There and Back Again: Using State Legislative Term Limits in Oregon and Michigan to Assess the Institutional Consequences of the 'Reelection Imperative'

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This paper advocates a more general theoretical foundation for the study of legislative organization than that provided by the reelection imperative. The basis for this more general framework is Schlesinger's (1966) Ambition Theory. The paper presents some predictions about legislative committees that come out of this Ambition Theory of Legislative Organization, and tests them using the natural experiment provided by state legislative term limits. The hypotheses are tested in the Michigan and Oregon legislatures, both of which experienced term limits, though their experiences diverged when Oregon's term limits were struck down by the courts. These scenarios provide research designs in which serious threats to validity that plague similar institutional analyses can be reduced. The empirical results provide evidence in support of the predictions, suggesting that with some modifications, the theory may have applications across a broad set of legislatures.

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> *[T]hose...who have seen the "reelection imperative" as the major driving force for understanding legislatures (especially the United States House) and the behavior in it can be seen as investigating a special case of ambition theory* (Aldrich 1995, 311).

This paper is about how a broader view of legislators' motivations plays out in the context of the United States Congress. Aldrich's (1995) suggestion that the reelection imperative is a special case of ambition theory means that our understanding of Congress, and of legislatures generally, may benefit from a consideration of ambition theory. This is especially true if we want to take our models of the U.S. Congress and apply and test them in other legislative contexts.

More specifically, the theoretical toolkit that has been developed in modern congressional scholarship must be augmented and improved before the insights of the congressional literature can be brought to bear on the more general study of legislatures. The reelection imperative has been a profoundly useful and successful foundation for theories of congressional organization, but it is an assumption that we know is false.[1] For the assumption of the reelection imperative to be shown false in the context of the U.S. Congress, all that needs to be observed is that some members choose not to run for reelection at the end of any given Congress–(leaving aside those who die) some retire from politics and others run for some other elective office.

A broader view of legislative politics reveals an important property of what I term 'the ambition theory of legislative organization'. Ambition theory can help build a theory of legislative organization that can be generalized beyond a single, fixed set of institutions. We can think of the theoretical advantage of the more general notion of ambition theory both in terms of the potential individual-level variation in the ambitions that drive politicians *and*

[1] As a survey of the philosophy of science tells us, the simplifying assumptions of every theory are false, on some level. In fact, theories are consciously false in their assumptions, in that they simplify reality such that profoundly complex phenomena are rendered explicable, an analytic strategy that is due to the limitations of human understanding. The most important consideration in constructing new theories is whether assumptions that are marginally less false allow us to derive predictions that are enough closer to empirical reality to justify the increased complexity of our theories. It may be more art than science, however, to determine where increased predictive power justifies increased theoretical complexity.

in terms of system-level variation in the sorts of exogenous factors that aid and constrain the fulfillment of those ambitions. Viewing important aspects of legislative structure as endogenous and driven by the goal-oriented behavior of self-interested legislators, while at the same time observing evidence of goals beyond just the reelection imperative, suggests room for applying our understanding of congressional organization, with changes at the theoretical margins, much more broadly.

One way to demonstrate the theoretical advantages of this enterprize might be to apply an ambition theory of legislative organization to the institutional development of a legislature over time. The problem with this approach, however, is that despite a long history of institutionalization (Polsby 1968) punctuated by occasional and seemingly drastic reforms (see Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 2005, Chapter 4), the fundamental structure of the Congress today is arguably little changed from where it stood following passage of the 17th Amendment. This is because, while the typical style of campaigning has certainly changed, and the relative balance of power within the two chambers of the Congress among individual members of the House and Senate, the committees, and the parties (majority and minority) have changed, the fundamental nature of what Schlesinger (1966, 5) calls "the electoral conditions which satisfy [politician's ambitions]" have not been radically altered.

In particular, Mayhew's (1974) argument that members of Congress can be viewed as single-minded pursuers of reelection was (and remains) fundamental to the study of the Congress because the electoral conditions surrounding the pursuit and retention of a seat in Congress have changed relatively little, when viewed broadly and on a long enough time horizon. Katz and Sala (1996) pinpoint one of the last monumental changes in the electoral conditions faced by members of Congress as the rapid adoption of the secret ballot that took place around the country in the 1890s, and use it to demonstrate the organizational effects of the electoral connection. Indeed, the consolidation of these effects, which can be observed in the existence of a significant incumbency advantage, begin to be seen at least as far back as the 1920s (Cummings 1966).

