this concept of "matching" to be closely related to that measured by a field of work attempting to ascertain the value of specific committee assignments. While my conceptualization of matching does imply that well-matched assignments are of more "value" to individual legislators than those that do not match agendas, for the existing literature "value" has consistently been defined as the *average popularity* of a particular committee as revealed by committee transfer requests (Bullock and Sprague 1969; Groseclose and Stewart 1998; Munger 1988; Steward and Groseclose 1999). This operationalization of "value" eschews any consideration of the particularized and differentiated needs of members or constituents. For this reason, I prefer to use Fenno's language of "matching," as it makes the subjective nature of committee value more explicit.

Up to this point, I have emphasized that members pursue committees based on policy agendas and that the leadership largely accommodates members' committee preferences as they are expressed in formal requests. If we assume this sequence is strictly adhered to, members will request committees that deal with policies important to them (or their constituents), and leaders will accommodate these requests, leading, in turn, to committee assignments reflective of individual member policy priorities. Given this, we might have little reason to expect any kind of mismatch between agendas and committee assignments; however, there are certain considerations that can contribute to a stronger or weaker match. These considerations specifically address the degree to which the process successfully translates the previous input into its connected output at both the initial phase of request formulation and the subsequent leadership accommodation phase. I will begin by considering the ways in which agendas might not be accurately or thoroughly reflected in requests.

The first barrier to a successful match arises from the strategic consideration that members make in their requests and advertising for committee assignments. As Shepsle (1978) argues, official committee requests ("revealed preferences" in Shepsle's terms) are different from actual preferences for committees. While these actual preferences for committees are unobservable and driven by personal and constituency policy concerns, requests are the result of an "expected value calculus," where members temper their true assignment preferences based on the perceived likelihood of receiving the requested assignments (Shepsle 1978, 64). Thus, members may not request the committees most important to their policy goals if they are broadly popular and the likelihood of assignment is low. This recognition illuminates an endogenous relationship in the process of accommodation, whereby the probability of assignment by leadership is determined by requests, which, in turn, are shaped by member perceptions of the probability of assignment.[3]

A second barrier to the translation of agendas into requests comes from the capabilities of the members. Those legislators with more experience with and knowledge about their constituency, legislative organization, and process should be more capable of effectively articulating their agendas through assignment requests. As mentioned above, agendas are at least partially constructed from constituency interests, and, therefore, members who have a better understanding of the priorities in the districts should be better equipped to request assignments relevant to those priorities. Members must also have an understanding of how those priorities match onto the policy space created by the committee system. However, while experience might help members make better requests given their agendas, it could also make them more sensitive to the strategic considerations described above. If members' policy interests and priorities are not fully expressed in their requests, then even perfect accommodation could lead to significant mismatches.

A possibility for even greater mismatches can arise when members are uncertain about their agendas or they simply do not have a clear set of policy priorities at the outset. While members without any real agenda can easily be accommodated by any set of assignments, we should not expect for them to remain without policy priorities for long. As these members learn about the chamber, their constituents' needs, and the

process of legislating, they are likely to develop priorities that might not be reflected in their committee assignments. Thus, mismatches can arise not only from a failure to properly request or accommodate but also from potential shifts in member priorities.

Unlike strategic requests or member capabilities, the next barrier to a successful match imposes limits on leaders. Leaders might face significant institutional obstacles in trying to accommodate requests. While many have argued that chamber leadership can expand or contract the committee system to suit their needs (e.g., Shepsle 1978; Westefield 1974), there are limitations in this regard. Specifically, leaders face a series of incentives that limit the desirability of constant expansion of seats on popular committees. First, as Shepsle (1978) points out, a popular committee's value may be inversely related to its size. The larger the committee becomes, the less influence any single member should have, thus, reducing the value of the committee overall. In addition to devaluation of committee assignments, leaders are also restrained in expanding the committees system by the need for an efficient division of labor in the chamber. As the size of a committee increases, the same logistical and collective-action problems present in the parent chamber begin to arise in committee. Simply creating more committees—as opposed to expanding existing committees—cannot resolve these issues either. New committees would either have to share policy jurisdictions with existing ones or would not satisfy the policy needs of existing members, making expansion pointless. In the former instance, overlapping jurisdictions pose the same problems of devaluation and loss of efficiency as expanding existing committees (King 1997).[4]

These limits on the expansion of the committee system make it so that assignments are a finite resource. This can pose a challenge for matching assignments to policy interests as the potential breadth of the latter is, theoretically, unlimited. In the U.S. House, most members have one or two committee assignments[5]; yet, in most cases, it would be unreasonable to assume that any member's personal policy agenda would be so narrow. In the states, the number of assignments varies more drastically within and across chambers creating different institutional contexts for the expression of leadership accommodation.

In addition to institutional constraints, the degree of familiarity with and the partisan affiliation of the member making a request should also strongly condition leadership accommodation of that request. The leadership might be hesitant to assign members that they are less familiar with to highly sought after committees simply because they cannot be certain of the members' qualifications or intentions. This means that we expect for leaders to more eagerly accommodate those members whom they are more confident will use the assignment effectively. Leaders should also favor members of their own party because they are more likely to have policy goals in common. If leaders intend to use the committee system to control the legislative agenda (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 1993), they have very strong incentives to ensure that the majority of committee members are unlikely to shirk their authority. As with agendas, when assignments are not reflective of requests, the probability of a strong match should be lower.

To this point, I have argued that members are motivated primarily by policy considerations when articulating their preferred committee assignments, explicitly connecting requests to member agendas. Furthermore, relying on the extensive literature on the U.S. House and from the American states, I argue that the leaderships' dominant strategy in the assignment process is the accommodation of member requests. These two statements, taken together, should lead to committee assignments that are reflective of individual agendas. There are, however, several factors that muddle the translation of agendas into requests and, subsequently, requests into assignments. Therefore, we should expect variation in how well assignments match agendas, both within chambers and across them. We now turn to a proposed method to measure the individual committee-agenda match before we assess its importance to the functioning of legislatures.

Committee-Agenda Matching and the Effective Processing of Legislation in the States

A good deal of scholarship has examined legislative success and effectiveness in both Congress (e.g., Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Cho and Fowler 2010; Cox and Terry 2008; Matthews 1960; Moore and Thomas 1991; Volden and Wiseman 2014) and in the state legislatures (Bratton and Haynie 1999; Kirkland 2011; Kousser 2005). There is good evidence that legislators tend to benefit in terms of their effectiveness from greater experience in the chamber (Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Frantzich 1979; Kousser 2005; Moore and Thomas 1991), membership in the majority party (Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Frantzich 1979; Moore and Thomas 1991; Volden and Wiseman 2014), and holding committee and subcommittee chairs (Evans 1991; Volden and Wiseman 2014). In addition, there is some further evidence that members who are more ideologically proximate to their party's median (Volden and Wiseman 2014) and who demonstrated loyalty to the party in terms of both voting behavior and fundraising (Hasecke and Mycoff 2007) can expect to see their bills advance further in the legislative process.

This project expands on this literature by bridging the gap between individual member characteristics and institutional positions through the consideration of the committee-agenda match. Better matches should allow members to more effectively shepherd their proposals through the legislative process. The intuition is rather simple: both members of the relevant policy committee and the floor should favor bills that are introduced by those members who also sit on the relevant policy committee over those who do not. If this is true, then members with better matches should be more effective at getting their proposals through the process.

