INFORMATION AND PARTY INFLUENCE IN THE U.S. CONGRESS*

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1 Introduction

Members of Congress are tasked with the job of making and passing policy to address wide-ranging concerns. They cast anywhere from hundreds to just over a thousand roll calls each Congress and do so while also campaigning for reelection, fundraising, and performing constituency service. Furthermore, members of Congress are politicians and not substantive experts. They typically gain specific knowledge of policy only on the set of issues that their committees handle. This leaves members largely uninformed about what goes into policy decisions across Congress. They are dependent on information and cues to know how to cast votes in a fast-paced, demanding environment.

Theories on the legislative organization of Congress have placed committees at the center of information transmission about legislation under consideration in Congress. In taking up bills introduced in its jurisdiction, a committee is privy to more information about a bill than the average member and is tasked with communicating information about bills to the broader chamber. This transfer of information, however, happens within an increasingly partisan congressional environment. Partisan-driven incentives can seep into how party leaders or committee chairs can control this informational environment to their benefit. Releasing information or keeping members in the dark can help those who control information wield control over outcomes (Curry, 2015). As majority party leaders and committee leaders control the information levers present in procedural elements within Congress, these leaders can use information as a tool to achieve majority party goals.

This view of information as currency has not been directly addressed in previous work on the role of parties and committees, despite the substantial informational elements present in the committee stage and the potential impact of information on party power. Cox and McCubbins (1993), in *Legislative Leviathan*, recognize how majority party leaders can take advantage of the structure of the committee system to work in their favor. The polarized informational environment of the last few decades begs the question of how effectively information can be controlled by the

majority party in the committee stage to maintain party influence on the floor.

Two recent studies highlight the gap I seek to fill. Curry (2015) argues how congressional leaders have the incentive to control the rank-and-file's access to information; with interviews and descriptive data on procedural rules, he shows that leaders indeed attempt to influence the informational environment. I extend this by considering whether party leaders' control over information ultimately drive *outcomes* to their will. Baumgartner and Jones (2014) show how incorporating diverse viewpoints—more diverse information—can lead to more intensive policymaking activity. I build upon this by taking into account party leaders' perspectives in controlling these information channels and whether, again, outcomes bolster party goals.

I provide a refreshed argument that combines (a) how information is currency in congressional politics, and increasingly so, to (b) the foundation of *Legislative Leviathan's* view of majority party governance of the committee system. In doing so, I build upon core ideas of majority party control as established in Cox and McCubbins (1993). I argue and provide descriptive evidence for how the majority party can ensure their members fall in line on the floor by controlling the amount of information the committee disseminates about the bill.

A descriptive test requires a measure of information that is controlled by leaders during the committee process. While recent work on information provision in Congress has focused on committee hearings as a venue for information dissemination (Ban, Park, and You, 2023; Esterling, 2004), committee hearings only cover a small subset of legislation considered on the floor. Thus, I introduce a new measure that quantifies information from a more consistent source whose content is controlled by the majority party in committees: committee reports on legislation from 1995 to 2021. While samples of committee reports have been used previously to measure congressional delegation to agencies (Bolton, 2022), I use all committee reports on legislation to introduce a new measure of the information that a committee disseminates on the bills reported for floor action.

Using information in committee reports, I illustrate how party leaders' control of procedural elements involving information can drive legislative outcomes to their will. I show how there is variance in the amount of information a committee provides about a bill in that bill's committee

report, and test how the amount of this information can bolster the party's control of floor voting on the bill. My theory predicts that the restriction of information will reduce the possibility that members become aware of compelling reasons to object to the party line, thus leading to fewer amendment attempts and greater majority party support on the floor for the bill.

I find that increasing the amount of information a committee disseminates to the floor about a bill does lead to more attempts to amend that bill on the floor, holding constant various characteristics of bills. While the magnitude of this effect is small, I find that the majority party in general has maintained strong influence on the floor: the mean number of amendments attempted on bills with committee reports is 0.65 amendments, reflecting very few baseline attempts to amend bills that the majority party brings to the floor. I also find that increasing the amount of committee information on a bill decreases majority party support for passage on the bill, holding constant characteristics of bills that may also affect support. By reducing the amount of information in a committee report, the majority party can ensure higher levels of support for passage of the bill. While the magnitude of this effect is again small, the level of passage support among majority party members is high to begin with, at 90% of majority party members.

My aim here is not to provide a comprehensive empirical analysis of how information affects party influence. Such an analysis would require a causal research design and account for a variety of channels through which members receive information, at minimum. My goal, however, is to outline and provide descriptive evidence for a theory of how information, controlled by committee chairs and party leaders, can be wielded to reinforce party influence over legislative outcomes.

