Leadership in American Politics

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CHAPTER SIX

Parties and Leadership in American Politics

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Clear it with Sidney.
—President Franklin Roosevelt, in reported conversation with Democratic
National Committee chair Robert Hannegan, July 1944

The chairmanship of the party, as you know, is one thing, but after all you're the
chairman of the party when the truth is known. You're the fella who will arrange
these things politically in the different states or you'll arrange it in the Congress
or you'll arrange it in the Senate or any other place because everyone looks to the
president.
—Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago, in recorded conversation with
President Lyndon Johnson, November 21, 1964 (audio available at http://
millercenter.org/)

Studying party leadership in the United States is challenging because American
parties are so amorphous and polycentric. As Joseph Schlesinger (1984, 379) noted,
"The formal structure is obviously not the real organization." This is not something
that a student of Congress or the presidency would write. Scholars of Congress may
describe how a leadership role like the speakership (Jenkins and Stewart 2012) or
the Senate majority leadership (Gamm and Smith 2002) has developed. Yet com-
pared to parties Congress is a very well-bounded institution. Similarly, studies of
the presidency may reveal important change in the extent to which the chief execu-
tive operates as a partisan leader (Rossiter 1960; Neustadt 1960; Lowi 1985; Milkis
1993; Galvin 2010; Skinner 2012), yet there is no doubt where the buck stops in
the executive branch.

Parties, by contrast, are best understood as networks (Schwartz 1990; Bernstein

and Dominguez 2003; Cohen et al. 2008a, 2008b). Networks have some actors who are more central than others but lack a centralized leadership. Hierarchy exists within institutions that make up the party network, but not in the party as a whole.

The two quotations opening this chapter suggest different answers to the question of where power lies in parties. The first highlights the role of interest groups, and the second foregrounds the influence of officeholders. Both capture part of the truth.

In the first case, Roosevelt was referring to Sidney Hillman, chair of the Political Action Committee of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). This alliance of industrial unions arose during the New Deal and rapidly became a force within the Democratic Party. Yet the party was a diverse coalition, and important factions, including Southerners and urban machines, did not want Vice President Henry Wallace, a CIO favorite, to be renominated. Liberal factions, including the CIO and African Americans, opposed Wallace's chief rival, James Byrnes of South Carolina. The fact that Roosevelt was seriously ill, which was known by elites if not voters, raised the stakes of this fight.

As wartime commander in chief, Roosevelt—then still the only president to have addressed a convention—preferred not to appear at a partisan gathering. So Roosevelt would not be present in Chicago for the selection of his running mate. The president claimed to have no problem with Wallace, but told Democratic National Committee (DNC) chair Robert Hannegan that he would happily run with Justice William O. Douglas or Senator Harry Truman, his probable true choice. Truman was a product of the Kansas City machine and a border state politician on good terms with his Southern colleagues. Yet the Missouri senator was also a New Dealer who had voted for labor and civil rights measures. He emerged as the compromise choice.[1]

News of Roosevelt's conversation with Hannegan leaked. The president's statement, rendered as the more ominous "Clear everything with Sidney" by Arthur Krock of the *New York Times* (Ferrell 1994), was seized on by Republicans as proof that Democrats were in the pockets of labor bosses (*Time* 1944). The fact that Hillman was a Jewish immigrant with radical ties made his prominence even more polarizing (Fraser 1991).

In the second case, President Johnson consulted with Mayor Daley about John Bailey, Kennedy's choice for DNC chair. Johnson was not close to Bailey and weighed replacing him with legislative liaison Larry O'Brien. Daley advised that dumping Bailey, a loyal functionary, was not worth the controversy it might provoke. Johnson acted as the mayor advised, although Daley's influence on this decision is unclear. He retained but marginalized Bailey and found another position for O'Brien the following year.

Beyond highlighting the roles of interest group leaders and elected officials in parties, these examples also illustrate the importance of informal processes in parties. Hillman held no post in the Democratic hierarchy and was a founder of New

York state's American Labor Party (which also nominated Roosevelt). While Daley was the chairman of the mighty Cook County Democratic Party, he was not a DNC member. Johnson likewise had no formal role at the DNC. Yet both men understood that Johnson, like presidents before and after him, would select the party chairman, and this choice would be rubber-stamped by the national committee members.

Also notable is the secondary role of the DNC chair in both cases. In 1944 Hannegan was a liaison between his party's president and a key interest group leader. In 1964 the chairmanship was discussed, but the chairman himself was not in the conversation and was not seen as a peer by either participant.

In this chapter I cover three main points: the limited importance of the formal leadership of national, state, and local party chairs; the central role of politicians in managing the groups of intense policy demanders that are the core of parties; and differences in leadership practices among Republicans in contrast to Democrats.

Beyond Party Committees: The Limited Role of the Formal Party Structure

A major obstacle to the understanding of political parties is a literal-minded focus on the formal structure of party committees. While elected officials are legislators or executives as well as partisans, party committees may appear to be the party phenomenon in its purest form. This is a mistake, especially if we are concerned with leadership. The services party committees provide candidates are real and have increased since the 1970s, along with the budgets and staffing of the Democratic and Republican national committees and the congressional campaign committees (Coleman 1996; Herrnson 2013). State-level organizations are better funded than they once were as well. It is only at the local level where the patronage-oriented traditional party organizations were based (Mayhew 1986) that there has been some decline, and even that only in the minority of counties where such organizations had been strong. Yet while leaders serve, "parties in service" (Aldrich 1995, 7) to candidates are not leading.

There is no truly paramount leader even of the formal party structure. The chairs of the parties' national committees do not pick the heads of the various congressional and other national campaign committees. The "Hill committees" are run by members of Congress (MCs) appointed by congressional leaders in the case of Democrats and elected by the party conference in the case of Republicans. Conflict between the chairs of the national committees and Hill committees is not unknown.