There are several reasons why we should expect that proposals originating from members of the relevant policy committee would fare better than those that do not. First, when a bill gets to the relevant policy committee, the members of that committee should be more accepting of proposals coming from co-members than those introduced by nonmembers, all else equal. Members spend a significant amount of time in

committee and, thus, are more likely to know more about their committee co-members than those they do not sit on a committee with, particularly with regard to the committee's policy jurisdiction. Committee members, then, should favor bills introduced by committee co-members because they can be more certain about the policy intentions of the sponsor. Committee members might also show deference to bills introduced by committee co-members, to gain favor within their working group. If there are multiple, similar proposals, a committee co-member's bill might be favored in expectation of reciprocity from other committee co-members in the future. In addition, committee co-member sponsored bills are also more likely to consider the particular problems and policy idiosyncrasies that the committee has jointly considered, leading the bill to appear more appealing and relevant to committee members.

A bill sponsored by a member of the relevant policy committee might also be favored on the floor. The division of labor inherent to the committee system can lead to specialization, which the chamber might rely on for policy specific information otherwise unavailable to them (Krehbiel 1991). In this context, it would be rational for the floor to prefer a bill sponsored by members of the relevant policy committee as an "expert proposal" versus those proposals introduced by members not seen as specialized in the particular policy area. Therefore, we should expect for introductions emerging from relevant policy committee members to be favored by the policy committee in question, as well as the broader chamber.

This relatively simple intuition, combined with the insight that significant mismatches will lead to the sponsoring of bills outside of the policy jurisdictions of their assignments, leads me to the central hypothesis of this section:

> **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** All things equal, members with poorer committee-agenda matches will be less effective at shepherding their bills through the legislative process than those with better matches.

In addition to my primary hypothesis that the committee-agenda match helps legislators be more effective, I also argue that this relationship is conditioned by both political and institutional factors. First, because the parties structure debate in the chambers and the majority party has the numerical advantage in committee and on the floor, I expect for party status to strongly condition the effects of the committee-agenda match. Majority members who have a good match find that they not only are in the right committees given their interests, but that they also have more influence within the committee than their minority member counterparts (Cox and McCubbins 2005). In essence, majority party members gain more leverage over the legislative process by being on the right committees than minority members because they can use their committee-agenda match more effectively to promote their agendas:

> **Hypothesis 2 (H2):** All things equal, the positive effect of the committee-agenda match on legislative effectiveness will be stronger for members of the majority party than for members in the minority.

This benefit to members of the majority party might only accrue in when particular committee rules are in place, however. Specifically, we are interested in the negative-agenda powers or the ability of committees and committee chairs to block proposals from reaching the floor. Several scholars have emphasized this feature of procedural control as an essential element of majority party power in legislative chambers (Anzia and Jackman 2012; Cox and McCubbins 1993; 2005; Maltzman 1997; Shepsle and Weingast 1987). Majority members can utilize these negative-agenda powers to ensure that the majority party does not get rolled on floor votes by preventing potentially troublesome proposals from leaving committee (Cox and McCubbins 2005). Typically, this negative-agenda power is referred to as *committee gatekeeping* (Anzia and Jackman 2012; Crombez, Groseclose, and Krehbiel 2006; Maltzman 1997; Shepsle and Weingast 1987). Therefore, the value of a good match increases for the majority party and decrease for the minority in chambers that grant committees gatekeeping powers compared with those that do not:

> Hypothesis 3 (H3): All things equal, the pattern predicted in H2 above will be stronger in states with committee gatekeeping powers and weaker in states without these powers.

To reiterate, I contend in H3 that committee gatekeeping power exerts an asymmetric effect on majority and minority matches in such a way that majority members are more advantaged by a good committee-agenda match than minority members. Because gatekeeping powers accrue to the majority and can be used at the expense of the minority, the advantages of good committee assignments take on a more partisan color in states with these rules.

Data and Method

Both the dependent variable and the measure of committee-agenda matching require a relatively detailed account of legislative activity in the states. I obtain these legislative activity data—which includes bill sponsorship, co-sponsorship, and bill actions (amendments, votes, committee action, etc.)—from Open States. Open States is a third-party service that collects publicly available state legislative data from official sources, such as state legislative websites and publications, using automated scraping techniques.[6] While committee assignments and party were drawn directly from the official legislative record for each sample chamber, they were also cross-checked with the Open States data.

In total, the sample includes 12 state lower chambers for the 2011 and 2013 sessions.[7] The sample of 12 chambers constitutes the full range of states for which crucial data were available over the study period. Figure 1 identifies which data were not available for each state not in the sample. As the figure shows, states were excluded from the sample for a lack of complete committee assignment data (21), primary bill sponsor data (13), and committee reference data (3).
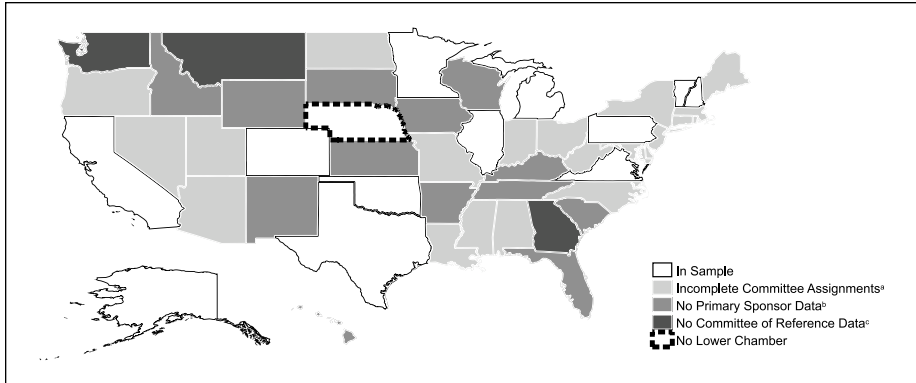
Figure 1. Data availability across all state lower chambers for the 2011–2014 period.
[a]Archived committee assignments are not posted in the journal or on the legislature's website, or the journal is not available.
[b]The Open States data does not provide bill sponsorship or does not differentiate between primary sponsors and co-sponsors.
[c]The Open States data does not identify the committee to which bills are referred.

Although the sample is determined primarily by data availability, it is none-the-less quite representative of all states on many important dimensions. From Figure 2, we can see that sample averages on characteristics like legislative professionalization and party polarization closely mirror the global averages.

Measuring the Committee-Agenda Match in the States

The literature indicates that legislators have incentives to pursue assignments that comport with their policy agendas and that leadership usually has incentives to accommodate member requests. To this point, however, scholars have not proposed a means of assessing the relationship between agendas and assignments; although, measures of the related concepts of leadership accommodation (e.g., Hedlund 1989; Hedlund and Patterson 1992; Rohde and Shepsle 1973; Shepsle 1978) or committee assignment value (e.g., Bullock and Sprague 1969; Munger 1988; Francis 1985; Grosclose and Stewart 1998; 1999) do exist. The primary difficulty in measuring the committee-agenda match is devising a means of estimating individual policy agendas against which we can evaluate a member's committee assignments. In this section, I propose a means of measuring these agendas that leverages a large amount of data on legislative activity to uncover, what I call, "revealed policy agendas." I, then, compare the revealed policy agendas to the actual assignments to generate a measure of the committee-agenda match.