I ask a question related to Adler's (2002, 1) question, "Why is congressional structure so 'sticky'?", asking instead "When might legislative structure cease to be sticky?" The answer I provide is that it is when legislators have no incentive to maintain existing arrangements; when, in other words, the electoral connection has been severed. Scholars have examined related questions often at the level of the individual legislator, looking for evidence of ideological shirking by departing members of the United States House of Representatives (Jenkins, Crespin, and Carson 2005; Rothenberg and Sanders 2000), but the wholesale dissolution of the electoral connection that would be necessary to move from the erosion of representation of constituents by particular legislators to a radical remaking of legislative institutions is an extraordinarily remote possibility in the United States Congress. But such is a reality in state legislatures that have faced the imposition of term limits, wherein careerism as we have generally understood it becomes necessarily absent.

In this paper, then, I present what may appear to be a novel test of the electoral connection in the mold of Katz and Sala (1996). But the argument and the test of its implications go further than that, to show explicitly what ambition theory can add to our understanding of the connection between members' motivations and legislative organization. To state it another way, arguments about legislators' utilization of committees as means to the achievement of their career goals need to be capable of accounting for *variation in those goals*.

The argument is a simple one, and takes advantage of the natural experiment represented by state legislative term limits. Despite its simplicity, though, the argument has a number of testable implications, only some of which will be explored in this paper. I begin by returning to the theme that animates the larger project of which this essay is a part– questioning the fundamental motivational assumption of modern legislative scholarship.

> I shall conjure up a vision of United States congressmen as single-minded seekers of reelection, see what kinds of activity that goal implies, and then speculate about how congressmen so motivated are likely to go about building and sus-

taining legislative institutions and making policy (Mayhew 1974, 5-6).

For Mayhew, this simplifying assumption implies particular activities in which members of Congress engage in order to further their reelection prospects. These activities in turn imply structural features of Congress as an institution that help facilitate these activities. But when the fundamental behavioral assumption posited by Mayhew is changed, not by the analyst but by exogenous changes in the institutions of a legislature, certain fundamental behavioral and structural predictions are affected as well. As I will argue, the imposition of term limits represents this sort of exogenous change, and it has consequences for the sorts of organizational features legislators seek to maintain and those they seek to (or allow to) change.

An Ambition Theory of Institutional Maintenance

> *As a political institution goes through a period of change, the functioning of its subunits may be altered. Some of the institutional changes and reforms may be aimed directly at particular subunits. However, a subunit may change because developments in the larger institution or other subunits cause or offer it new roles to perform in the overall operation of the institution* (Oppenheimer 1977, 96).

Here, I present a theory of institutional maintenance that is intended both to be general in its application but also to point to a particular set of predictions, relating to legislative term limits, that diverge from those that would be derived from the more traditional theories of congressional organization that have come out of Mayhew's (1974) electoral connection. In fact, if we take the electoral connection at face value, any theory that takes it as its core assumption really cannot make predictions about how a legislature should respond to term limits, institutionally. Addressing this particular deficiency would be interesting, but I view term limits as a way to address the more general question of how we should think about legislatures in which reelection is not the only career goal.

Despite a move in recent years away from the "textbook" dominant committee theories

of legislative organization, it is still difficult to argue against the fundamental importance of committees in legislative decisionmaking and in how members use the institutional structure of the legislature to pursue their goals.[2] While it can be argued that members of every legislature might have a variety of goals beyond simply that of reelection, the crucial link between a more nuanced understanding of legislators' goals and the endogeneity of legislative institutions remains to be shown. If we understand the structure of committees, in particular, to be the product of the set of legislators' goals we assume, then changing our assumptions in this regard should change our understanding of and our predictions about legislative committees.[3]

Whether or not a particular structure (or aspect thereof) helps a legislator pursue her goals is dependent upon what those goals are, and what sort of activities those goals entail. As Mayhew has suggested, the goal(s) that we assume a legislator uses her office to pursue determine the activities that our theory predicts she will engage in. A concern for the maintenance of a particular structure within a legislative institution is driven by a concern for how that structure, as it exists, helps a legislator pursue his goals. More specifically, a concern for individuals' committee seat property rights is largely driven by careerism (Katz and Sala 1996), or, in other words, the electoral connection (Mayhew 1974). "Careerism" and the "electoral connection" are essentially synonymous with what Schlesinger (1966) termed static ambition (Aldrich 1995, 311). But Schlesinger points to two other sorts of ambition that politicians might have instead of static ambition–progressive ambition, which entails the desire for higher office, and discrete ambition, which entails politicians viewing their service in their current office, and their 'career' in politics as a temporary thing.