For example, DNC chair Howard Dean was elected chairman after pledging a fifty-state strategy of long-term party building, which would entail the national committee subsidizing parties in Republican states where Democrats had difficulty raising funds and where organization had atrophied. This plan was popular with

such state parties, all of which had national committee members with votes in the election for chair. Dean followed through on this promise despite the angry insistence of Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee chair Rahm Emanuel and Democratic Senate Campaign Committee chair Chuck Schumer that funds would be more usefully directed to competitive congressional races (Galvin 2008). Dean's strategy was one of the more important independent initiatives of a national chair. He was able to pursue it, but he could not make the chairs of the Hill committees adopt his approach any more than they could compel him to desist.

There are also now separate campaign committees in both parties dedicated to raising funds for gubernatorial, state legislative, and subgubernatorial executive branch candidates.[2] These too are autonomous organizations. Nor do national chairs appoint state party chairs.

The chair of the party that does not occupy the White House is genuinely elected by the hundreds of committee members and is somewhat more visible and autonomous than his in-party counterpart. Yet Donald Trump's dismissive description of then RNC chair Reince Priebus—"we're not dealing with a five-star army general"—is not inaccurate about party chairs in general (Haberman 2015). Few have great authority or stature. Only one former chairman became a president (George Herbert Walker Bush), and the chairmanship was but one of his many stepping-stones.[3] On a handful of occasions the chairmanship was split into two positions: a general chairmanship filled by a prominent elected official who served as a spokesman and fund-raiser, and a national chairmanship occupied by a relatively obscure operative focused on nuts and bolts.

The president is the de facto leader and face of his or her party, but that is an informal status and a limited one. The president is the party "fundraiser in chief" (Doherty 2010), a task that has become increasingly time-consuming. By custom, the president chooses the chair of his or her party's national committee (who is then formally elected by committee members), but he or she does not select congressional leaders or control their campaign committees or state party organizations. Presidents cannot bestow nominations to elective office, even if they recruit candidates and try to shape the field. In any case, only one party at a time has a president, and there is no leader of the opposition in the United States.

To paraphrase Schattschneider (1942), parties are best understood as coalitions that seek to gain control of the government via elections. The key decisions are the choice of candidates, the choice of platforms, and, while in power, the choice of policies and priorities among them. The heads of formal party structures have only a modest influence over candidate selection and no direct influence over policy.

The formal structure of party committees can influence candidate selection by setting the rules by which nominations are determined. For example, the Virginia Republican Party's frequent resort to the convention nomination system favors conservative candidates, as does the California Republican Party's insistence on a

closed primary. The national parties also regulate the timing and delegate selection methods used by state parties in presidential nominations. These choices are made by party committees, however, and are not typically the prerogative of committee chairs. Rule making by a large body is not generally counted as leadership.

The other important way in which the formal party structure can influence candidate selection is via recruitment, and here the chairs of various party units are prominent. A party committee may adopt a rule, but only an individual can have a private conversation with a potential candidate. Scholars have long found that party chairs play an important role in recruiting candidates for national, state, and local offices and discouraging other aspirants (Eldersveld 1982; Herrnson 1988; Kazee and Thornberry 1990; Sanbonmatsu 2006; Lawless 2011). These actions shape the field of candidates that voters encounter in primaries.

Yet even in recruitment, where their role is greatest, chairs of party committees are far from the only actors. Elected officials, interest group leaders, and party activists also participate in recruiting. Recruitment by chairs is also focused on competitive seats (Herrnson 1988; Maestas, Maisel, and Stone 2005) that elect a minority of MC and state legislators, while other policy-demanding interest groups and activist elites recruit in safe districts as well (Masket 2009; Bawn et al. 2014).

Party elites beyond the formal organization do more than shape the field. They can help the candidates of their choice and undermine others. My colleagues and I (Cohen et al. 2008) show that even in the postreform era of presidential nominations, party elites typically back a candidate who is later nominated and that elite endorsements are associated with success, even controlling for candidates' fund-raising success and early poll numbers. Dominguez (2011) and Hassell (2016) report similar findings for House and Senate nominations. Masket (2009) shows a similar pattern in state legislative contests.

Yet while the recruitment and endorsement activity of party elites is quite significant both in encouraging and discouraging candidates (Herrnson 1988; Hassell 2016), and in bolstering them once the primary field is set, voters have the last word. The remarkable nomination of Donald Trump in 2016 is the most dramatic illustration of this point. Voters picked Trump, as Republican elites were fragmented among other candidates or sat worriedly on the sidelines. This nomination caused some to doubt whether elites retained influence in the process. Yet it might be argued that Trump is anomalous and that GOP leaders did not manage to unify behind any alternative, so that his nomination—while an undoubted failure for party elites—does not disprove claims that a cohesive party elite can still prevail (Cohen et al. 2016).

Still, even a unified party elite can be rebuffed by voters. One case is illustrative. In 2009 longtime GOP senator Arlen Specter switched parties. Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid and Vice President Joe Biden wooed Specter, who had barely won renomination in 2004 and doubted he could do so in 2010 (Yoshinaka 2016).

Leading Democrats, including President Obama, Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell, and Senator Bob Casey Jr., along with the state Democratic Central Committee and the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), backed Specter (Newton-Small 2009; *Politico* 2009; AP 2010; Isenstadt 2010). They had reason to do so. Specter was not only a crucial vote on the Affordable Care Act but also seemed to be the Democrats' best hope of holding the Pennsylvania Senate seat in 2010. Other potential switchers also might have been watching to see how Specter fared in his new party.

In many countries party leaders could have ensured Specter's renomination and even his reelection. In countries with proportional representation, party chiefs can often give defectors a safe position on the party's list of candidates. In district-based systems, they can place switchers in a safe seat, if necessary parachuting the defectors into new districts, even overriding the objections of local activists.[4] By contrast, American political norms made it impossible for Specter to run in another state. Democratic leaders backing him could not even convince US Representative Joe Sestak, who had become a candidate before Specter changed parties, to drop out of the primary, despite possibly offering him a political appointment (Bresnahan 2010). Moreover, despite all his support from party elites, Specter ultimately lost to Sestak, ending his long political career. Days before the primary, when polls signaled Specter's defeat, Obama refused to campaign for the senator, seemingly fearing to reveal the limits of his political pull among Democratic voters (Thrush and Martin 2010). As Democrats had feared, Sestak went on to lose the general election. Specter's experience was not unique. Yoshinaka (2016) shows that the path of party switchers is often not a smooth one because party leaders can influence nominations but not determine them. In other cases, party elites failed to secure the nomination for their favored candidate in open-seat races as well. To fully appreciate the phenomenon of party leadership, we need to look elsewhere.