To estimate policy agendas for individual state legislators, I draw on recent scholarship at the national level that relies on aggregating a large number of discrete legislative activities beyond roll-call voting to build relevant individual measures. Several of
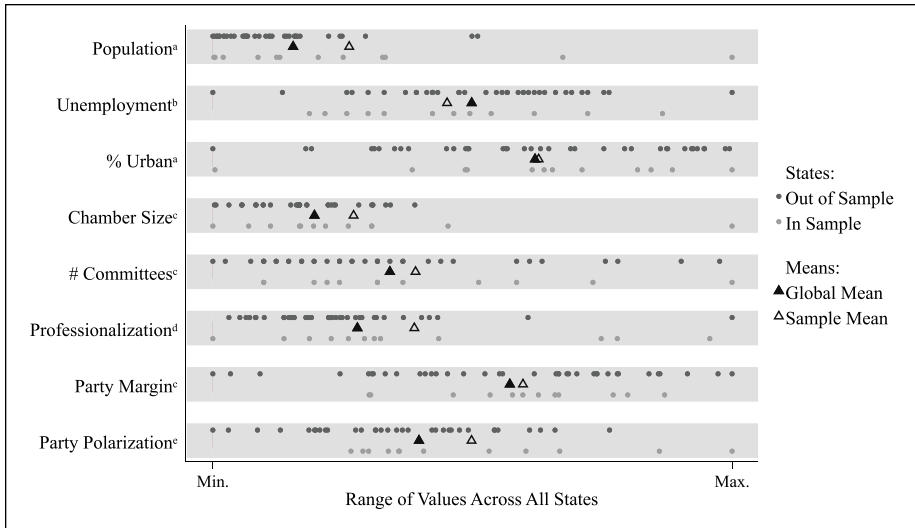
Figure 2. Representativeness of the state sample across eight characteristics: 2011.
Source.
[a]2011 American Community Survey (Census).
[b]U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
[c]2011 Book of the States.
[d]Squire (2017).
[e]Shor and McCarty (2011).

these studies rely on introductions, sponsorships, and co-sponsorships of bills[8] to develop measures of interconnectedness (Cho and Fowler 2010; Fowler 2006), bipartisanship (Harbridge 2015), or position-taking (Rocca and Gordon 2010). Most importantly for this project, these data have also been used to estimate legislator agendas, both at the national level (Sulkin 2011) and in the states (Barnello and Bratton 2007; Bratton and Haynie 1999).

Sulkin (2011) provides the most complete justification for the use of legislative activity in measuring legislator agendas, while investigating if members of Congress pursue their campaign promises through their legislative agendas. Like this project, Sulkin's investigation requires a measure of legislative agendas that can easily be compared and related to another measure—in her case, campaign promises; in mine, committee assignments. Sulkin (2011) utilizes bill introductions and co-sponsorships to assign "ownership" of bills to legislators and then estimate members' agendas by looking at the policy areas addressed by each member's "owned" bills. I employ a similar strategy in state chambers, modified slightly to conform to the dimensionality of the state committee systems.

Because the basis for the committee-agenda match is policy interest, I require a means of relating committee policy jurisdictions to the policy areas of sponsored bills. Traditionally, the policy area of sponsored bills has been determined through analysis

of the bill's content directly. For example, looking at bills in the U.S. Congress, Sulkin (2011) assigns issue codes to bill introductions based on existing codification schemes that are meant to be exhaustive and mutually exclusive. However, because I am interested in comparing agendas with committee assignments, I utilize the already existing classifications created by the committee policy jurisdictions. In other words, the policy jurisdictions created by the committee system also create functional policy categories for the chamber, upon which I base the issue categorization of sponsored legislation.[9] This means that the dimensionality of the policy space, as conceived of here, varies across chambers and is tied to committee system structure. Furthermore, instead of coding the policy substance of individual bills, I rely on legislators and the legislative process to define the bills' policy areas, themselves, by looking to which policy committee the bill is refereed to.[10] Once the policy jurisdictions of sponsored legislation have been determined, I compare each member's distribution of sponsored bills[11] to their distribution of committee assignments across the same policy jurisdictions. One of the great advantages of using legislative activity in this way is that the comparison is made easier by a shared set of policy areas between agendas (as measured here) and committee assignments. I calculate the *committee-agenda distance* for each legislators as the *total, above average sponsorship activity, outside of their committee portfolio*. In other words, the resulting measure provides a sum of "agenda weights" for those agenda items not covered by a legislator's committee assignments. While this description sounds complicated, the intuition behind the measure is straight-forward. Let us delve deeper into the above definition to examine each constituent part.

The first, and most complicated, step is to measure the agenda of a member based on their legislative activity, as outlined above. This involves compiling a list of the member's primary sponsored bills and determining to which committee(s) they are referred. Because different policy areas will be emphasized in different chambers, we then tag committee jurisdictions as being within a member's agenda if they send a higher proportion of their bills to that committee than the average legislator. I examine legislators' proportion of bills as opposed to the number because I expect for there to be significant variation in legislative activity across members. The degree to which the committee jurisdiction is in their agenda is determined by the relative, above-average frequency that their bills go to that committee. Therefore, the "positive deviations from the average" represent the degree to which the proportion of the member's activity in a committee exceeds the average proportion in the chamber. The more the proportion exceeds the average ("positive deviation"), the more space the policy area takes up on the member's agenda. Lines one through three of Table 1 show how the calculation for this portion of the measure is made.

The hypothetical example in Table 1 is based on a legislature with five committees. For our legislator "L," we begin by determining what proportion of her bills were sent to which committees (line 1) and then compare that to the average proportion of bills going to the committees (line 2). We then calculate the deviations from the average, where positive values mean that L sent a higher proportion of bills to the committee than the average legislator. In Table 1, the positive deviations are identified in bold on line 3. We ignore the negative deviation on the agriculture committee because it

Table 1. Calculating the Committee-Agenda Distance for a Hypothetical Legislator.

	Chamber committees				
	Agriculture	Commerce	Education	Natural resources	Transportation
1. Proportion of L's bills	.000	.400	.250	.050	.300
2. Average proportion	.187	.283	.210	.040	.280
3. L's deviations	−.187	**.117**	**.040**	**.010**	**.020**
4. L's assignments		✓			✓
5. L's positive deviations outside committee		.117		.010	
Committee-agenda distance (sum values from line 5)			**.127**		

simply indicates that agriculture issues are not a priority for L. This provides us with an estimate of L's agenda, which is composed of commerce related issues, followed by education, transportation, and natural resources, where the positive deviations weight the importance of agenda items and are referred to as agenda weights.