We could imagine the membership of any particular legislature as distributed into these three different categories of ambition, and think about how that distribution will produce

[2]Indeed, even partisan theories of legislative organization recognize the importance of committees and committee seats to members, arguing that providing or taking away a committee seat (or committee chairmanship) is an important tool in enforcing party discipline. (Rohde 1991; Cox and McCubbins 1993, 2005).

[3]For a consideration of state legislative committees on their own terms, see especially Francis (1989), Martorano, Hamm, and Hedlund (2000) and Martorano (2006) and for a discussion of how term limits have changed the function of state legislative committees see Kousser (2005, 93-125).

very different institutional demands. If we believe the arguments of scholars of congressional organization, then the prevalence of static ambition should be directly proportional to a concern for committee seat property rights. It must be emphasized that the reason the reelection imperative fits the contemporary U.S. Congress is not that it characterizes every legislature well. Instead, the reason is that assuming that every member is a single-minded seeker of reelection approximates the distribution of members of the contemporary U.S. Congress into the categories of discretely, statically, and progressively ambitious. But we know that at least some legislatures are characterized by a different distribution of ambitions. In particular, there are over a dozen legislatures in the American states in which term limits have been imposed, if only for a time, on legislators. In these legislatures, then, the distribution of ambitions has been 'artificially' changed. There can be no static ambition, no careerism, in a legislature in which members can serve only 6 or 8 or 12 years.

As static ambition is removed by term limits, then, changes that undermine property rights will become more common. More specifically for my present purpose, implicit queues for membership will become expanded committees. In a careerist body, what the individual member should want is to maintain their influence over (and ability to claim credit for) the spoils that can be brought back to their constituents and, more generally, the policy that is made in a particular issue area. So keeping a seat on a particular committee could be less important to a legislator in a context where the committee system is already volatile in terms of jurisdiction, referral, etc. What a member should work to prevent, though, regardless of the volatility of the committee system, is the dilution of his influence and credit claiming by the increased size of committee rosters. Munger (1988), following Shepsle (1978), refers to the potential for steadily growing committee rosters as *currency inflation*, and argues that members should exercise "counterexpansionist pressure," to preserve the entitlements that make a committee seat valuable to members.[4]

[4]Speaker Reed once referred, in discussing the committees in the House, to "the very great inconvenience of numbers." (quoted in MacNeil 1963, 149). We might interpret this as both a statement of the effectiveness and efficiency of committees acting as 'little legislatures' *and* as a characterization of the interests of committee members in keeping committees as small as possible.

Munger states the argument explicitly, writing, "The larger the increase in seats on a committee, the more an individual assignment to that committee declines in value, all else being equal" (1988, 337). But this argument is premised on some crucial assumptions that remain implicit, the most important being that the dominant goal among members is to be reelected to their current office.

According to Fiorina (1989, 39-47), who analyzes the activities of the archetypical legislator driven by the reelection imperative (i.e. members of the U.S. Congress), the concern for distributive politics and for casework dominates the activities of the reelection-minded legislator. Given the prevalence of committees with subject matter jurisdiction and (often) influence over the relevant budgets and oversight responsibility over relevant agencies, it makes perfect sense that the legislator as Fiorina conceives of him uses committees (and probably *created* committees) with an eye toward engaging in these activities that are so crucial for reelection. But when the very possibility of reelection is eliminated, and when committees are thus no long viewed by members as tools for credit claiming and casework, the need for exercising counterexpansionist pressure is greatly diminished.

Instead, members should come to view committees largely as a forum in which to advertise and take public positions, which are the activities Mayhew (1974) associates with higher office ambition. The exclusivity of committee rosters becomes less important, so long as progressively ambitious members are given the opportunity to serve on the committees that facilitate taking the positions they want take. Even discretely ambitious members, or at least those among them who have some policy agenda, will be satisfied as long they get to serve on the committee that has jurisdiction over the relevant policy. Building seniority as an available strategy for advancing one's career goals is effectively eliminated by term limits, and at the same time the very activities that committee seniority facilitates become less important because the goal they help achieve, reelection, has been limited by term limits as well.

A more general theory like the one I am advancing allows us to specify conditions in which

the effects that Shepsle, Munger, and Katz and Sala posit are attenuated by the presence of alternative goals among members of a legislature. Even in a careerist legislature, not every member views serving in their current office as a career. Some view it is a public service with, presumably, a relatively short time horizon. Other members view serving in their current office as a means to winning some other office. To the extent that this variation in goals is even a possibility in legislatures, it suggests that we need a more general theory than the one that has been built to explain the U.S. Congress and assumes the reelection imperative. If we believe that this assumption should be broadened, then it suggests some ways in which we need to rethink our Mayhewian understanding of legislative organization.