2 Information and party influence

My argument combines two parts of the congressional literature: how information is currency in congressional politics and the foundation of *Legislative Leviathan's* view of majority party dominance of the committee system. I theorize that majority party leaders can rein in members by controlling the informational environment in the committee phase to the floor. My argument is straightforward: information about pending or potential legislation can be made available within

Congress in varying amounts at various points during the legislative process, but especially at the committee stage. On one side, party and committee leaders have incentives to control the amount and types of information made available during this process. On the other side, rank-and-file members, being constantly pressured to act and constrained by time, depend on this information and cues communicated to them by leadership. In this pressurized, fast-moving decision-making environment, the absence of more informational viewpoints leaves members more dependent on the party line position.

My theory has three components: (1) information from committees is valuable to members in their decision of how to vote on a bill, (2) the amount of information provided by committees is controlled by the chair and can vary from bill to bill, and (3) in the absence of information, members default to party lines. I discuss each component in detail below.

Information from committees is valuable to members.

Members need information about what is in a bill in order to know how to cast their vote. The immense amount of literature on legislator vote choice, exploring the effects of electoral pressures, legislator ideology, and party influence on vote choice (e.g. Mayhew 1974; Canes-Wrone, Brady, and Cogan 2002; Ansolabehere, Jr., and Stewart 2001), rest on the assumption that legislators know *what* they are voting on.

But, members cast these votes in the context of a demanding, time-pressured environment. They cast hundreds of roll calls each Congress, in addition to performing constituency service, running for reelection, fundraising, and serving on their committees. The complexity of bills has also sharply increased over time, with the length of bills growing by more than 500 percent since the 1950s (Ornstein and Malbin, 2008). In this demanding environment, members do not have adequate time to conduct their own comprehensive searches for information on every bill even though this information is one of members' most important strategic needs (Kingdon, 1989; Curry, 2015). Instead, they rely on information from a variety of sources: lobbyists (e.g. Austin-Smith 1996; Hall and Deardorff 2006), cues from other members (Matthews and Stimson, 1975; Fong, 2020), their staff's information searches (Furnas et al., 2020), and committees that first considered

the bill.

Among these sources, committees occupy an influential position in information dissemination to members of Congress. As the legislative unit tasked with considering all bills under their jurisdiction, committees are designed to gather information about bills, amend bills, and decide which bills to recommend for floor action. Informational theories of legislative organization, as the one advanced by Gilligan and Krehbiel (1987), view committees as the provider of information about legislation to the floor, with implications on the efficiency of this information transmission. The majority party cartel theory also places committees in a central role: in acting as a legislative cartel, the majority party uses its influence to control who it assigns to committees and the proposals coming out of committees, holding committees in close check (Cox and McCubbins, 1993). The majority party's concern about committee preferences and its recognition of the committee's place in the sequence for bill consideration reveal that committees have unique power in influencing chamber outcomes.

Unsurprisingly then, due to the committee's central role in considering bills, the cue-taking literature centers on the information coming from the members of the *committee* that considered a bill. Kingdon (1989) emphasizes how the committee system is developed to allow members to specialize in the committee's jurisdiction, for other non-committee members to rely on. Because committee members best understand the policy implications of the bill under consideration, non-committee members use committee member cues as a signal for how to vote. However, the usefulness of a committee member's voting cues to a non-committee member depends on how similar the non-committee member's preferences are to the set of committee members' preferences (Fong, 2020).

Beyond these cues, however, a member can turn to the direct *information* released by committees to make the member's own judgements. Unlike voting cues of committee members, which only communicate one direction (support or lack of support) among the committee's members, the information released by committees through committee hearings and committee reports lay out the details, arguments, and political ramifications about the bill under consideration. Knowing that this

information is selected by the committee (and discounting appropriately), a member can directly apply their own criteria to this information and decide how to vote.

Information, thus, is important to members in deciding how to vote. And, in particular, committees provide one of the most important sources of information about the bills they recommend to the chamber.

The amount of information provided by committees vis-à-vis leaders can vary from bill to bill.

During the committee stage, the committee chair oversees the process by which the committee can take up a referred bill for consideration, choose whether or not to hold a hearing on the bill, choose whether to amend the bill, and choose whether to report the bill for floor action. At each of these points, the chair, who leads the majority party in committee, holds control and commands the most resources to carry out his or her wishes.

In terms of control, many studies of committees have highlighted the driving force of committee chairs (e.g. Fenno 1973). While chairs undoubtedly take note of the opinions of their majority party delegations in their committees, they ultimately have the last say in each decision point of the committee process. Curry (2015), in his interviews of committee staffers, leadership staffers, and members, finds that that committee chairs largely view their roles as using the committee process to meet party goals (Curry, 2015, p. 44). Chairs gather information from their committee members during the committee process, but this information is used to understand the political dynamics and predict support (Curry, 2015, p. 54). Chairs, in their service to their party, differ in their goals from the rank-and-file in one crucial aspect: chairs have the incentive to use tools to get their rank-and-file to do what chairs, representing majority party goals, want. And information is the strongest tool they have at their disposal.