With the estimate of the member's agenda in hand, I now compare it to the legislator's committee assignments. We accomplish this by summing over the agenda weights, ignoring any for which the legislator sits on the corresponding committee (Table 1, line 5). In other words, when the legislator sits on a committee whose jurisdiction is on their agenda, I count it as a match and treat the agenda weight as being accounted for in their assignments (i.e., equals 0). Therefore, the resulting *committee-agenda distance* is the sum of agenda weights on nonmatched agenda items. Formally, the measure is calculated as follows:

$$C\text{-}A\text{-}D_{ikt} = \sum_{c=1}^{N} \mathbb{R}\left(\left(P_{iktc} - \bar{P}_{ktc}\right)\left|1 - \alpha_{ic}\right|\right), \tag{1}$$

where i indexes the legislators (sponsors); k indexes the chambers; t indexes the sessions; c indexes the committees; P_{ikjc} is legislator i's proportion of sponsored bills that go to committee c in chamber k for session j; $\bar{P}_{ktc}$ is the average chamber proportion of sponsored bills that go to committee c in chamber k for session j; α_{iktc} is a dichotomous $(0,1)$ indicator where 1 indicates that legislator i is assigned to committee c; and $\mathbb{R}(\cdot)$ is the *Ramp function*:

$$\mathbb{R}(x) = \begin{cases} x, x \geq 0 \\ 0, x < 0 \end{cases}.$$

Equation 1 provides us with an individual-level and continuous measure of matching between committees and agendas, where smaller values (distances) equate to

better matches. This measure can range from 0 to 1,[12] where a 0 represents *a perfect match and no legislative activity outside of committee assignments*. A committee-agenda distance of 1 would represent *a perfect mismatch*, where all of the member's legislative activity occurs on bills outside of their committees. Figure 3 shows the distribution of committee-agenda distance for a sample of 12 state lower chambers.

From Figure 3, we can see that in most chambers, the average committee-agenda distance is below .5, where the exception is for New Hampshire (.58). Furthermore, within each chamber there is a significant amount of variation, with California having the smallest ($SD = .106$) and New Hampshire having the largest ($SD = .328$) . We also find some patterns across chambers in Figure 3. In almost half of the chambers (California, Illinois, Oklahoma, Texas, and Vermont), committee-agenda distances appear normally distributed around the mean. In another five chambers (Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Virginia), we observe distributions with longer right-sided tails. In these states, we can say that a large number of legislators have relatively good matches, at the expense of a few with particularly poor ones. In New Hampshire, we see a quite significant left-sided tail. This indicates that most New Hampshire legislators have pretty poor matches (right-sided peak), while a select few have quite good ones. Finally, we also see that most chambers in the sample have relatively stable distributions of committee-agenda distances over time. There are, however, a few chambers where significant change over time can be observed. In Alaska and Minnesota, for example, the distribution of committee-agenda distances become more uniform in 2015, indicating that there might have been a more egalitarian distribution of assignments in that year for those chambers.

To determine the validity of this measure, I assess how it responds to different empirical contexts. The goal is to determine if the measure meets our theoretical expectations of how things should operate in the real world. Specifically, I identify those cases where we would expect for assignment to a specific committee to improve an individual's match and then determine if these expectations are uncovered in the empirical record. The difficulty in this regard is that we have to make certain assumptions about the policy agendas of individual legislators to determine whether assignment would be beneficial or detrimental to their match.

Apart from those features built into the measure (revealed policy agendas), how might we isolate the importance of a single issue to a particular legislator? I propose to do so by looking to the characteristics of the constituents being represented. While constituency characteristics cannot provide us with an assessment of the importance of all policies, we can use them to inform our assumptions about the importance of some specific policies. For example, we might expect for legislators representing constituencies with large numbers of farmers to receive a greater benefit from being assigned to the agriculture committee than those with far fewer farmers to represent. Therefore, we would expect for those legislators with high-demand constituencies in a specific policy area to reduce their committee-agenda distance much more from being assigned to the relevant policy committee than those with low-demand constituencies. This is, in fact, what the data reveal.
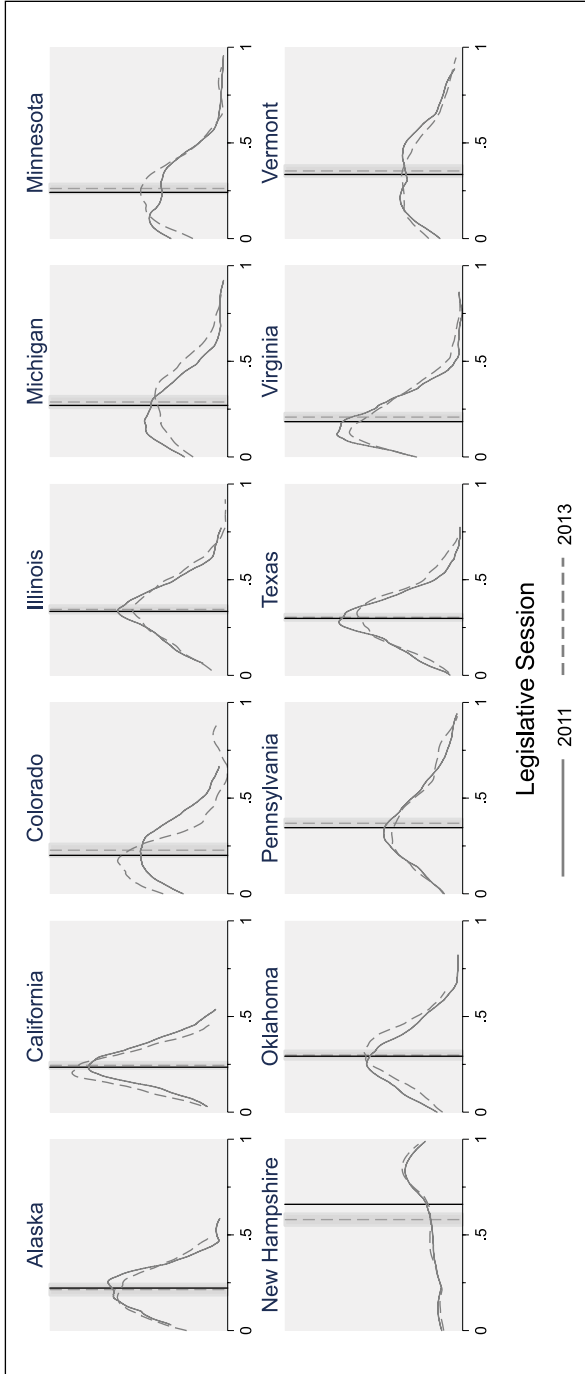
Figure 3. The distribution of committee-agenda distance by state lower chamber.
Note. Vertical dashed lines and gray area indicate chamber means and 95% confidence interval, respectfully. Vertical solid lines indicate the median. The global mean is .338 with a standard deviation of .23.

In Table 2, I identify high- and low-constituent demand groups among all of the legislators from the sample chambers for three policy areas: agriculture, education, and finance/insurance. Using a similar methodology to Adler and Lapinski (1997), the degree of constituent demand is determined by legislative district employment data from the Census' American Community Survey obtained via the *IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System*. For every district, I calculated the within-state percentile of constituent employment with each of the three policy areas. I then classify the top 10% within each state as high-demand and the bottom 10% as low-demand constituencies.[13]

From Table 2, we can see that for high-demand constituencies, those legislators assigned to the relevant policy committee have statistically smaller committee-agenda distances than those who are not. This is particularly pronounced for legislators serving constituencies with high demands for representation in education policy. The average difference in the committee-agenda distances between those with assignments to education committees and those without is −.111, or a little less than one-half of a standard deviation (*SD*). Furthermore, the differences among the education and finance/insurance low-demand groups are much smaller than for their high-demand counterparts and not statistically discernible from 0. For the low-demand agriculture group, the difference is actually positive, yet, also statistically indistinct from 0. These results from Table 2 comport with my expectation that the committee-agenda match should improve as committee assignments better reflect constituent demand and, therefore, suggest the measure is tapping into the concept of the committee-agenda match in a meaningful way. We now turn to a brief application of the measure to assess its substantive importance to the field of state legislative politics and procedure.