Ambition theory provides us with a ready-made framework for a more general theory. It retains one of the most useful properties of the reelection imperative, in that it views the full set of activities associated with legislating as instrumental in achieving the career goals of self-interested politicians. Term limits provide us with a natural quasiexperiment to test the predictions of an ambition theory of legislative organization, in which careerism/ reelection imperative/static ambition is effectively eliminated as a goal. If ambition theory can inform our understanding of legislative organization, then, term-limited state legislatures are one important place to find out.

The obvious precursor to the argument presented here is found in Squire (1988), in which career paths in state legislatures are related to the internal organization of those legislatures. Indeed, from my perspective, Squire is absolutely correct in pointing to the distribution of ambitions in a legislature as a predictor of institutional structure. As with much institutional research, though, Squire's argument and analysis suffers from a problem of endogeneity. In Squire's analysis of the lower chambers of legislatures in California, Connecticut, and New York, a *relationship* is demonstrated between the prevalent career paths for members of these chambers and how the structure of the legislative chamber distributes power and influence. The problem, though, is in assessing which factor "fits itself" to the other. In other words, are members' career decisions responding to an exogenously fixed set of

institutional structures, or are institutional structures the collective 'best response' to the career goals and opportunities seen as available by members?

The problem, of course, is that either formulation is still only a theoretical simplification. We know that career opportunities vary across states/legislatures and within states/legislatures over time (Schlesinger 1966), and we also know that the institutional structures of legislative bodies are often deliberately changed by their members (Polsby 1968; Rohde 1991).[5] Recognizing, then, the almost certain dynamic causality here, what should we do? In this paper, at least, I would argue for choosing between the two characterizations of the causal story on the basis of which side of the dynamic process predominates.

So how can we arrive at a reasonably confident inference, at least for the sample in any particular analysis, that either 1) career paths are made to fit institutions or 2) institutions are made to fit career paths? One answer is to employ more sophisticated empirical modeling techniques like structural-equation/causal modeling. The answer I choose rely on, however, is good research design. Or, more accurately in this case, the answer is found in taking advantage of good research designs provided by nature.

The imposition of term limits provides us with a set of naturally-occurring research designs that resemble various types of the interrupted time series designs first discussed in detail by Campbell and Stanley (1963).

Hypothesis

Term limits eliminate careerism in a legislature, and deliberately so. Members are forced, in Schlesinger's (1966) terminology, to become either discretely or progressively ambitious when term limits are imposed upon them. Members must either use their current office as a springboard for some other office, or must view it as a short-term position which they use to fulfil their civic duty or to pursue some limited set of concrete policy goals. If committee

[5]Though see Squire and Hamm (2005, 35-39) for some state constitutional limitations on endogenously generated internal rule making in various state legislatures.

seats are used for purposes other than the pursuit of a career in one's current office, then members should care less about protecting the 'value'[6] of their own committee seats.

Following this logic, an alternative hypothesis can be constructed and evaluated in the context of the two research designs outlined below.

> •Hypothesis: *When careerism as a possible motivation for legislators is eliminated, then the size of committee rosters should increase, all else equal.*[7]

For Katz and Sala (1996), the reason careerism leads to a concern for committee property rights is that committee members use their positions to claim credit for providing something of value to their constituents.[8] Working in that context, Mayhew (1974) writes:

> Whatever else it might be, the quest for specialization [in a legislature] is a quest for credit. Every member can aspire to occupy a part of at least one piece of policy turf small enough so that he can claim personal responsibility for some of the things that happen in it. Better yet, he can aspire to rise in seniority and claim even more responsibility–perhaps even be christened a "czar" or a "baron" by the press (95).

Dilution of credit in that context can be a dangerous thing, as Mayhew's characterization of the quest for specialization implies. Whether it is claiming credit for district projects or exercising influence over a bureaucracy over which the committee has oversight, more demands from within a particular committee can push up against the limits of supply.

But when reelection as a career strategy is limited, members care less about what their current constituents want and start thinking, to paraphrase Schlesinger (1966), about tomorrow's constituents. Perhaps that means a focus on a statewide constituency, or a focus

[6] In the sense that both Shepsle (1978) and Munger (1988) suggest the use of the term 'value'.

[7] The reverse is also implied by my own argument and by the argument of Kata and Sala (1996)– when careerism appears (or reappears), the size of committee rosters should decrease. See Table 4 below for an explicit test of this secondary hypothesis.