Party Politicians and Interest Groups: Leadership as Coalition Management

In previous work exploring the question of how parties change positions on issues (Karol 2009), I found three processes distinguished by the connection between party politicians and interest groups: coalition maintenance, in which a group develops new policy preferences and the politicians of the party to which they aligned adapt in order to continue to represent the group; coalition group incorporation, in which politicians take new stands on issues in order to bring new groups into their party coalitions; and coalition expansion, in which politicians take stands on issues that are not marked by groups focused on the topic in hopes of winning support across the board. These behaviors are all examples of coalition management. Yet as coalition managers, party politicians do not only respond to party-aligned groups.

They lead them as well. There has been research about how politicians guide groups, but much discussion of such "reverse lobbying" has focused on interest groups and public policy (Weir 1995; Skocpol 1996; Shaiko 1998) and much less on parties.

An early exception was Schattschneider (1960, 43), who observed, "The political education of business is a function of the Republican Party." Similarly, Phillips-Fein (2011) reported that the support of Senate minority leader and GOP gubernatorial nominee William Knowland for a right-to-work initiative was key to its appearance on the California ballot in 1958. Knowland wrongly thought the issue could help his gubernatorial bid, which was intended to launch a presidential campaign in 1960. In 1956 the Eisenhower campaign had not wanted this divisive issue on the ballot. In both years conservative activists and business interests supported anti-union policies. The key difference between 1956 and 1958 was not a change in the preferences of business or conservative activists but a shift in the view coming from the top of the GOP ticket.[5]

There is also evidence of this phenomenon in the Democratic Party. Unions had worked closely with Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) in advocating a single-payer national health insurance plan in 1971–1972, at a time when President Nixon favored an employer-mandate approach. Kennedy and other Democrats aligned with unions rejected the Nixon plan as inadequate. After both plans failed, Kennedy worked with Ways and Means chair Wilbur Mills and negotiated with Nixon to advance a more modest plan. The AFL-CIO rejected this bill (Quadagno 2005), and the subsequent scandal-driven departures of both Nixon and Mills stalled momentum.

By 1978 Kennedy saw the employer-mandate approach Nixon had promoted, which he and unions had once rejected, as "the only politically viable road to universal coverage" (Hacker 1997, 85). Still committed to what had become his signature issue, the Massachusetts senator began promoting a mandate-based plan. Yet while Kennedy's next proposal was less ambitious than the one unions had rejected only a few years earlier, this time labor largely sided with him. Gottschalk (2000) contends that Kennedy's shift, along with President Carter's less supportive position, influenced labor leaders to modify their own stands. While this plan also failed, it helped reorient unions' and Democrats' positions on health insurance, contributing to the employer-mandate focus of the Clinton health care plan fifteen years later.

The politics surrounding the failed Clinton health care initiative of 1993–1994 furnish yet another example of party politicians guiding the activity of aligned interest groups. After Clinton's election, many observers believed that some sort of health care reform was inevitable as a result of both the Democrats' renewed control of Congress and the White House and of public discontent with the status quo. This assessment, along with concern about rising insurance costs, underlay the Chamber of Commerce's initial posture of seeking to influence the nature of reform

rather than opposing it (Berke 1993). Yet in a dramatic reversal, the chamber turned against the Clinton health care reform efforts in late 1993 after intense criticism and lobbying by Republican MCs and activists. Conceivably the corporate lobby simply realized that GOP opposition meant that reform was no longer inevitable, and it was safe to stop supporting it. This view may have some merit because divisions existed within the chamber and the business community more broadly on health care policy.

Yet this interpretation gives too little credit to the sincere concerns of some of the Chamber of Commerce's constituency and understates the element of coercion by politicians involved. In a remarkable episode, US Representative John Boehner (R-OH), then a young leader of the Conservative Opportunity Society, wrote to members of the chamber advising them to resign from the lobby if it did not abandon its support for an employer mandate (Martin 1995). Party politicians also attempted to direct the activities of aligned interest groups in the G. W. Bush years. Sinclair (2006) describes how GOP leaders insisted to business lobbyists that the latter support the second round of income tax cuts the Bush administration promoted in 2003 before they would bring up the narrower tax measures that were actually of greater concern to corporations.

GOP Senate leader Mitch McConnell offers a more recent example of party politicians leading interest groups. In 2009 the Kentucky senator lobbied the National Rifle Association to come out against the nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to the US Supreme Court.[6] McConnell asked the gun rights group if they would "score" the vote on Sotomayor—that is, include it among the votes used to calculate ratings for senators. The gun rights group had never taken a position on a Supreme Court nominee and reportedly was wary of taking on a fight that was neither a priority nor likely to succeed. While elected officials must take a position on all bills and nominations that reach the floor, a lobby can choose its battles. Avoiding visible defeat may make a lobby seem more formidable. Yet the Senate GOP leader apparently felt the NRA could help him minimize defections among Republican senators. With this tactic, McConnell could also force Democrats from pro-gun states to choose between supporting a nominee who appealed to Democratic constituencies, including feminists and Latinos, and maintaining their NRA ratings. McConnell's tactic appears to have swung a handful of votes at most (Huffington Post 2009). It did not derail Sotomayor's nomination, and it is unclear whether any Democratic senators were defeated because of their votes for the jurist.[7] Yet the case is still interesting as a recent example of the phenomenon of party leaders and politicians guiding interest groups as well as being guided by them. Because the NRA was part of the Republican coalition, they were subject to influence by its leading politicians.