Measuring Legislative Effectiveness in the States

The dependent variable in this analysis is individual legislative effectiveness, which I have defined as a member's ability to shepherd their proposals through the legislative process. Early work on legislative effectiveness usually followed one of two measurement strategies. First, a series of works relied on surveys of various elites to develop perceptual measures of individual legislative effectiveness (Francis 1962; 1989; Hall 1992; Meyer 1980; Miquel and Snyder 2006; Weissert 1991a; 1991b). While these measures have the advantage of capturing perceived influence that might not be picked up by the legislative record (Volden and Wiseman 2014), they also have some serious setbacks. Surveys, especially across several chambers, can be expensive and time consuming to field. Many elites—whether other legislators, lobbyists, or staffers—might have little to say about the majority of members, focusing on only a few who are particularly outspoken and influential. In addition, surveys are also prone to nonresponse bias and various other forms of bias that might be more problematic given the particularly salient and politically relevant contexts in which elite respondents find themselves. Surveys were neither a feasible nor desirable approach for this project, and, so, let us turn to the second method.

Table 2. Committee-Agenda (C-A) Distances for Legislators Whose Assignments Do and Do Not Meet Constituent Demand.

Constituent demand[a]	Policy/committee jurisdiction	Legislators without the policy relevant committee assignment(s)		Legislators with the policy relevant committee assignment(s)			
		N	Mean C-A distance	N	Mean C-A distance	Difference	95% confidence interval
High	Agriculture	326	.382	132	.305	-.077**	[-.128, -.025]
	Education	209	.403	56	.292	-.111**	[-.030, -.190]
	Finance/insurance	368	.380	89	.317	-.063*	[-.124, -.002]
Low	Agriculture	460	.378	26	.410	.031	[-.077, .139]
	Education	159	.355	42	.280	-.075	[-.003, .154]
	Finance/insurance	337	.351	55	.343	-.008	[-.076, .060]

[a]Constituent demand for representation on the specific policy jurisdiction is measured using constituent employment data from the Census American Community Survey (obtained via NHGIS.org).
*p < .05. **p < .01.

The second approach to measuring legislative effectiveness is to calculate the success rates of sponsored legislation. Most commonly, scholars consider the proportion of a legislator's sponsored bills that become law (Anderson, Box-Steffensmeier, and Sinclair-Chapman 2003; Box-Steffensmeier and Grant 1999; Bratton and Haynie 1999; Cox and Terry 2008; Frantzich 1979; Hasecke and Mycoff 2007; Kousser 2006; Matthews 1960; Moore and Thomas 1991). This approach improves on the survey-based methods by relying only on the published record and removing the potential for perceptual biases that come with survey-based measures. Hit rates, however, come with their own set of shortcomings. As Kousser (2007) notes, hit rates say absolutely nothing about how active members are in general. More importantly, hit rates ignore the intervening stages of the legislative process (Volden and Wiseman 2014). Volden and Wiseman (2014) argue that progression through the legislative stages contributes to effectiveness, even when bills fail to become enacted. They demonstrate that progression that falls short of enactment does still influence a legislator's ability to move future legislation forward. Volden and Wiseman (2014, 25) propose a *Legislative Effectiveness Score* that accounts for progress at five specific stages of the legislative process: bill introduction, action in committee, action out of committee, passes the chamber, and becomes law.

I follow the insights from Volden and Wiseman (2014) and construct a measure of effectiveness that considers the progression of bills through the legislative process.[14] Specifically, I measure *state legislative effectiveness scores* (SLE scores) with the following equation:

$$\text{SLES}_{ikt} = \left[\frac{\text{BILL}_{ikt}}{\sum\limits_{j=1}^{N}\text{BILL}_{jkt}} + \frac{\text{AIC}_{ikt}}{\sum\limits_{j=1}^{N}\text{AIC}_{jkt}} + \frac{\text{ABC}_{ikt}}{\sum\limits_{j=1}^{N}\text{ABC}_{jkt}} + \frac{\text{PASS}_{ikt}}{\sum\limits_{j=1}^{N}\text{PASS}_{jkt}} + \frac{\text{LAW}_{ikt}}{\sum\limits_{j=1}^{N}\text{LAW}_{jkt}} \right] \left[\frac{\bar{N}}{5} \right], \quad (2)$$

where[15] *i* indexes the legislators (sponsors); *k* indexes the chambers; *t* indexes the sessions; BILL is a bill introduction; AIC is a bill that receives committee action; ABC is a bill that receives action out of committee; PASS is a bill that passes the chamber; LAW is a bill that becomes law; and $\bar{N}$ is the average number of legislators by chamber.

The measure is a cumulative sum of proportions that is then normalized by the weight $\bar{N}/5$ to set the global mean to 1. SLE scores have several appealing features. First, because the denominator of the fractions at each stage is a subset of the one in the previous stage, each stage is naturally weighted based on the propensity of bills to get to that stage in the chamber. For example, if there are 500 introductions and legislator *i* sponsored 10 of them, the proportion at the first stage ($\text{BILL}_{ikt} / \sum\limits_{j=1}^{N} \text{BILL}_{jkt}$) would be .02. However, if only 100 of the 500 introductions receive actions in committee, but if all of *i*'s 10 bills are included among them, the proportion at the second stage ($\text{AIC}_{ikt} / \sum\limits_{j=1}^{N} \text{AIC}_{jkt}$), for the same 10 bills, would equal .1 due to the change

in the denominator. Because bills that received committee action were five times less common than introductions, each bill receiving action in committee was weighted five times that of an introduction. This natural weighting based on the prevalence of legislation reaching each step allows me to avoid artificially weighting each stage. The downside to this feature of the measure is that because it implements chamber specific weights, some of the cross-chamber variation is diminished.[16] From Figure 4, which shows the distribution of SLE scores across the sample, we can see that the chamber means are quite consistent (at around one). We still see a good amount of variation within chambers, and the distributions take a variety of shapes across chambers.

Other Variables and Controls

To test the conditional hypotheses, I require additional data on member party status (H2) and the chamber rules governing committee gatekeeping (H3). Member party affiliation is recorded in the Open States data and was extensively cross-checked with legislative journals to ensure validity. To determine majority status, I rely on the *Book of the States*. In terms of the gatekeeping status of standing committees, Anzia and Jackman (2012) have collected data on committee gatekeeping in all 99 partisan state chambers using a survey of legislative clerks.[17] I incorporate their dichotomous indicator as my measure of committee gatekeeping.