[8] Recall that their argument relates to the increased 'personal vote' nature of congressional elections after the introduction of the secret ballot, creating a closer representative relationship between members and constituents.

on the primary constituency in some other office, but it certainly means that the legislator's focus is not so narrow as we would expect it to be if a career in her current office was the priority (Carey, Moncrief, Niemi, and Powell 2003).[9] At the same, if tomorrow's constituents do not even exist, as in the case of a member who is leaving political office and public life, then members presumably care even less about what today's constituents want (Rothenberg and Sanders 2000).

Research Design(s) & Data Analysis

[Figures 1 & 2 about here]

I test the hypothesis using two different datasets and using two different but related research designs. First, I present data on committee membership from the Michigan House and Senate from 1993 to 2007[10] And the equivalent for Oregon from 1991-2005. The Michigan legislature is considered one of the most professionalized state legislatures in the U.S., in terms of members' salary, staff, and the time spent in session.[11] While an analysis of a highly professionalized legislature might threaten the generalizability of the inferences to other, less professionalized state legislatures, it may allow us to approximate a counterfactual in which another, highly professionalized legislature that has evoked much interest in legislative studies, the United States Congress, is imagined to have term limits imposed upon it.

The Oregon data were compiled using the Oregon State Archive's record of the Oregon Legislative Assembly Committee Minutes, which include a record of present and absent members at each committee meeting.[12] Task forces and special committees have been

[9]Herron and Shotts (2006) present a model which suggests that term limits, which limit careerism, can produce certain particular under which the provision of district-targeted pork is reduced.

[10]These data were provided in hard copy by the offices of the Michigan Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate.

[11]See the National Council of State Legislatures, "Full- and Part-Time Legislatures, "`http://www.ncsl.org/programs/press/2004/backgrounder_fullandpart.htm`

[12]See `http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/legislative/legislativeminutes/legminutes.html/` for the source of these data.

excluded from the sample examined here.[13]

Table 1: Difference of Means—Term Limits and Committee Rosters, Michigan Legislature 1993-2007

Group	Mean	Standard Error	N
Term Limits	10.852	0.431	175
No Term Limits	8.661	0.459	118

$t = 3.390$
Degrees of freedom = 291
p-value = 0.0004

Table 2: Difference of Means—Term Limits and Committee Rosters, Oregon Legislature 1991-2005

Group	Mean	Standard Error	N
Term Limits	7.525	0.272	83
No Term Limits	6.803	0.172	134

$t = 2.363$
Degrees of freedom = 200
p-value = 0.0095

The Michigan research design approximates an interrupted time series, in which a single group is given repeated pretest measurements, is administered a treatment, and then again given repeated posttests. The Oregon research design approximates an equivalent

[13]It should be noted that this choice actually *weakens* the inference drawn from the analyses of the Oregon data.

time samples design. In this quasi-experimental design, "the effect of the experimental variable is anticipated to be of transient or reversible character" (Campbell and Stanley 1963, 43). Shadish, Cook, and Campbell (2002, 188-90) discuss this design as well, calling it a "removed-treatment design". The treatment is the impact of term limits, which in Michigan first occurs in the 1998 election cycle for the House, and in 2002 for the Senate.[14] In Oregon, the term limits first removed members of both the House and Senate in 1998, and would have removed members in 2002 if not for the actions of the state supreme court in January of 2002, so I measure the impact of term limits as having occurred during the organization of the legislature in 1997-2001.[15] In both samples this is, of course, an important measurement choice. I choose to measure the impact of term limits by focusing on the organizational decisions that are made when members anticipate being removed from office at the end of the term by term limits. This choice can be disputed, of course, so in Figures 1 and 2. I present mean committee rosters in Michigan and Oregon graphed against time (and separated by chamber) in case the reader who believes this choice may be leading to an improper inference cares to 'eye-ball' the data. The unit of analysis throughout is the committee, and the dependent variable throughout is the number of members on the committee at the beginning of a legislative term.[16]

Tables 1 and 2 present just the bivariate relationships between term limits and the size of committee rosters in Michigan and Oregon using a difference of means t-test with a directional hypothesis. In each case, the effect of term limits is significant in the predicted (positive) direction.

Because we have neither random assignment nor a control group, the econometric method and the control variables in the model become especially important. In the bivariate rela-

[14]So the impact on committee membership should occur with the organization of the chambers in 1997 and 2001, respectively.