Through procedural elements such as committee hearings, committee reports, and the chairman's mark, the chair tightly controls how much information, and what information, is disseminated to their committee member and the broader chamber. For instance, one form of information dissemination comes in committee hearings, when the chair presides over witness testimonies and member statements in a public forum. During these hearings, external witnesses—representatives

from interest groups, think tanks, agencies, and other groups outside Congress—come to provide information about the bill under consideration (Ban, Park, and You, 2023). Committee chairs control everything from witness lists to whether or not a hearing is held.

Another channel of information dissemination from the committee comes in the form of committee reports. These reports accompany the legislative measures (bills or resolutions) that committees report from committee to the floor. Chairs, again, decide what to include in a committee report: they direct their committee staff to prepare these reports. These reports generally include background information, an explanation of the need for legislation, a section-by-section analysis of the bill, any external submissions of statements or prepared information, the political ramifications of the bill, and the budget impact. How much information, how that information is framed or presented, and what kinds of information to include, are all up for determination when the committee report is prepared.

Using informational elements of the committee process such as these, committee chairs can control the amount of information they release on a bill, and using their discretion, vary this amount of information from bill to bill.

In the absence of more information, members default to party lines.

Members of Congress are bound by the collective interests of their parties. Individual members are affected by the standing and the perception of their parties in the public (Jacobson, 2009; Cox and McCubbins, 2005). Because of this collective interest, members are predisposed to hew to partisan behavior (Lee, 2009).

Following this, the literature on roll-call voting concludes that members assume they will vote with their party in both the committee stage and on the floor, unless given a reason otherwise (Kingdon, 1989; Matthews and Stimson, 1975). As Curry (2015) explains, collective incentives drive members by default to support their party's decision, unless information reveals a reason that makes the party line objectionable.

Applying this to roll call voting behavior, members default to voting along party lines unless they have information that establishes compelling reasons not to. Given the majority party's gate-

keeping power in the legislative process, the majority party brings bills to the floor that it wishes to pass. The party line for majority party members, thus, is to vote in support of passage of a bill on the floor. Further, given that the majority party's gate-keeping power gives it the opportunity to amend a bill before it is brought to the floor, the majority party does not wish for amendments to be made to the bill on the floor. The party line for majority party members, thus, would also be to not attempt amendments on the bill on the floor.

With more information that could give members more reasons to amend the bill, more amendments will be attempted on the bill on the floor, compared to when members are given less information. Likewise, with less information giving members fewer reasons to vote against the party line, members of the majority party will vote with relatively higher support of passage of bills on the floor, compared to when they are given more information.

To test this argument, I turn to measuring the amount of committee information provided on a bill using a new data source: committee reports.

3 Committee reports transmit information

U.S. House and Senate committees issue committee reports to accompany a legislative measure when it is reported for chamber action. Committees can also issue reports summarizing their oversight and investigative activities or summarizing their legislative activities over a Congress, but committee reports issued for legislation (e.g. bills or resolutions) play the unique role of being a formal conduit of information on a legislative measure as that measure proceeds through the legislative process.

These committee reports issued for legislation are designed for a committee to disseminate information to the parent body about the legislation that the committee considered and is reporting to the floor. The reports have been recognized as a distinct type of document that uniquely contains the information, political context, and recommendations that the committee wishes to convey to the chamber as a whole (Zwirn, 1980).

Of course, there are other sources of information about a bill under consideration that members receive. The committee itself can hold legislative hearings on a bill, transcripts of which are kept in official record for reference. Members can transmit information to each other informally in non-written form; in particular, party leadership can provide information as they whip votes for the floor. Outside of Congress, interest groups can meet with and give information to members, in both written and non-written forms. Members can correspond with bureaucrats for specialist information (e.g. Gailmard and Patty 2013).

However, these other sources of information are not as consistently available or do not represent the definitive information coming from the *committee* under consideration, the body that holds a central role in information gathering and transmission in theories about legislative organization. The informational theories emphasize the strategic informational role of committees, in which committees are incentivized to gain expertise and share policy-relevant information with other legislators (e.g. Gilligan and Krehbiel 1987; Gilligan and Krehbiel 1990), a role that is "at the heart of legislative organization" (Krehbiel, 1991). Among the sources of information coming from the committee, then, committee reports are the only written source of politically relevant information about bills from the committee (Zwirn, 1980). Unlike committee hearings, which are not held on every bill a committee reports to the chamber, committee reports are issued for the vast majority of legislation that committees report.

I am not the first to conceptualize committee reports as a source of information about a bill from the committee. Bolton (2022) uses committee reports from House and Senate Appropriations Committees to model the amount of information about policy direction and, for the specific case of appropriations, the agency constraint given. Even though the targeted audiences of these appropriations reports are agencies and not the chamber, the concept is the same: committee reports on legislation represent similar information transmission to their targeted audience, the chamber. While Bolton (2022) only uses appropriations committee reports, I use all legislative committee reports.