The previous examples of reverse lobbying are not meant to indicate that this is the dominant form of interaction between party politicians and interest groups. Nor are such attempts always fully successful, as two other cases illustrate. When he became chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee in 1975,

US Representative Guy Vander Jagt traveled the country encouraging business interests to establish political action committees, hoping to establish a counterweight to labor PACs that would help the GOP gain seats (Jackson 1988). While there was an explosion of business PACs in the 1970s, many adopted an incumbent-oriented strategy that reinforced the dominance of House Democrats in that era, much to Vander Jagt's chagrin. A more recent example of failed pressure on interest groups was the so-called K Street Project, in which the House majority whip, Tom DeLay (R-TX), working with Grover Norquist, Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA), and others, leaned heavily on trade associations and lobbying firms to hire Republicans. While many former DeLay aides were hired (Mann and Ornstein 2006), this might have occurred anyway, given the proclivity of trade associations to hire well-connected former MCs and staffers. Meanwhile, the initiative became public and increased scrutiny on DeLay, who was admonished by the ethics committee and later departed Congress amid scandal.

What are we to make of these examples? In most cases party politicians did not convince interest groups aligned with their parties to abandon their basic preferences, and they certainly were not unresponsive to group concerns. Yet at times they led their interest group allies to take actions they would not have on their own. Politicians did not simply accept the demands of their parties' "intense policy demanders" (Bawn et al. 2012, 573) and attempt to sell them to the public. Instead, politicians managed these groups in the interest of the party as a whole.

This is leadership. Yet in evaluating this activity, we should note that the politicians guiding the groups were not necessarily moving the parties to the center. Kennedy convinced union leaders to back less ambitious health care policies. Yet when McConnell got the NRA to score the vote on Justice Sotomayor he was contributing to polarization. In pushing the corporate lobbies to support the 2003 Bush tax cuts, Republicans were emphasizing their more saleable issue but still moving policy rightward.

The relationship between a party's elected officials and its interest groups is one of mutual dependence. Interest groups need politicians to affect public policy. In turn, the groups provide important resources to politicians during campaigns (Skinner 2007; Karol 2015) and influence the nomination process (Cohen et al. 2008a, 2008b; Karol 2009; Bawn et al. 2012). Moreover, a party's elected officials and groups often share values. Yet the groups' influence is limited. In a two-party system, many groups are "captured" by one of the major parties and typically can only threaten to abstain, not to trade sides.[8] Groups retain some influence via the nomination process even then, however.

While coalition management is chiefly the province of elected officials, some interest group leaders play a role that transcends factional concerns. When they are sufficiently prominent in a party, a group's leaders may identify their interests with the party's and temper their demands. Looking at the role of labor in the Demo-

cratic Party, especially in states where it is strongest, like Michigan, both Greenstone (1969) and Galvin (2013) found evidence that far from hindering the party, union leaders recognized that it could not simply reflect their views and supported centrist candidates. They acted as party leaders as much as union ones.

Exploring Differences between the Parties

The similarities between Democrats and Republicans are great when viewed in comparative perspective. The constitutional framework and electoral laws create strong incentives for political actors to coalesce into two parties and for a federal structure isomorphic to the political institutions that the parties seek to control. State regulation of parties, dating back to the Progressive Era, also works to make the parties similar in many of their structures and practices. But occasionally scholars turn their attention to the differences between the parties (Freeman 1986; Klinkner 1994; Grossman and Hopkins 2016). Yet this is infrequent. A few concerns may contribute to this neglect. One factor may be a perceived need to seem nonpartisan (Ornstein and Mann 2012). While one may describe differences between party practices with no overt normative judgment, there is always a danger that description will be seen as pejorative. So where differences are noted, they are often not dwelt upon or explained satisfactorily. Still, such concerns have not stopped scholars of diverse views from noting the asymmetric nature of party polarization in Congress, to which changes among Republicans have contributed most (Hacker and Pierson 2005; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2007). Probably a more important factor is simply the desire to generalize. Students of comparative politics, accustomed to studying groups of countries, each with its own multiparty system, are happy to create typologies, including "catchall," "sectoral," and "protest" parties. Americanists, having only two significant cases at the national level, want to be able to talk about "party" behavior in general.

If one looks at behavior in the short and medium term, elites' perceptions of their parties' strategic situation loom large. Parties in office have more power but also more responsibility. Scholars have refined these distinctions beyond simply the ins and outs. Green (2013) explores the behavior of the deep minority—that is, the minority party in the House of Representatives when it does not have a copartisan in the White House. Unlike the Senate minority, which retains a measure of influence as a result of the supermajority rules governing that body, the minority in the House, when it cannot even sustain vetoes, has limited relevance in our polarized era. Thus their leaders and the caucus focus largely on messaging rather than attempting to influence policy outcomes.[9] Lee (2013) found that the MCs whose party controls the White House are more likely to vote to raise the debt ceiling, as are those in the majority. More generally, I argue that presidents are closer than Congress to elite opinion. As a result, their copartisans in Congress, having a stake in the president's

success, will tend to favor policies elite opinion prescribes, including foreign aid and free trade (Karol 2013). Donald Trump is the sole exception since World War II.

Beyond the current status of the party, its leaders' and constituent elements' perception of their strategic situation is key. If party leaders feel that their current status in the majority or minority may change, they will behave differently than if they see it as inevitable. Jones (1970, 170) noted that congressional Republicans, who then had been in the majority for only four of the previous forty years, had a "minority party mentality." He found that "accepting minority status as a fact of life" was most prevalent among long-serving members. Seniority had brought many of these Republican MCs into ranking minority member (RMM) positions. Yet despite serving in leadership posts, they still focused on individualistic goals and tried to make deals with Democratic chairs, rather than adopting an oppositional posture that might increase the odds of a return to majority status. House minority leaders John Rhodes and Robert Michel became increasingly unpopular among Republicans, who felt that they were too defeatist and willing to settle for crumbs from Democrats rather than building an electorally useful record of clear partisan distinctions. Fenno (1997) contends that pressure from more militant younger Republicans led both Rhodes and Michel to retire. Scholars offer divergent assessments of the results of one-party dominance. Fenno argued, "When both parties expect to alternate in power, the party temporarily in the majority has an incentive to consult, cooperate and compromise with the party temporarily in the minority" (1997, 11). Yet Lee (2016) found that the fact that both parties have recently experienced and can readily imagine subsequent shifts of control results in stronger party leaders, more teamlike behavior, and more polarization, along with position taking and partisan gamesmanship as opposed to legislating.