[15]See the National Council of State Legislatures, "Members Termed Out: 1996-2006," `http://www.ncsl.org/programs/legismgt/about/termedout.html/`

[16]Because of significant changes from year to year in the names of the committees, and presumably also in their jurisdictions, it is difficult to analyze these data as panel data, where issues of serial correlation could be addressed. But given the apparent changes in committee jurisdiction, it is suspect, substantively, to think of these as repeated observations of the same cases.

tionship, we cannot distinguish between House committees and Senate committees, nor can we single out exceptional committees like Michigan's Appropriations committees or Oregon's Revenue committees (always larger than other committees) or "housekeeping" committees like Michigan's House Oversight & Ethics Committee (almost always smaller than other committees). At the same time we cannot account for potential nonindependence within legislative terms, nor for any factor that might reveal the spuriousness of the hypothesized relationship.

Because the measure of the dependent variable is a discrete count, there are legitimate doubts that ordinary least squares regression is the appropriate econometric technique. With count data, then, there are two generic techniques that could be appropriate–Poisson regression and negative binomial regression. In choosing between them, the distributional assumptions of the Poisson model are crucial. There is little evidence of overdispersion in the Michigan data, so I present poisson results here for both that reason and for the sake of consistency, because a negative binomial regression model run on the Oregon data with anything but the most basic specification consistently failed to converge. [17]

Equations 1 and 2 present the specifications of the empirical models, run on the Michigan committee data, that I estimate using poisson regression.

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \epsilon \tag{1}$$

and

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \epsilon \tag{2}$$

[17] An additional quirk of the data that requires attention is the absence of zeros in the dependent variable measure. A committee with zero members ceases to exist, and thus is not present in the data. But poisson regression can produce predicted values of zero, which makes little sense in this context. An alternative is to use a technique called zero-truncated poisson regression (ZTP), which accounts for this absence of zeros in count data. I have run these models using ZTP (and ZTNBR for the Michigan data) and found no difference in the substantive inferences. See Greene (1994) for a discussion of the development of these techniques, and Long and Freese (2006) for further discussion of these techniques and their implementation in STATA 9.

In Equation 1, y is a measure of the number of members on a committee, X_1 is an indicator of the impact of term limits, X_2 indicates whether the committee is in the Senate, X_3 indicates whether the committee is the Appropriations Committee in either chamber, X_4 whether it is a "housekeeping" committee, and X_5 measures the number of committees in the chamber in a given legislative term.[18] Equation 2 takes this specification and adds some partisan controls. X_6 measures the percentage of the seats in the chamber held by the majority party, and X_7 indicates a Republican majority party in the chamber. The empirical results for these two models are presented in Table 3.

Before discussing the Michigan results, one more thing needs to be pointed out. The robust standard errors shown in parentheses here (and in the Oregon models) are adjusted for clustering on the chamber-term. Clustered standard errors are often used in survey research to account for correlation or nonindependence of observations within some subset of the full sample–for instance, respondents from the same family. The technique, first explicated in the finance literature (Froot 1989) is more generally applicable wherever we suspect nonindependence within subsets of our observations (Williams 2000; Wooldridge 2002). Here, there is reason to suspect that while committee rosters are not zero-sum (in fact, the theory explicitly predicts them not to be) they are nonindependent in that putting a member on one committee makes it marginally more difficult for that member to serve on another committee given, if nothing else, the constraints of time.

Moving to the results, then, I find support for the hypothesis in the Michigan sample. In both models the coefficient associated with the term limits indicator is positive and strongly significant at the 5% level (at least). The control variables for which I have expectations produce coefficients that work how I expect, in that Senate committees are predicted to be smaller, the Appropriations Committees in both chambers are expected to be larger and housekeeping committees smaller. The partisan control variables produce insignificant

[18]Controlling for the number of committees is potentially crucial, as changes in the size of committees could be produced by an expansion or contraction of the number of committees, since there is a fixed number of legislators. Not accounting for this could threaten an inference we might make about how the dilution of the value of committee seats is being driven by ambition considerations.

Table 3: Committee Size in the Michigan Legislature, 1993-2007

Poisson Regressions†, DV: # of Members			
	Expectation	Coefficient (Robust SE)	Coefficient (Robust SE)
Term Limits	+	**0.054**** **(0.018)**	**0.053*** **(0.025)**
Senate	−	-0.742** (0.031)	-0.770** (0.033)
Appropriations Committee	+	0.884** (0.032)	0.884** (0.032)
Housekeeping Committee	−	-0.482** (0.149)	-0.482** (0.146)
Number of Committees	+/−	0.0060 (0.003)	-0.0003 (0.004)
Majority Party's % of Seats	+/−		0.002 (0.005)
Republican Majority	+/−		-0.051 (0.028)
Constant	+/−	2.34** (0.080)	2.39** (0.222)
Observations		333	333
Log likelihood		-819.3	-819.0

Robust standard errors in parentheses (adjusted for clustering on 16 chamber-terms)
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1% (two-tailed alternative)

†Notes: The data are pooled. The unit of analysis is the legislative committee (House & Senate). Standard errors are adjusted for clustering on 16 Chamber-Terms.

coefficients, and do not undermine the term limits result, though the Republican Majority variable (very close to significance with a p-value of 0.6) produces an intriguing result, in that it suggests that committee rosters should be smaller under Republican majorities.