Other measures have also been used to represent the amount of information a legislator receives

from committees or leaders about a bill. Of note, Curry (2015) uses layover time—the amount of time that legislation is available for review before roll call voting—as a proxy for information. If layover time is intentionally restricted, members do not have time to review the bill, thus restricting their information about a bill. Curry (2015) also uses bill complexity—how easily understood the bill's contents and implications are—as another proxy for information. If a bill is intentionally written in a complex manner, legislators do not receive much usable information from the bill itself and must depend on other information such as cues from leadership. While these measures do capture the amount of information a legislator receives about a bill, they are not direct measures of the amount of information that a committee conveys about the bill.

Committee reports, on the other hand, directly capture the information that committees convey to the chamber. To be more precise, as the committee stage is dominated by the majority party and controlled by the committee chair, the committee report contains the information, political context, and recommendations that the *committee chair*, representing the majority party, wishes to convey to the chamber as a whole. This makes committee reports a fitting measure of information controlled by the majority party.

Figure 1 shows an example of what committee reports typically contain. While the content of reports vary from report to report, reports generally contain the same main ingredients. The table of contents in the example show these ingredients: description of the purpose and summary of the bill, summaries of the committee's action and views of the bill, a section-by-section analysis of the bill, and information about the goals, implications, and changes to existing law that the bill makes. The minority party, at the end of each report, has the chance to include its own section, typically called "minority views" or "dissenting views." This minority section, however, is normally very short and a couple of paragraphs at maximum. The vast majority of a committee report contains information about the bill that the *majority party*, at the behest of the committee chair, decides to convey.

The amount of this information is a choice and can be varied. The level of detail, the amount of discussion or explanation, or the number of differing motivations or perspectives on the bill can

116TH CONGRESS
2d Session
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
REPT. 116–684
Part 1

REBUILD AMERICA'S SCHOOLS ACT OF 2019

DECEMBER 21, 2020.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia, from the Committee on Education and Labor, submitted the following

R E P O R T

together with

MINORITY VIEWS

[To accompany H.R. 865]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Education and Labor, to whom was referred the bill (H.R. 865) to provide for the long-term improvement of public school facilities, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon with amendments and recommends that the bill as amended do pass.

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Figure 1: Example Table of Contents of Committee Report

all be decided upon when the report is written.

For instance, the "Background and Need for Legislation" section of the Committee on Homeland Security's House Report 118-45 on the "Border Reinforcement Act of 2023" was comprised of two paragraphs:

> Given that the number of aliens presenting at ports of entry and illegal aliens entering the United States between ports of entry has drastically increased over the past two and a half years, the threat posed by drug cartels, transnational criminal organizations, and known or suspected terrorists remains extraordinarily high. Over the years, Congress has appropriated billions of dollars to strengthen border security through new investments in personnel, technology, and physical infrastructure; nonetheless, our borders are measurably less secure than they were several years ago under the prior administration.
>
> Rather than continue the flawed approaches of the current administration, this bill provides DHS with a clear direction to secure the border. This multi-layered approach is designed to deter, detect, and help interdict illegal cross-border activity at the border, especially between ports of entry where the crisis is most prominent. This bill clearly and effectively communicates Congress' intent: the United States will not tolerate illicit activity at our borders.[1]

On the other hand, the Committee on Homeland Security issued House Report 115-121 on the "Anti-Border Corruption Reauthorization Act of 2017" which contained seven paragraphs in the same "Background and Need for Legislation" section, detailing various reasons and perspectives for why the vetting process for U.S. Border Patrol agents needs to be reformed for border security reasons.

Both of these reports were issued by the same committee under a Republican majority. The pithy description of the first report reads similar to a party position statement on border control. The lengthened description of the second report, however, provides more details and perspectives. A Republican rank-and-file member not on the committee who would default to holding the party line is given less elaboration in the first report, and thus fewer reasons to raise issue with the bill. That same member is given more elaboration in the second report, potentially increasing the chance that the member may be alerted to some issue in the bill.

[1] From House Report 118-45 "Border Reinforcement Act of 2023" accompanying H.R. 2794.

Committee reports, thus, are a direct source of information from committees about a bill. The content of reports can be chosen to give more or less information about a bill. These elements make committee reports a prime measure of how much information committees disseminate about a bill to use.

4 Data and methods

To capture the amount of information disseminated by committees, I construct a new dataset consisting of U.S. House committee reports. I collect the text files of committee reports from 1995 through 2020 from Congress.gov.[2] Since I am focused on committee information about legislation as the legislation advances through Congress, I use committee reports that are issued by a committee when it reports legislation to the floor. I parse reports to extract the bills and resolutions that they cover.

Table 1: Committee Reports, 104th-116th Congresses

Congress	Reports on Legislation	Legislation with Roll Calls	
		Reports	No Reports
104	681	186	223
105	624	176	303
106	784	212	348
107	608	190	299
108	636	204	413
109	600	209	386
110	726	307	569
111	561	270	715
112	521	213	261
113	554	241	222
114	690	256	262
115	865	306	293
116	550	152*	247*

*Data from Adler and Wilkerson (2020) only goes to May 2020.

[2]Congress.gov makes the raw text of committee reports available from 1995 through 2020, which cover the 104th through 116th Congresses.