I also control for various other potential confounders. First, I include two controls for general policy orientation: party affiliation and ideological extremism. To control for party affiliation, I use a dichotomous variable indicating if the legislator is a Democrat; although, I have no specific expectations regarding this variable. For extremism, I rely on the ideological distance from the chamber median, as calculated by Shor and McCarty (2011).[18] I include another four controls related to the legislators' general status in the chamber, where I expect for higher status to positively affect effectiveness. The first indicator of status is a dichotomous variable for party leadership, which includes the top two leaders of each party for each chamber. The second status indicator is for committee chairs and vice chairs. Third, I include an indicator for members with committee assignments on control committees.[19] Given previous findings (Cox and Terry 2008; Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Miquel and Snyder 2006; Volden and Wiseman 2014; Weissert 1991b), I expect for leaders, committee chairs, and members of control committees to have more say over outcomes than the average member, which should allow them to have higher levels of effectiveness. The final legislative status indicator is for legislative tenure, which I measure as years of service in the chamber. These data were collected from various sources, including the Klarner et al. (2013) legislative elections data set, state legislative journals, and various online sources for legislative information, including *Ballotpedia.org* and local news sources. Tenure has consistently been found to be a strong indicator of effectiveness at the state level (Meyer 1980; Miquel and Snyder 2006; Weissert 1991b) and national level (Cox and Terry 2008; Jeydel and Taylor 2003; Moore and Thomas 1991; Volden and Wiseman 2014).
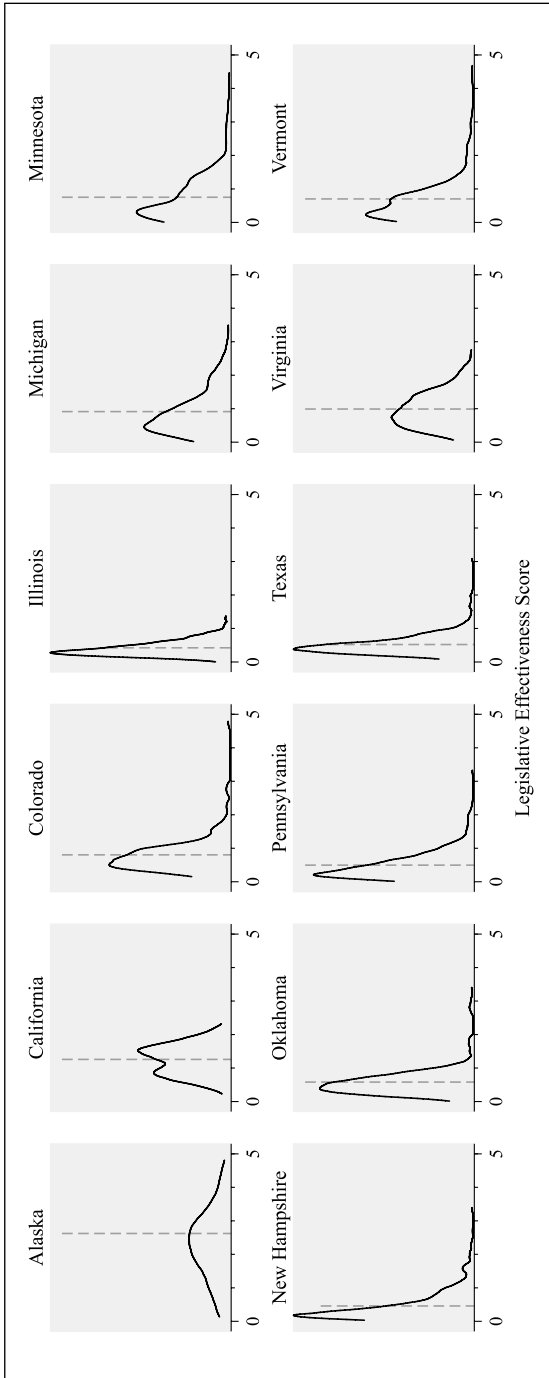
Figure 4. The distribution of state legislative effectiveness scores by state lower chamber.
Note. Dashed lines indicate chamber means. The global mean is .714 with a standard deviation of .663.

I also control for the number of standing committee assignments, which I expect will increase members' ability to influence the process and, therefore, should positively contribute to effectiveness. Because most of the research on legislative effectiveness has been confined to examining one or a handful of chambers where the number of assignments varies little, tests for these effects are lacking. The final individual-level control was obtained from Klarner et al. (2013) and is the legislator's electoral vote margin in the previous election. I expect that for a smaller margin to increase effectiveness, as legislators who may be electorally vulnerable try to secure their future seat advancing the policy interests of their constituents.

In addition to the gatekeeping indicator, I also include two other chamber-level variables. First, I include the size of the chamber, as measured in seats and obtained from *The Book of the States*. I expect for members in larger chambers to have a more difficult time passing their proposals, as they face more competition than those in smaller chambers. The last chamber-level control is for the degree of legislative professionalization (Squire 1992; 2007; 2017). Professionalization is a measure of key resources—primarily time, pay, and staff—available to the members in a particular chamber. Higher levels of professionalization should encourage more effectiveness as members have more resources at their disposal to help them succeed. Finally, I control for the effects of each session with a dichotomous indicator that takes a value of 1 for the second session and 0 for the first.

Because I am testing the effects of both individual- and chamber-level variables on an individual-level outcome, my data are nested, and, thus, I make use of hierarchical models with random intercepts for each chamber.[20] The advantage to this approach is that it addresses the within-chamber correlation among units resulting from chamber-level unobserved heterogeneity, by allowing the intercept to vary by state (Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012). This approach also corrects for downward biased uncertainty estimates for chamber-level covariates in standard pooled models (Bickel 2007). Given that I am interested in knowing the effects of chamber-level variables—specifically relating to the presence of gatekeeping committees—on individual behavior, these models are the most appropriate.

Results

Table 3 provides the estimates of my random-intercept models of legislative effectiveness. Model 3a presents the estimates for the additive-only model, where we find that a 1 *SD* decrease in committee-agenda distance yields an increase in the SLE score of almost .2. While this effect is somewhat substantively small, it is nevertheless larger than the effect of holding a committee chair or being in the majority party. This result provides support for H1, that better committee-agenda matches improve legislative effectiveness.

Most of the controls in the model perform as expected. Being in the majority party has a significant positive effect on legislative effectiveness, while ideological distance from the chamber median has a negative one. Being a Democrat appears, on average, to reduce legislative effectiveness, but being in a leadership position has no discernible

Table 3. The Interactive Effects of Committee-Agenda (C-A) Distance, Party Status, and Gatekeeping Powers on Legislative Effectiveness in State Lower Chambers.