Overall, Hypothesis 1 is strongly supported by the Michigan results. Now, we move to a similar analysis of the removed-treatment research design offered by the Oregon Legislature. The specifications for the estimated models are presented in Equations 3, 4, and 5.

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon, \tag{3}$$

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \epsilon, \tag{4}$$

and

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{1A} + \beta_2 X_{1B} + \beta_3 X_2 + \beta_4 X_3 + \beta_5 X_4 + \epsilon \tag{5}$$

In Equation 3, y is a measure of the number of members on a committee, X_1 is an indicator of the impact of term limits, X_2 indicates whether the committee is in the Senate, X_3 indicates whether the committee is one of the Revenue committees in either chamber, and X_4 measures the number of committees in the chamber in a given legislative term.[19] Equation 4 takes this specification and adds some partisan controls. X_5 measures the percentage of the seats in the chamber held by the majority party, and X_6 indicates a Republican majority party in the chamber. Finally, Equation 5 duplicates the specification of Equation 1 but for breaking the term limits indicator into X_{1A}, indicating the period before term limits were imposed, and X_{1B}, indicating the period after term limits were struck down by the courts. The empirical results for these three models are presented in Table 4.

[19]There is no control for housekeeping committees like that used in the Michigan models above because such stand-alone committees don't seem to exist in the Oregon legislature. While particular committees have housekeeping functions (like the equivalent of Michigan's Ethics or Standards of Conduct Committees, for example), these functions tend to be only part of a committee's jurisdiction, alongside more obviously substantive matters.

Table 4: Committee Rosters in the Oregon Legislature 1991-2005

Poisson Regression†, DV: # of New Committees				
	Expectation	Coefficient (Robust SE)	Coefficient (Robust SE)	Coefficient (Robust SE)
Term Limits	+	**0.096** (0.037)**	**0.127** (0.035)**	
Before Term Limits	−			**-0.018 (0.035)**
After Term Limits	−			**-0.196** (0.017)**
Senate	−	-0.413** (0.054)	-0.480** (0.050)	-0.407** (0.030)
Revenue Committee	+	0.102** (0.032)	0.100** (0.032)	0.109** (0.030)
Number of Committees	+/−	-0.020 (0.010)	-0.020* (0.006)	-0.013*
Majority Party's % of Seats	+/−		0.003 (0.006)	
Republican Majority	+/−		-0.106 (0.075)	
Constant	+/−	2.36** (0.155)	2.30** (0.339)	2.36** (0.083)
Observations		202	202	202
Log pseudolikelihood		-416.7	-416.1	-413.58

Robust standard errors in parentheses (adjusted for clustering on 16 chamber-terms)

* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1% (two-tailed alternative)

†Notes: The data are pooled. The unit of analysis is the legislative term for each legislative chamber (House & Senate).

Moving to the Oregon results, I again find support for the hypothesis. In the first two models in Table 4, the coefficient associated with the term limits indicator is positive and strongly significant at the 1% level (at least). The control variables for which I have expectations produce coefficients that work as expected, in that Senate committees are predicted to be smaller, and the Revenue Committees in both chambers are predicted to be larger. The partisan control variables in the second model produce insignificant coefficients, and do not undermine the term limits result.

The results in the third model in Table 4, and especially the post-term limits result, make for a particular interesting illustration of the argument. To the extent that a term-limited legislature tends to draw a different sort of candidate (and one seemingly self-selected to care less about committee seat property rights and other considerations of that sort), it is unclear that this result was expected. If Oregon's potential legislative candidates expected term limits to characterize the state of the world going forward, one might expect them to opt in or out in part on the basis of expectations about how a term-limited would function. Instead of selecting a different sort of legislator, though, the imposition and subsequent removal of term limits seems to have merely shifted the incentives regarding the committee structure in the Oregon Legislative Assembly, with members who were elected under the term limits regime quickly responding to the elimination of that regime by dramatically reducing the size of committee rosters.