Table 1 Column 2 lists the number of committee reports issued by Congress. Some committee reports cover more than one bill or resolution; in these situations, I also record the number of pieces of legislation covered by the report to include as a control variable. I exclude committee reports that are general activity reports of a committee as they are retrospective summaries that come at the end of a congressional session or Congress. I also exclude committee reports from the Rules Committee as the text of these reports contain the procedural summary of the rule reported for a piece of legislation; the legislation itself can have a separate report from a substantive committee.[3] This yields a set of 7,463 committee reports.

For each committee report on a bill, I measure the number of words in each report to use as the main independent variable operationalizing the amount of information about that legislation conveyed by the committee to the floor. Figure 2 summarizes the distribution of committee report length. Due to the highly positive skew of the distribution, I use the natural logarithm of the word count in my analysis.

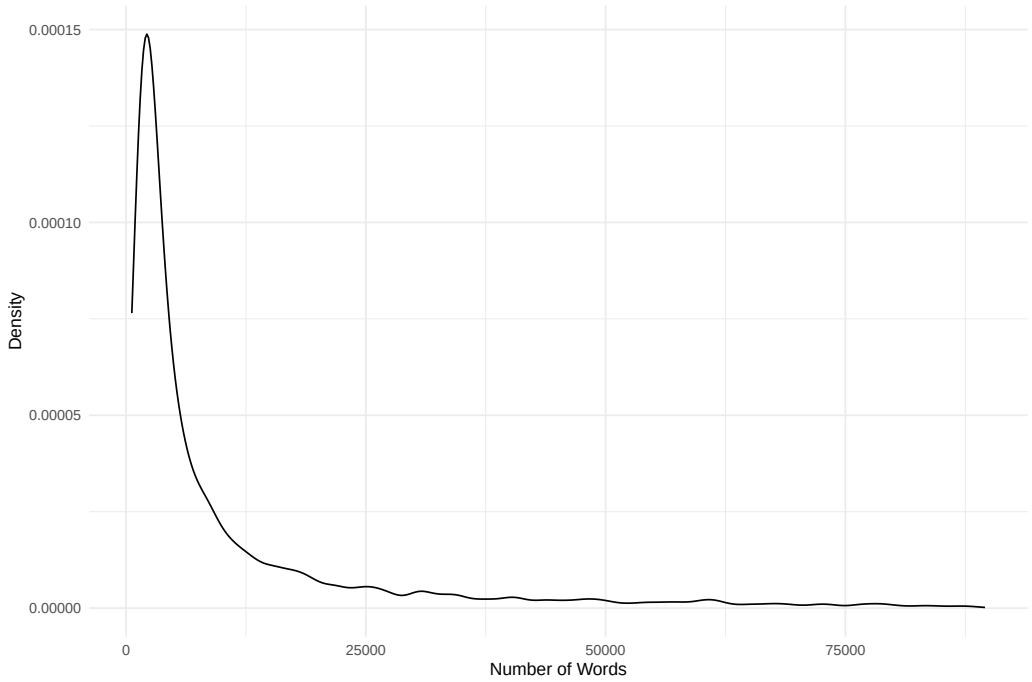

Figure 2: Distribution of Committee Report Length

[3]Results are substantively similar when including rule reports.

While there are other potential measures for the amount of information transmitted by a committee report, the length of a report is the most straightforward measure: the more information a committee report includes, the longer the committee report is. I assume that length represents the *amount* of information contained in the report. This follows previous work that has used committee reports to represent information; of note, Bolton (2022) uses the length of committee reports on appropriations to measure the amount of information on what and how much Congress delegates to the agencies.

One possible concern in using committee report length, however, is how writing style affects the length of a report. Two paragraphs of the same length may convey different amounts of information if paragraph A is written concisely and paragraph B is written verbosely. However, the language used in committee reports is mainly utilitarian using plain reporting language to convey what the committee (committee chair) wants to disseminate. I use committee fixed effects in the analysis to control for time-invariant features of committees to hold constant writing styles that may differ across committees.

Another possible concern in using committee length is that two paragraphs of the same length may also convey different *types* of information. For instance, paragraph A may be written to explain budgetary, statistical information and paragraph B may be written to explain political positions. In this case, both paragraph A and paragraph B convey information—following extant literature on the types of information in Congress (Esterling, 2004), I conceptualize all types of information, including both technical information (e.g. analytical information) and political information as useful information a committee can transmit to the chamber. Additionally, all committee reports typically address both types of information. Given that each committee report has the same opportunity to elucidate both technical and political information, any differences in length reflect the choices made for the how much of both types of information to convey. Further, I use congress fixed effects in the analysis to control for how factors such as the partisan environment or the agenda priorities of the majority party may affect the committee reports written for all bills in each congress, and I use indicator variables for major and minor topic codes from the Policy Agenda

Projects to control for how the content of committee reports may vary across different topics.[4]

I merge this committee report data with data on bills and resolutions from the Congressional Bills Project (Adler and Wilkerson, 2020) on the bill or resolution number. For every bill or resolution introduced in the U.S. House, the Congressional Bills Project provides data on various characteristics such as its committee(s) of referral, topics[5], sponsors and cosponsors, and information about the lead sponsor such as ideology. Recall from the previous section that bills or resolutions with a committee report could end up not receiving any floor action, and that bills or resolutions with floor action (at least one roll call) need not necessarily have a committee report. Among the bills and legislation with floor action, the last two columns in Table 1 show how many had committee reports issued and how many did not. Across the congresses in the dataset, committee reports were issued for anywhere from one-third to one-half of the legislation with floor action.