What is true for MC is also true for presidents. Skowronek (1993) discusses "third way" presidents elected when their party is seen as the less popular one. Such presidents have tended to adopt less ambitious policy goals than those from the dominant party and to use governing strategies that allowed them to reach across party lines to win support in Congress. Galvin (2010) explains variation in the extent to which presidents worked as party builders based on their understanding of their party's position. Republican chief executives, even those who worked with congressional Democrats and ran far ahead of their party in elections, like Eisenhower and Nixon, were party builders. By contrast, Democratic presidents before Bill Clinton were party predators. The difference in behavior flowed from a shared view that Democrats were the natural majority. GOP presidents tried to strengthen their party's apparatus in order to compensate for Republicans' smaller numbers, while until recently Democratic presidents felt no such need.

Another set of explanations for party differences concerns the composition of the parties' coalitions. Congress scholars working with principal–agent theory (Aldrich and Rohde 1997; Sinclair 1998) have long seen the preferences of party mem-

bers as the key factor determining the strength of leadership. A more homogenous legislative party will be more willing to delegate authority to leaders to advance collective goals.

Beyond the issue of diversity, scholars also find explanations in the nature of the groups that align with each party. Klinkner (1994) looks to differences in the nature of party coalitions to explain the divergence he finds in the behavior of the "out" parties' national committees. He argues that when Republicans lose the White House, the fact that they are the party associated with business leads them to focus on improvements in marketing and logistics. By contrast, Democrats, being a far more diverse coalition, seek to create structures to enhance the representation of various groups.

One place to look to explore differences in party leadership practices is in Congress. Although one can note differences in the parties' presidential nomination processes (Polsby 1983; Citrin and Karol 2009; Karol 2014), only one party controls the White House at any given time, so it is difficult to disentangle period effects from partisan ones when focusing on the presidency. By contrast, both parties are always represented in the Congress, even if one is necessarily in the minority.[10]

Looking at the departures from office of modern Democratic and Republican House leaders reveals a striking difference between the parties. The causes of Democratic leaders' departures were generally external, whereas Republicans left in a majority of cases because their position in their own party had become untenable. Among Republicans, Joseph Martin and Charles Halleck were unseated by vote of the GOP conference. Gingrich left because he saw the writing on the wall. The resignation of Rhodes and the retirement of Michel also stemmed from pressure from their conference (Fenno 1997). Most recently and dramatically, John Boehner resigned in the middle of the 114th Congress after a protracted conflict with the right wing of his party. Ford left to become vice president, and Hastert's retirement seems to have been a personal choice. Thus, only two of nine modern Republican leaders departed truly voluntarily.

Among Democrats, Sam Rayburn died in office, Tom Foley was defeated in a general election, and John MacCormack retired for reasons of age and scandal. By all accounts, Tip O'Neill's retirement at age seventy-four was a voluntary one. Jim Wright resigned in the wake of scandal. His case was very different from those of GOP leaders whose colleagues were simply dissatisfied with their performance. Gephardt faced little challenge despite several failures to regain the majority status the party had long enjoyed. He left the leadership to pursue a presidential bid. Nancy Pelosi retained the leadership despite losing the majority in 2010 and failing to regain it in the next three elections. The case on the Democratic side that most closely parallels the treatment several Republican leaders have received is that of Speaker Carl Albert. Albert was clearly unhappy in the postreform Congress and was criticized by the young Turks, but there is only modest evidence that he was

pushed out (Naples Daily News 1976). The pressures on Rhodes and Michel from House Republicans seem to have been far greater.

Another way to distinguish the parties when looking at leadership transitions is to consider the path to the top of the party hierarchy. How often did the next in line get the leadership position, be it the speakership, the majority leadership, or the minority leadership?

Twelve men have served as Republican Senate leaders since the end of World War II. Of these, only five (Kenneth Wherry, Everett Dirksen, Hugh Scott, Trent Lott, and Mitch McConnell) had served as GOP whips before being elected as leaders. Of the other seven leaders (Wallace White, Styles Bridges, Robert Taft, William Knowland, Howard Baker, Robert Dole, and Bill Frist), none had served as chair of the Senate Republican Conference, and only two had served as chair of the Republican Policy Committee, seen as the fourth-ranking position (Taft and Knowland). Moreover, the Republican whips who were bypassed were not elderly or enmeshed in scandal. In three cases (Robert Griffin in 1977, Ted Stevens in 1985, and Don Nickles in 2002) they were simply defeated in the conference. Leverett Saltonstall was bypassed three times. He, unlike the others, may have been deemed too liberal.

Once again, the story is different for the Democrats. Only nine men have served as Senate Democratic leaders, and five were previously whips (Scott Lucas, Lyndon Johnson, Mike Mansfield, Robert Byrd, and Harry Reid). Ernest McFarland, George Mitchell, Tom Daschle, and Chuck Schumer did not serve as whip before becoming leader. The difference between five out of nine Democrats who rose from the whip's position, compared to only five out of twelve Republicans, suggests some difference in party styles, but these small numbers mean that we cannot be too confident on the basis of the comparisons alone.

However, close examination of the cases in which the Democratic whip did not succeed to the leadership are instructive. In 1950 both the Democratic majority leader Scott Lucas and his whip, Francis Myers, were defeated in elections. In 1989, when Alan Cranston was bypassed and George Mitchell was elected to replace Robert Byrd, Cranston was already seventy-five years old and enmeshed in the Keating Five scandal, which would lead him to retire at the end of his term. He was not a candidate for leader. When Mitchell was replaced in 1995, the Democratic whip, Wendell Ford, was seventy. He also did not run for the leadership. In 2017 Schumer became leader instead of the seventy-two-year-old whip, Dick Durbin. By contrast, none of the Republican whips who were skipped over were beyond their early sixties, and none were plagued by scandal. While the number of cases is not large, they suggest that Senate Republicans are less likely to elevate their whips and are less governed by the notion that the next in line should succeed to leadership posts.