Overall, the hypothesis seems to be well supported by both the Michigan and Oregon results.

Discussion

The argument presented here essentially reverses Katz and Sala's (1996) argument about committee seat property rights. For them, the introduction of the secret ballot in the United States at the end of the 19th century created incentives for members of Congress to protect

the value of their committee seats. This was because the secret ballot eroded the almost deterministic relationship between a party's electoral success and its members' success that was created by party-printed ballots (Rusk 1970; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987; Squire et al. 2004). With the rise of the personal vote and candidate-centered elections, maintaining a long-standing relationship between representatives and constituents became imperative. One important way of doing this was for members to find a means of exercising influence over policies of importance to their constituents, and to make sure that some of the credit for policy achievements came to themselves. Committees provided this means, and members had an incentive to ensure that they received a seat, kept a seat, and maintained the value of a seat on the committee or committees that were most important to their constituents.

With the imposition of term limits, the process unravels, but not because the personal vote is no longer important. What happens, instead, is that members must pursue personal votes from a wider pool of voters. In this context, the value of a committee seat is no longer figured in terms of seniority or credit claiming, since both are associated with the needs of a member who hopes to make a career out of serving in her current office. Whether it is position taking, advertising, portfolio building, etc., the activities in which term limited members need to engage are not aided by maintaining committee property rights, either individual or collective. For state legislative committees after term limits, it comes down to a story of 'the more, the merrier.'

I began with the idea that the reelection imperative is a special case of ambition theory (Aldrich 1995). Given the position of the reelection imperative in theories of legislative organization, this idea has important consequences. Beyond our positive theories of politics, how would an ambition theory of legislative organization inform normative theories of representation? Legislators as delegates would seem to be much less common when forms of ambition other than static ambition are prevalent in a legislature. Trusteeship may characterize the relationship between at least the discretely ambitious politician and her constituents. But on many matters, shirking may better characterize the constituent-

representative relationship for members who are not statically ambitious. Indeed, given the evident erosion of committee-related property rights, there may be reason to expect that the dilution of the value of an individual committee seat is reflected in a reduction of the influence of constituents over policy areas in which they have very real interests at stake. As Carey, Moncrief, Niemi, and Powell (2003) and Herrick and Moore (2005) show, term limited legislators espouse different attitudes about representation and demonstrate different sorts of ambition, but there is justifiable doubt about whether term limits advocates have gotten what they sought by imposing term limits.

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Figure 1: Term Limits & Mean Committee Membership, Michigan 1993-2007

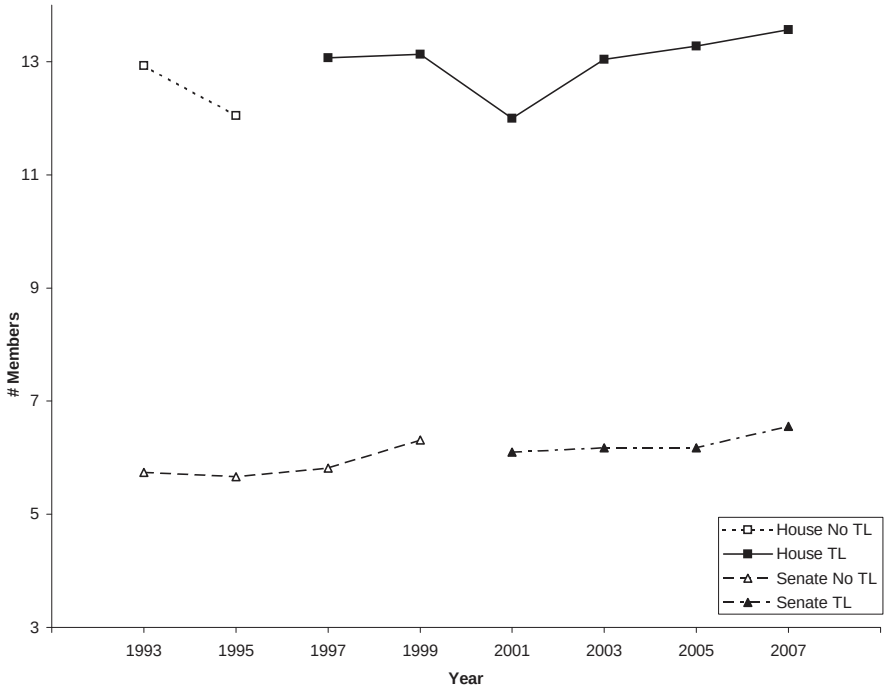

Figure 2: Term Limits & Mean Committee Membership, Oregon 1991-2005