Finally, I merge this bill-level dataset with member voting behavior from Voteview (Lewis et al., 2023). This yields a dataset that contains each individual House member's vote on every roll call, linked to the bill variables of the bill for a given roll call. Note that a bill may receive multiple roll call votes, such as a roll call on an amendment or a roll call on passage.

4.1 Empirical strategy

To estimate the effect of committee information on party influence on the floor, I use the following model using ordinary least squares:

$$Y_{it} = \beta\{\text{Report Length}\}_{it} + \gamma \mathbf{Z_{it}} + \alpha_t + \delta_c + \epsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

[4]Major topic codes include categories such as "Health," "Agriculture," or "Law Crime, and Family Issues," among others. Minor topic codes include categories such as "Public Health and Disease Prevention," "Food Inspection and Safety," or "White Collar Crime and Organized Crime," among others. In total, there are 20 major topics and 220 subtopics from the Policy Agendas Project. The topic code(s) are assigned to a committee report based on the topic code(s) of the bill the committee report covers. The Congressional Bills Project assigns one major topic and one minor topic for a bill (Adler and Wilkerson, 2020).

[5]Data is available for the major topic and minor topic of bills (not resolutions) using the Policy Agendas Project topic codes.

In this specification, Y_{it} denotes the number of amendments attempted on the floor on bill i in Congress t; this variable is logged for the analysis due to having a positively skewed distribution. $\{\text{Report Length}\}_{it}$, the main independent variable of interest, is the log number of words for the committee report issued.

$\mathbf{Z_{it}}$ includes control variables at the bill-level: (1) an indicator for whether the bill was coded as an important bill by Adler and Wilkerson (2020), (2) the number of other bills covered in its committee report, (3) the number of committees the bill was referred to (as a proxy for bill complexity), (4) the number of bill cosponsors, (5) the first dimension DW-NOMINATE score of the bill sponsor (as a proxy for bill ideology), and (6) indicators for the major and minor topic of the bill. These control variables represent proxies for the other bill characteristics that may also affect the number of amendments attempted on a bill.

I include congress fixed effects (α_t) to capture factors that affect all bills in each congress (party in the majority, majority/minority delegation size, agenda priorities, partisan environment, etc.) and committee fixed effects (δ_c), for the committee that issued the report, to capture time-invariant features of committees (norms surrounding content of reports or information released by committee, etc.).

The coefficient β measures the effect of committee report length for a bill on the number of amendments attempted on that bill during the subsequent floor voting phase. Since the majority party leadership does not wish to change the content of a bill that it brings to the floor, a positive, statistically significant coefficient would be in line with the theoretical expectation of greater information leading to lower party influence.

I supplement this bill-level specification with a second specification where Y_{it} measures two outcomes on the *passage vote for that bill*: (1) the percentage of majority party support and (2) the percentage of chamber support (across both majority and minority party). The coefficient on committee report length in this specification measures the effect of committee report length for a bill on the percentage support in passage of that bill. Given the majority party's agenda control, the majority party's position is to pass a bill it brings to floor voting. Thus, for specifications using

this second dependent variable, a negative, statistically significant coefficient would be in line with the theoretical expectation of greater information leading to lower party influence.

5 Results

In Table 2, I present estimates from specification (1) where the dependent variable is the number of amendments attempted on the floor. Columns 1 through 3 present results for all legislation and Columns 4 through 6 present results for only bills, excluding resolutions. In each set of columns, the number of observations decreases as control variables are added up to the full specification. This is due to data availability of bill characteristics in the Congressional Bills Project; of note, Adler and Wilkerson (2020) do not have sponsor ideology coded for all bills in the 116th Congress.

The coefficients indicate that the longer a committee report on a bill, the more the number of amendments attempted on the bill or resolution on the floor. The magnitude of this effect, however, is small. In the full specifications in Column (3) or Column (6), the coefficient of 0.19 for the log value of the number of words (on the log number of amendments) implies that increasing the length of a bill's committee report by a quarter is associated with about a 4% increase in the number of amendments attempted on the floor. Given that the mean number of amendments attempted on bills in the sample is 0.65 amendments, this is a statistically significant, very small effect of committee information.