On the House Republican side, things have been messier. When Halleck replaced Martin in 1959, the GOP deviated from the Democratic transition pattern in two respects: Halleck forced Martin out in an election, and he was not, formally

speaking, the next in line. Halleck bypassed Representative Les Arends, the minority whip and the de jure second in command. Admittedly, Halleck had served as majority leader in the 80th and 83rd Congresses, so this point is arguable. Similarly, when Gerald Ford in turn ousted Halleck in 1965, he was Republican Conference chairman, the position immediately below Arends in the hierarchy.

Yet other examples are harder to dismiss. When Ford became vice president and vacated the minority leadership, Arends, by then nearly eighty years old yet still whip, was bypassed once again. But so was the third-ranking member of the leadership, GOP Conference chairman John Anderson. Anderson was only fifty-one but was apparently considered insufficiently conservative. Instead, Republicans turned to the fourth-ranking member of the leadership, longtime Policy Committee chairman John Rhodes, to replace Ford.

Bob Michel was the GOP whip when he replaced John Rhodes in 1981 yet was nearly defeated in the GOP Conference by National Republican Campaign Committee chairman Guy Vander Jagt. Gingrich was the whip when he succeeded Michel in 1995, but Dennis Hastert was elevated to the speakership from the relatively obscure position of chief deputy whip in 1999. Boehner was the GOP's No. 2, the House majority leader, in the Congress before he succeeded to the minority leadership. Yet he had reached the majority leadership only months earlier in the wake of Tom DeLay's resignation by narrowly defeating the GOP whip, Roy Blunt. So here too Republicans did not simply turn to the next in line.

In 2015, when Boehner resigned, it initially seemed that House majority leader Kevin McCarthy would be his successor. Yet there was a revolt against McCarthy in the wake of a politically maladroit admission on his part that the Benghazi investigation was being used as a political weapon against Hillary Clinton. When McCarthy fell out of favor, the next in line, House majority whip Steve Scalise and Republican Conference chair Cathy McMorris Rogers, were bypassed as Republicans turned to Paul Ryan, who was not, formally speaking, even a member of the leadership.

The seniority system was long seen as a hindrance to parties by reformers. The authors of the famous 1950 American Political Science Association report *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System* complained, "It is not playing the game fairly for party members who oppose the commitments in their party's platform to rely on seniority to carry them into committee chairmanships. Party leaders have compelling reason to prevent such a member from becoming chairman" (9). While House Democrats were the first to challenge the seniority system in the mid-1970s, Republicans have moved much further away from the norm since the 1990s (Deering and Wahlbeck 2006; Pearson 2015). This is true both in that Republicans term limit their committee leaders (in both chambers), and it is also evident in the selection of House chairs and RMMs.

A key difference between the congressional parties is the Republicans' use of term limits since the 104th Congress, when they gained the majority in both cham-

bers for the first time in forty years. A term-limit movement was then nationally prominent. It succeeded in states where the initiative process allowed it to bypass the legislators whose terms would be limited. The Contract with America included a pledge to bring a constitutional amendment limiting MC terms up for a vote. Different versions of that proposal failed, even in a Republican House. Yet in both chambers Republicans did impose six-year term limits. In the House, this was made a rule. Initially it included an eight-year limit for the Speaker, but this was later abandoned (Anderson 2003). The longer and then-unlimited term for the Speaker strengthened him vis-à-vis term-limited chairs.

In 2009 House Democrats repealed this rule before it had any consequences for their own allocation of leadership positions. In the Senate the rule was adopted in 1996 by the Republican Conference, not by the Senate as a body. In both chambers Republicans have counted service as chair and RMM against the limit. These rules have been followed in most cases. House Republicans have granted waivers to a handful of well-regarded legislators, allowing them to continue as chair or RMM. More common has been the scenario in which a termed-out chair leaves Congress, often to become a lobbyist, having little more to aspire to on Capitol Hill. In other cases a termed-out chair was able to move to the leadership of another committee or make do with a subcommittee chair.

The difference in party practices has evident consequences for tenure in committee leadership posts in recent Congresses. In the 113th Congress (2013–2014), while the median House Republican chair and Democratic RMM were both in their second terms as committee leaders, the party means were somewhat different as a result of a longer-serving minority among Democrats that has no parallel on the GOP side. The mean length of service on the part of House Democratic RMMs was 6.1 years, while that for Republican chairs was only 2.8. The analogous figures for the current 115th Congress are 3.8 years for Republicans and 7.5 for Democrats. In the Senate, where Democrats were in the majority in the 113th Congress, the median chair was serving in his second Congress in that post, while, remarkably, the median Republican RMM was new to his position. Party means also reveal clear, if not enormous, differences, with Democratic Senate chairs in place for 5.2 years and their GOP counterparts only 2.8 years. In the 115th Congress, however, Republican Senate leaders had been in place 3.8 years on average, while their Democratic counterparts had only been committee leaders for 3.4 years

In the House, a handful of Democratic MCs occupy committee leadership posts they have held for more than a decade. Yet while there is no counterpart to these on the Republican side of the aisle, the aggregate party differences in tenure, while real, are perhaps less dramatic than we might have expected. Other consequences, including retirements among senior House Republicans that probably would not have occurred otherwise, are more striking.

The difference between the parties was notable in 1995 when Newt Gingrich

led the Republicans to the majority after forty years in the desert and unilaterally decided to deviate from seniority in selecting committee chairs (Aldrich and Rohde 1997). Gingrich's actions differed from the handful of Democratic violations of seniority in years past. Democrats deviated from seniority when legislators were ideological outliers, were enmeshed in scandal, or were too old to effectively perform the chair's duties. By contrast, Gingrich violated seniority simply because he preferred another choice. For example, Representative Carlos Moorhead of California, only in his early sixties and a solid conservative, was disinherited, losing two important chairmanships he would have once been able to choose between by dint of his seniority, because the Speaker felt that the Californian did "not project the right image" and was not "an activist" (Karmin 1994).

Nor was this Republican downgrading of seniority's importance limited to the Gingrich years. Deering and Wahlbech (2006) found that seniority played a limited role in Republicans' decisions regarding the replacements of termed-out chairs in 2001. These scholars found that seniority was a significant predictor of a representative becoming finalist for a chair—that is, being asked to speak before the Steering Committee and make one's case. Yet within the pool of finalists, differences in seniority did not predict the ultimate selection. By contrast, Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi has "continued to respect seniority in most instances" (Peters and Rosenthal 2010, 70).