	Model 3a		Model 3b		Model 3c	
Fixed effects						
Interactions						
C-A distance	−0.755***	(0.047)	−0.544***	(0.066)	−0.506***	(0.102)
Majority party	0.182***	(0.030)	0.410***	(0.102)	0.381*	(0.174)
Gatekeeping	−0.267	(0.266)	−0.230	(0.177)	−0.207	(0.182)
C-A-D × Majority			−0.331***	(0.089)	−0.139	(0.132)
C-A-D × Gatekeeping					−0.066	(0.134)
Gatekeeping × Majority					0.065	(0.210)
C-A-D × Majority × Gatekeeping					−0.391*	(0.179)
Legislator variables						
Extremism	−0.050*	(0.020)	−0.022	(0.024)	−0.022	(0.024)
Democrat	−0.081***	(0.019)	−0.075*	(0.032)	−0.075*	(0.032)
Leader	−0.096	(0.084)	−0.144	(0.082)	−0.121	(0.082)
Committee chair	0.171***	(0.024)	0.123***	(0.025)	0.122***	(0.025)
Control committee	0.078*	(0.029)	0.084**	(0.028)	0.082**	(0.028)
Tenure (years)	0.005**	(0.002)	0.005***	(0.002)	0.005***	(0.002)
No. of bills sponsored	0.019***	(0.001)	0.018***	(0.001)	0.018***	(0.001)
No. of committees	0.040***	(0.012)	0.020	(0.012)	0.018	(0.012)
Vote margin	0.058*	(0.029)	0.058*	(0.028)	0.055*	(0.028)
Chamber variables						
Chamber bills	−0.000**	(0.000)	−0.000***	(0.000)	−0.000***	(0.000)
Chamber seats	−0.002	(0.001)	−0.001	(0.001)	−0.001	(0.001)
Professionalization	−0.118	(0.409)	−0.065	(0.346)	−0.072	(0.345)
2013 session	−0.013	(0.020)	−0.018	(0.019)	−0.018	(0.019)
Constant	1.292***	(0.226)	1.259***	(0.225)	1.251***	(0.226)
Random effects						
Var(Majority Party)	—		.064***	(.029)	.064***	(.029)
Var(Constant)	.159***	(.049)	.100***	(.046)	.102***	(.046)
Var(Residual)	.200***	(.005)	.186***	(.005)	.185***	(.005)
Chambers	12		12		12	
N	2,392		2,392		2,392	
Akaike information criterion	3,037.081		2,892.097		2,883.210	
Log Likelihood	−1,499.541		−1,425.049		−1,417.605	
ρ	.443		.257		.258	

Note. Estimates are coefficients from a hierarchical linear model with varying intercepts and slope (majority party). Standard errors in parentheses.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Figure 5. The effects of committee-agenda distance (+1 *SD*) on state legislative effectiveness scores by party status.
Note. The changes in the dependent variable shown above were calculated based on the estimates from Table 3, model 3b, and reflect the result of an increase in committee-agenda distance by 1 *SD* (.23).

effect. As expected, being on a control committee or being the chair of a committee does increase your legislative effectiveness score, as does a member's tenure in the chamber. Members with more committee assignments and more bills sponsored should also expect their effectiveness scores to be higher than those with fewer. The only chamber-level control that yielded a statistically significant result was that for the total number of bills. Legislators in very active chambers tend to be more effective than those in less active ones.

To investigate the effects of majority and minority committee-agenda distance (H2), I introduce an interaction in model 3b.[21] Because of the interaction, the coefficient for committee-agenda distance indicates its effect for members of the minority party (when Majority = 0), where it is negative and significant in both models. The effect for majority members can be computed by adding the coefficients for committee-agenda distance and that of the interaction (C-A-D × Majority). The effect for the majority party is also negative and statistically significant. Figure 5 presents the effects of a 1 *SD* increase in committee-agenda distance on SLE scores.

Figure 5 shows a statistically significant partisan difference in the way the committee match conditions SLE scores. In fact, the majority gains more than twice the advantage that the minority receives from a good match. A decrease in committee-agenda distance of 1 *SD* increases SLE scores by .202 for majority members, while only .126 for minority members. Furthermore, we have more than 95% confidence that the estimates for majority and minority members in Figure 5 are statistically different from each other. We also see improvements in fit between models 3a and 3b. Figure 5 provides strong support for H2, that the positive effect of committee-agenda match on legislative effectiveness will be stronger for majority members than minority members. Apart from the effects of committee-agenda matching, we also see that the estimates for the control variables remain quite stable across specifications.
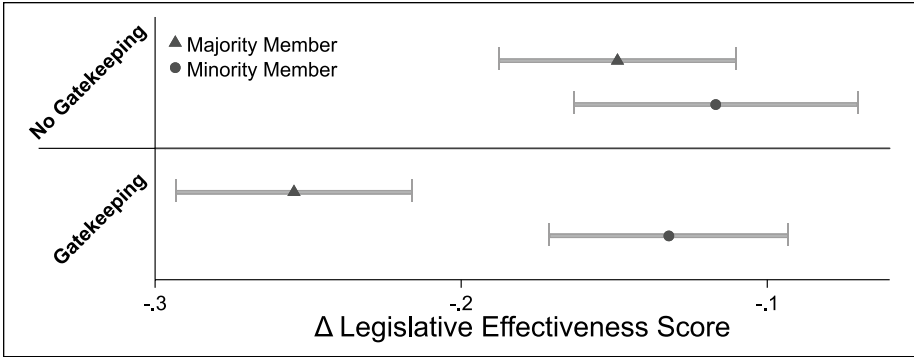
Figure 6. The effects of committee-agenda distance (+1 *SD*) on state legislative effectiveness scores given party status and committee gatekeeping powers.
Note. The changes in the dependent variable shown above were calculated based on the estimates from Table 3, model 3c, and reflect the result of an increase in committee-agenda distance by 1 *SD* (.23).

To test H3, I estimate an additional model that includes the three-way interaction term between committee-agenda distance, majority party status, and the presence of committee gatekeeping (Table 3, model 3c). Because of the three-way interaction, the negative coefficient for committee-agenda distance represent the effect of going from 0 to 1 on committee-agenda distance for minority members in chambers without gatekeeping. To assess the interaction more thoroughly, I illustrate these conditional effects in Figure 6.

Figure 6 presents the effects of increasing committee-agenda distance by 1 *SD* across four scenarios for model 3c. From the figure, we can see that in non-gatekeeping states, the point estimates for majority and minority members are quite close and have overlapping 95% confidence intervals. In gatekeeping states, the effect seems mostly unchanged for minority members, while for majority members we see a much stronger negative effect on SLE scores. Furthermore, as anticipated in H3, the difference among majority and minority members in gatekeeping states is much greater than in non-gatekeeping states. The effect for majority members in gatekeeping states is also statistically different from the majority effect in non-gatekeeping states. Therefore, Figure 6 provides support for H3, in that we see majority members receiving an increased relative advantage from their matches in gatekeeping states.

Although I find support for all three of the proposed hypotheses, we might consider the robustness of these findings to different measures of legislative effectiveness. Table 4 shows the differences in partisan effects of committee-agenda distance on eight different measures of effectiveness: the number of bills (1) introduced, (2) passing committee, (3) passing the chamber, and (4) being enacted by each legislator.

The entries in Table 4 correspond to the impact that a 1 *SD* increase in the committee-agenda match has on the majority party advantage in legislative effectiveness. As such, my theory anticipates stronger (more positive) relative partisan effects of matching in gatekeeping states than in non-gatekeeping states. Table 4 further supports this

Table 4. The Majority Party Advantage from a 1 *SD* Increase in Committee Matching across Various Measures of Legislative Effectiveness.