Appendix Table A2 investigates heterogeneity by bill importance on three subsets. The first subset is the set of legislation in which the Speaker voted. The Speaker is only required to vote on roll calls when the Speaker's vote would be decisive or if vote is required by ballot. Functionally, this means that the Speaker votes on roll calls in which the majority party deems of high importance. The second subset is on major ("important") legislation and the third subset is on minor legislation (non-"important"), using the coding from the Congressional Bills Project.[6] While point estimates for legislation in which the Speaker voted are, at first glance, larger than seen in Table 2, the substantive magnitude of the coefficient is still small: an increase of a bill's committee re-

[6]This coding is based on filtering bill titles using a dictionary of words from Adler and Wilkerson, 2020.

Table 2: Effect of Committee Information on Number of Amendments.

	All Legislation			Only Bills		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Report Length	0.13***	0.18***	0.19***	0.17***	0.18***	0.19***
	(0.0053)	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.013)	(0.021)	(0.023)
Important Bill		0.15***	0.13**		0.16**	0.15**
		(0.057)	(0.066)		(0.063)	(0.074)
Num. Other Bills in Report		-0.011	-0.012		-0.011	-0.014
		(0.0081)	(0.0087)		(0.0089)	(0.0095)
Num. Multiple Referral		-0.0052	-0.014		-0.0073	-0.012
		(0.012)	(0.014)		(0.013)	(0.015)
Num. Cosponsors		0.00049	0.00056		0.00045	0.00051
		(0.00027)	(0.00031)		(0.00028)	(0.00031)
Sponsor Ideology			0.023			0.022
			(0.034)			(0.036)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee FE		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Topic Controls		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Observations	2458	997	798	901	898	734

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

port length by a quarter is associated with around a 13% increase in the number of amendments attempted on the floor.

I also present results by party in the majority in Appendix Table A1. Results are similar to the main results, with significant positive coefficients but extremely small substantive sizes.

Next, I turn to specifications where the outcome is the percentage of support (percentage voting yea) on the passage vote of the legislation. Table 3 presents estimates from the specification where the dependent variable is the percentage points of majority party members voting in support of passage. Columns 1 through 3 report results on the set of all legislation and Columns 4 through 6 report results on the set of bills.

Table 3: Effect of Committee Information on Majority Party Support.

	All Legislation			Only Bills		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Report Length	-1.82**	-1.16	-3.56**	-0.26	-1.24	-4.03***
	(0.73)	(1.02)	(1.39)	(0.82)	(1.18)	(1.45)
Important Bill		-2.05	13.6		-4.10	17.2
		(8.91)	(17.5)		(9.96)	(18.7)
Num. Other Bills in Report		1.10	2.39**		0.99	2.04
		(0.72)	(1.03)		(0.79)	(1.02)
Num. Multiple Referral		-1.42**	0.24		-1.34	0.33
		(0.61)	(1.13)		(0.69)	(1.18)
Num. Cosponsors		0.025	0.0012		0.021	-0.015
		(0.021)	(0.036)		(0.024)	(0.037)
Sponsor Ideology			13.6			-1.24
			(7.56)			(8.37)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee FE		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Topic Controls		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Observations	306	239	175	195	193	154

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Coefficients on report length are negative and statistically significant across the board, suggesting that the greater the amount of information in a committee report, the lower the percentage of majority party members voting to support the legislation on its passage vote on the floor. Point es-

timates in the specifications with the full set of controls suggest that increasing a committee report length by a quarter is associated with an increase of about one percentage point in majority party support.

Table 4 repeats the regressions but with the dependent variable of the percentage points of all members in support of passage, across both parties. Results are very similar to those in Table 3. The negative, statistically significant coefficient on report length suggests that the greater the information provided by the committee in its report, the lower the chamber support in passage of the bill. Again, point estimates in the specification with the full set of controls suggest that a 25% increase in the length of the committee report leads to a decrease of one percentage point in chamber support.

Table 4: Effect of Committee Information on Chamber Support.

	All Legislation			Only Bills		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Report Length	-0.55	-2.36**	-3.99***	0.92	-2.91***	-4.34***
	(0.74)	(0.97)	(1.09)	(0.85)	(1.08)	(1.26)
Important Bill		-0.93	-5.62		-1.43	-11.0
		(8.44)	(13.7)		(9.15)	(16.3)
Num. Other Bills in Report		2.50***	3.17***		2.58***	3.04***
		(0.68)	(0.80)		(0.73)	(0.89)
Num. Multiple Referral		-0.16	1.07		-0.25	0.67
		(0.58)	(0.89)		(0.63)	(1.02)
Num. Cosponsors		-0.017	0.0038		-0.015	-0.0024
		(0.020)	(0.028)		(0.022)	(0.032)
Sponsor Ideology			-5.62			-8.22
			(5.93)			(7.27)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee FE		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Topic Controls		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Observations	306	239	175	195	193	154

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

What about the behavior of the minority party? The majority party holds agenda control and gate-keeping powers across both the committee and the floor stages. In the committee stage, the

committee chair from the majority party exercises near complete decision-making on the contents of the committee report. While the minority party, through the ranking member, can decide what to include in the "minority views" section of the committee report, this section is very short, usually one or two paragraphs, and pales in comparison to the amount of information offered by the majority party in the remaining vast majority of the space in a committee report. While minority party members no doubt are provided with the same committee report, the majority party information in the report may not be as relevant to the minority party, and thus should not drive minority party voting behavior on the floor.