The distribution of committee leadership posts in the House reported in Table 6.1 suggests that Republican practices have changed little since then and that Democrats remain somewhat more observant of the seniority norms, although less so than in years past. Looking at the eighteen standing committees in the 113th Congress (excluding the Budget Committee, where term limits have historically been the rule) reveals interparty differences regarding seniority that go beyond term limits and their consequences. Of the thirty-six chair and RMM positions, fourteen were occupied by representatives next in line according to seniority, junior only to a legislator who took a more desirable chair, or, in the case of Republicans, behind a representative who termed out of the chair. Another eleven leapfrogged one colleague to reach the chair or RMM position. GOP representatives who bypassed two colleagues held five committee chairs. Another six were occupied by MCs who bypassed four or more legislators.

These numbers indicate that seniority is still relevant in that a disproportionate share of GOP committee leadership posts are held by the most senior or second most senior eligible legislator. Yet most positions are no longer held by the senior representatives who once monopolized them. Almost a third went to an MC who was elevated over several colleagues, showing a great decay of the seniority norm. Importantly, the category of chairs elevated over four or more colleagues with greater committee seniority is entirely composed of Republicans. A closer look at these six cases reveals instances in which seniority was entirely disregarded. In the

Table 6.1. Committee Leadership and Seniority, US House of Representatives, 113th Congress (2013–2014)

Party	Was Next in Line	Jumped Over One Colleague	Jumped Over Two Colleagues	Jumped Over Three Colleagues	Jumped Over Four or More Colleagues	Total
Democrat	9	5	4	0	0	18
Republican	5	6	1	0	6	18
Total	14	11	5	0	6	36

113th Congress, Representative Candice Miller (R-MI) became chair of the Administration Committee despite having not served on it previously because GOP leaders wished to diversify an otherwise entirely white and male roster of chairs (Cahn 2012).

Similarly, in the 111th Congress, Representative Richard "Doc" Hastings (R-WA) was made RMM of the Resources Committee despite not having served on it previously. Reportedly, the ethical troubles of the previous RMM, Don Young of Alaska, made Hastings an attractive choice, given his background as chair of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, his closeness to leadership as evidenced by his service on the Rules and Republican steering committees, and his background in relevant issues resulting from his rural Western district (Bontrager and Straub 2008). Disregard for seniority in bestowing the Resources chair was not unprecedented among Republicans; in 2003 they had bypassed nine more senior representatives, including six who were not termed out and had no more attractive chair, to select Richard Pombo of California to lead this panel (Coile 2004). In other cases, a legislator had served on the committee before his elevation but was allowed to bypass several colleagues, some of whom were seemingly respectable candidates, as a result of his closeness to leadership or prominence in the GOP conference. In the 113th Congress, this was true of Education and the Workforce chair John Kline, Financial Services chair Jeb Hensarling, Oversight chair Darrell Issa, and Transportation and Infrastructure chair Bill Shuster.

In the 114th Congress, most House chairs and RMMs were holdovers from the previous Congress. However, a look at the new committee leaders again reveals Democrats to be far more respectful of seniority norms than Republicans. Of the five new Democratic RMMs, all were next in line according to seniority, except Raul Grijalva, who leapfrogged Grace Napolitano. The seventy-eight-year-old Napolitano did not run against Grijalva (Dumain 2014). On the Republican side, once again deviations from seniority were far more significant. Of the six new chairs, only two had been next in line. Two leapt over one MC, one skipped over three colleagues, and another bypassed four more senior representatives to sit in the chair (Fuller 2014).

In the 115th Congress, the picture is much the same. Among seven new House committee chairs, only two Republicans (Rodney Frelinghuysen of Appropriations and Greg Harper of House Administration) had been next in line, and only one (Virginia Foxx of Education and Workforce) leapfrogged only one colleague. The remaining five new chairs bypassed from two to six colleagues in ascending to their new positions. Of the three Democratic RMMs, one ascended according to seniority (John Yarmuth of Budget). Richard Neal became RMM of Ways and Means when eighty-five-year-old Sander Levin stepped down. Only Tim Walz, the new RMM of Veterans Affairs, bypassed more than one Democratic colleague who was not of very advanced age.

In sum, forty years after the liberal revolt against the committee chairs in the post-Watergate 94th Congress, it is House Republicans who have moved furthest away from the seniority norm, both in imposing term limits on chairs and in frequently bypassing the most senior representatives when picking chairs.

Comparison of Republican and Democratic practices regarding congressional leaders also reveals key differences. Republicans have been much tougher than Democrats on their leaders. Leadership succession on the GOP side has also been less likely to occur via routine elevation of the next in line. Republicans have shown less respect for the waning seniority norm than Democrats, not only term limiting committee chairs but also reaching far down the committee roster to find a chair or RMM, or even occasionally parachuting a representative who has not been on the panel into a leadership role.

How can we understand these differences? Some of the possible theories do not seem to fit the facts. Students of political psychology find that while conservatism is not the same as authoritarianism, the two phenomena are correlated, and Republican respondents score higher on authoritarianism (Hetherington and Weiler 2009). Yet if psychological dispositions were key to the behavioral differences related to leadership we observe, we would expect Republicans to be more deferential to their leaders and more respectful of seniority. In fact the opposite is the case. Similarly, Freeman's (1986) account of the Republican Party as a top-down organization that stigmatized dissent and values deference and order seems at odds with these findings.

While the diversity of the Democratic Party leads to more respect for seniority and tends to make leaders' positions more secure, there are also countervailing drives to which Democrats are subject more than Republicans as a result of their beliefs and the nature of their coalition. Diversity is a Democratic value and also characterizes the Democrats' coalition, both in Congress and the electorate. This commitment is evident in practices such as the extensive affirmative action requirements for convention delegates and the requirement that nomination contests allocate delegates proportionally.