Dependent variable	Gatekeeping	Majority party advantage[a]	
Introductions	✗	−0.881*	(0.345)
	✓	1.307***	(0.346)
Passing committee	✗	−0.376	(0.410)
	✓	3.942**	(1.390)
Passing chamber	✗	−0.096	(0.269)
	✓	1.287**	(0.408)
Becoming law	✗	0.122	(0.347)
	✓	1.043*	(0.409)

[a]Estimates are derived from hierarchical Poisson models, with random intercepts for chambers where the dependent variable is the count of the legislator's bills.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

contention, as we find significant positive effects in gatekeeping states across all of the dependent variables. In addition, we see the largest magnitude effect for the match occurring among majority members in gatekeeping states at the committee passage stage. This strongly comports with the theory presented, as we should expect for good committee matches to influence committee stages most strongly. In terms of bill introductions, we actually see a minor advantage for the minority party from improvements in matching in non-gatekeeping states. This unexpected result, however, is not replicated for the dependent variables that consider later stages of bill success. In all, Table 4 provides added confidence for the inferences derived from the main models in Table 3.

Conclusion

I have argued for a different conception of the value of committee assignments, one that focuses on the needs and goals of individual legislators. Specifically, I have proposed assessing this value in terms of how well committee assignments match up with the particular legislative policy interests. I argued that the match between a legislator's committee assignments and personal policy agendas are not perfect, even though members tend to request committees for policy reasons, and leadership tends to accommodate requests. I have presented a novel way of measuring the distance between legislators' committee assignments and policy agendas that relies on legislative activity to reveal policy areas of particular interest to specific legislators. I further argued that committee-agenda matching should increase an individual member's ability to shepherd their proposals through the legislative process. Using hierarchical random intercept models of state legislative effectiveness scores, I have shown that committee-agenda matching does indeed matter. In fact, a decrease in committee-agenda distance by 1½ *SD*s has a stronger positive effect on legislative effectiveness than being in the majority party.

Legislators who find themselves on committees that match their policy interests appear to be more effective than those who do not. By looking to the states, this analysis was also able to leverage variation in partisan control and institutional arrangements to more fully outline the relationship between committee-agenda matching and legislative effectiveness. I have found that the committee-agenda match tends to benefit the majority more than the minority, even when controlling for party identification, ideological extremism, status in the chamber, and tenure. Furthermore, as expected, the presence of gatekeeping increases the effect of matching for the majority but not the minority (Figure 6). In line with H3, this finding supports the argument that when a majority member has a good match in gatekeeping states, they tend to advance more of their proposals further than minority members with good matches. In non-gatekeeping states, the match has similar effects on legislative effectiveness for both minority and majority members.

This finding is important for legislative scholars because it demonstrates two key points. First, legislative effectiveness is not solely the result of personal characteristics of the legislators, like many previous studies at the national-level have considered (e.g., Volden and Wiseman 2014). Rather, legislators take advantage of their institutional positions to ensure their proposals make it through the process. My findings have shown that a particularly advantageous institutional position can be found at the confluence of committee assignments, policy agendas, and party. Second, the structure of the committee system is important for legislative outcomes, at least insofar as it contributes to the matching of committees with agendas. There is significant variation in committee system structure across American legislatures; some more conducive to matching, while others may be less so. This analysis constitutes the first attempt to outline how and when committee systems are best-suited to producing relevant outcomes. Significant mismatches across an entire chamber could place a large amount of power in the hands of a small number of legislators. For this reason, an important next step is identifying the predictors of good and bad matches, both at the individual level and at the institutional level. In doing so, we might better understand the ways in which legislative institutions condition individual behavior and, consequently, the resulting policy outcomes.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. The debates among the advocates of the various theories of legislative organization all, at least tangentially, relate to the role of the committee system (Groseclose and King 2001).
2. From here on rank-and-file members will simply be referred to as members, who are distinct from leaders. In the context of this project, leaders are always those members who have formal input into distributing assignments.
3. Although not articulated in these terms, Cox and McCubbins (1993, 30–31) level a similar critique against the accommodation and self-selection hypotheses.
4. Here I am referring to expansion that is motivated by a leadership accommodation strategy and not by demand for new committees with new policy jurisdictions. This kind of demand for expansion results from the emergence of new issues or the increased salience of existing issues.
5. In 2011, for example, 82% of House members had one (37%) or two (45%) assignments. A little more than 17% had three assignments, and only two members had four.
6. More information on Open States' methodologies as well as access to the data are available on their website: https://openstates.org/.
7. In the case of Virginia, I use the 2010 and 2012 sessions given their off-year election cycle.
8. The terminology for the concepts of introductions, sponsors, and co-sponsors varies across the states. In this article, a bill sponsor—occasionally referred to in the states as "author" or "primary sponsor"—is(are) the legislator(s) that introduces the bill in question. Introductions are the number of bills introduced by the sponsor. Co-sponsors are members, who are not responsible for introductions but sponsor a bill as a sign of support.
9. I omit committees that do not have a substantive policy jurisdiction. This primarily included the control committees of Rules, Ways and Means, and Appropriations, as well as those committees performing these functions but differently named.
10. Because sponsored bills are usually referred to committee after members have received their assignments, concerns may arise that this method relies on an endogenous account of legislators' agendas. Specifically, if the type of bills introduced or the committees they are referred to are conditioned by assignments, then my measure might not account for the distance between two independent distributions. Specifically, were assignments to encourage legislators to work on issues outside of their committee portfolios, the measure would artificially inflate distance. However, it is unlikely that committee assignments, even those outside of the member's agenda, would compel members to work outside of their committee portfolio. Rather, the effect of committee assignments would most likely encourage legislators to engage more on issues in their committee portfolio than we might expect from their agenda. Here I assume that the degree to which this is true is a function of how attached legislators are to their prior agendas. If they are strongly attached, we should expect for assignments to exert less of a pull on legislators' behavior than if they are only weakly attached to their agenda or have very little agenda at all.
11. I specifically only look at bills with policy content. Therefore, I drop all resolutions, as well as bills not sent to policy committees.

12. Although this measure could theoretically reach 1, those scenarios are not realistic. As such, the in-sample maximum is .98.

13. For education, I look to the top and bottom 5% because demand for education policy should be much more ubiquitous and evenly distributed across the state than for the other two policies.

14. In addition to considering progression through these stages, Volden and Wiseman's (2014) measure also accounts for the importance of bills through a weighting system. Unfortunately, the data necessary to differentiate among bills in this manner is not yet available at the state level.

15. I use the same notation as Volden and Wiseman (2014).

16. Volden and Wiseman also normalize the measure by multiplying it by $N/5$, which sets the chamber means to 1. Since I calculate these values across multiple chambers, where N varies, I standardize by the average chamber size across sample chambers.

17. Although Anzia and Jackman are examining roll-rates for the 1999–2000 legislative session, they collected gatekeeping data based on surveys fielded in 2010. They argue that these institutions have not changed much since 1999. Since my data began in 2011, their 2010 survey responses should be accurate.

18. Shor and McCarty have extended the data set of state legislative ideology to 2014 and made these data available on their website: https://americanlegislatures.com/data/.

19. Control Committees are coded as follows. AK: Finance, Rules; CA: Appropriations, Revenue & Taxation, Rules; IL: Appropriations; IL: Revenue & Finance, Rules; MI: Appropriations; MN: Rules & Legislative Administration, Ways & Means; NH: Ways & Means, Rules; PA: Appropriations; TX: Appropriations, Rules & Resolutions, Ways & Means; VA: Appropriations, Rules.

20. Comparable fixed effects specifications with quasi-demeaned data (Wooldridge 2009, 489–91) yield substantively similar results across all models presented in this chapter.

21. The interaction models also include random slopes for majority party membership.

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