As the Democrats moved into the minority in 2010, they anticipated that incoming chair Darrell Issa would use the Oversight Committee in an aggressive manner and wanted a strong RMM to counter him. The outgoing chair, Ed Towns of New York, was not seen as that person. The Democratic leadership signaled to Towns that he had lost their support, and he stepped down. However, Democrats did not turn to the next in line, Carolyn Maloney, but rather to the second in line, Elijah Cummings. There was nothing disqualifying about Maloney, but the Democrats, having pushed aside Towns, an African American, turned to Cummings, also an African American, to replace him (Beutler 2010; Brown 2010).

Conclusion

Assessing leadership in parties requires defining them. This is challenging in the case of American parties, which lack formal membership. The most useful definition of party is a group that unites to win elections and control the government. Party is the basis for the leaders who dominate the legislative and executive branches at the national and state levels. However, the heads of party committees who on paper occupy leadership roles are of limited importance. National- and state-level party committees control more resources and play more active roles in campaigns than they did a generation or two ago, but on their own, they are not "the party" in any meaningful sense. While there are structures of hierarchy within some party institutions, parties are best understood as networks including officials and candidates, interest groups and activists.

Party leadership is exercised, mostly informally, by elected officials interacting with aligned interest groups. The president is the closest thing to a national party leader that exists, but he has no counterpart in the party not controlling the White House. Acting as coalition managers, politicians balance the concerns of the groups within their party's coalitions while trying to attract new ones and win broad-based support. Sometimes they adopt new policies due to group demands, but they also can direct party-aligned groups, at least tactically, orienting them to support other party policies and sometimes even revisit positions.

While both of these points—the limited influence of formal party leaders and the central role of politicians and interest groups—hold true for both major parties, important differences between Republicans and Democrats are evident as well. Congressional Republicans are more likely to force out their leaders, less likely to replace them with the next in line, and much less respectful of seniority than Democrats. Republicans not only impose term limits but are also more likely to elevate relatively low-ranking committee members and occasionally those with no prior service on a panel to the position of chair or RMM. This behavior is not consistent with some accounts of Republicans as a hierarchical, deferential party or marked by

authoritarian personality traits. The greater homogeneity of Republicans may make it is easier for consensus to form against leaders and lead GOP legislators to place less stock in norms that keep the peace, such as the seniority system.

The messiness of American political parties means that the study of leadership in them is challenging. Many elites interact, and organizational charts can be highly misleading guides to who wields power. Yet given the parties' importance in our political system, it is a worthwhile inquiry. Because parties are constantly changing, all answers will be provisional and new investigations are always justified.

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Notes

1. In more recent cycles, the presidential nominee has openly chosen the vice presidential candidate, even though formally this decision requires the delegates' approval.

2. The Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, the Democratic Governors Association, the Republican Governors Association, and the Republican State Leadership Committee are all increasingly active in campaigns.

3. In a few other cases (William G. Miller, Bob Dole, and Tim Kaine), a politician who served as chair was nominated for vice president not long afterward, but even these men had other credentials that were more important.

4. Prominent examples in the United Kingdom include Shaun Woodward, who moved from the Conservative Party to Labour in 1999, and Reginald Prentice, who switched from Labour to the Conservatives in 1977. Both switchers were nominated in different constituencies and were rewarded with ministerial posts by their new parties. See White (2001) and Porter (2008).

5. While Schattschneider (1960) seems to suggest a similar dynamic in Ohio that year, where a popular vote on right to work also not only failed but also produced a backlash that sank GOP candidates, the journalistic account he cites actually suggests that the similarly conservative Senator John Bricker, unlike Knowland, tried to convince GOP funders of the folly of this plan and only reluctantly acceded to their insistent requests for support (*Reporter* 1958).

6. While McConnell denied trying to influence the NRA, independent conservative observers, including some present at the meeting in question, reject his denial (*Washington Times* 2009). See also Greenhouse (2012) and Bernstein (2012).

7. The NRA did cite the Sotomayor and Kagan nomination votes as a reason for staying neutral during the otherwise solidly pro–gun rights Senator Mark Begich's (D-AK) unsuccessful 2014 bid for reelection. See *CBS News* (2014).

8. Frymer (1999) suggests this fate is limited to African Americans and perhaps LGBT voters, but I believe it is far more widespread.

9. There were occasional exceptions to this rule, when Speaker Boehner needed Democratic support because Tea Party or Freedom Caucus Republicans would not support mustpass legislation.

10. Peabody (1967) found interparty differences and attributed them to parties becoming crankier the longer they were in the minority. Nelson (1977) rejected this explanation without presenting a compelling alternative.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Leadership and Interest Groups

Timothy M. LaPira

Former representative Vin Weber is the consummate Washington insider. Corporation CEOs, association presidents, union leaders, and grassroots organizers from across the political spectrum seek out his strategic political and policy advice, as do presidents, Speakers of the House, Senate majority leaders, and those who seek to occupy those leadership posts in government. He is regularly featured on Top 10 lists of movers and shakers, strategic consultants, and lobbyists in Washington, and has also been featured on virtually every national media outlet.

Weber began his political career as the Minnesota-based campaign manager and aide to Representative Tom Hagedorn and Senator Rudy Boschwitz before running for Congress in Minnesota's sixth and second congressional districts. In Congress, he quickly rose through the ranks to join the Republican leadership team, preceding none other than Representative Tom Delay as the Republican Conference secretary. He is considered to have been among then–minority leader Newt Gingrich's closest allies. He was a cofounder of the Conservative Opportunity Society, a chief architect of the Republican's Contract with America, and helped assure the 1994 Republican victory in the House.

Ironically, Weber did not run for office himself in 1994. Rather, he opted to go through the so-called revolving door, and—along with Democrat representative Tom Downey—opened the Washington office of Clark & Weinstock, a new breed of public affairs consulting that seamlessly blended political, policy, and public relations advice to a wide variety of clients. In 2011, the firm merged with a public relations firm specializing in grassroots mobilization to become Mercury/Clark & Weinstock. In his twenty years with the firm, Weber has represented companies from virtually every sector in the economy on issues as diverse as taxes, transportation, agriculture, health care, education, and veterans affairs.

Undoubtedly, Vin Weber can accurately be described as a leader in the vast, complex, and growing Washington interest group system. Yet so is Sandi Stuart. Most