Table 5: Effect of Committee Information on Minority Party Support.

	All Legislation			Only Bills		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Report Length	0.92	-3.62	-4.38	2.30	-4.74**	-4.68
	(1.40)	(2.09)	(2.46)	(1.71)	(2.26)	(2.71)
Important Bill		0.73	-27.6		1.89	-42.7
		(18.2)	(30.8)		(19.1)	(35.0)
Num. Other Bills in Report		4.09***	3.97**		4.42***	4.14**
		(1.46)	(1.81)		(1.52)	(1.91)
Num. Multiple Referral		1.40	1.90		1.13	0.98
		(1.25)	(2.00)		(1.31)	(2.21)
Num. Cosponsors		-0.067	0.0083		-0.056	0.013
		(0.042)	(0.064)		(0.046)	(0.069)
Sponsor Ideology			-28.6**			-16.7
			(13.3)			(15.7)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee FE		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Topic Controls		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Observations	306	239	175	195	193	154

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

I directly test the influence of committee information on minority party support of passage in Table 5, which uses the dependent variable of percentage points of minority party members voting in support of passage. While point estimates on report length are negative, standard errors are large and the coefficients are not statistically significant in specifications with the full set of

controls. Thus, I do not find evidence that committee information on a bill affects minority party support of the bill's passage on the floor.

6 Conclusion

This article sets the stage for a research agenda on how information can be used as a tool to increase or decrease party influence in the chamber. I introduce a theory that argues how leaders can manipulate the amount of information conveyed about a bill to bolster party goals on the floor. I introduce a new dataset, committee reports, and give descriptive evidence for how the amount of information in committee reports can maintain the majority party's will on the floor.

The magnitudes of the effects of committee reports are albeit small. However, these small magnitudes must be considered in the context of the strong baseline support for majority party goals on the floor: the average number of amendments attempted on the bills in this sample is 0.65 amendments and the average percentage of majority party members voting in support of passage roll calls is 90%. These averages reflect that the majority party already sees high levels of party-line behavior amongst its members; controlling information brings additional marginal gains.

One limitation of this study is that it focuses on a modern time period, 1995 to 2020, based on the time period for which all committee reports are available in Congress.gov. Many changes in congressional history that affected the strength of committee leaders and party leaders, such as the reforms of the committee seniority system, selection of committee chairmen, and the powers of subcommittees occurred in the 1970s. More recently, the Republican Revolution in 1994, where Republicans retook the House majority for the first time in 40 years, saw Republican leadership leverage institutional reforms that weakened congressional committees, the shift of policy development from committees to leadership, and the rise of unorthodox lawmaking (e.g. Sinclair 2016). These changes all predate the time period of this study. Locating and extending the committee reports data back in time would open up the possibility of a historical study across periods of substantial institutional change.

An additional extension would be to improve upon the measure of information from committee

reports. While I use committee length as the most straightforward measure, other forms of content analysis can provide richer conclusions. For instance, perhaps only political information can influence a member's decision on a bill, while technical information does not. Since committee reports contain both, separating the two and only using a measurement of political information could be used to test a hypothesis focusing on politically relevant information.

Finally, a better understanding of committee chair's incentives and decisions in what to include in a committee report would strengthen the theory. I simplify the theory by viewing committee chairs as representing the majority party leadership's will, a simplification I base on the interview findings from Curry (2015). But, it may be possible that committee chairs deviate from majority party goals under certain conditions. Investigating these conditions would provide a more comprehensive understanding of when information may be more or less salient as a tool for the majority party to use.

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Supporting Information for
Information and Party Influence in the U.S. Congress

Table A1: Effect of Committee Information on Number of Amendments, by Party in Majority.

	Democratic Majority			Republican Majority		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Report Length	0.055***	0.052	0.10***	0.11***	0.14***	0.15***
	(0.017)	(0.033)	(0.039)	(0.0094)	(0.015)	(0.016)
Important Bill		0.17	0.18		0.13	0.12
		(0.14)	(0.14)		(0.074)	(0.090)
Num. Other Bills in Report		-0.0086	-0.022		-0.017***	-0.019***
		(0.011)	(0.012)		(0.0065)	(0.0068)
Num. Multiple Referral		-0.028	-0.036		-0.016	-0.010
		(0.029)	(0.040)		(0.014)	(0.016)
Num. Cosponsors		0.00082	0.00062		0.00032	0.00036
		(0.00044)	(0.00056)		(0.00028)	(0.00031)
Sponsor Ideology			0.0049			0.019
			(0.067)			(0.044)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee FE		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Topic Controls		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Observations	284	281	220	838	837	697

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A2: Effect of Committee Information on Number of Amendments, by Importance.

	Speaker Voted			Excludes Minor			Only Minor		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Report Length	0.11***	0.56***	0.54***	0.18***	0.18***	0.19***	0.022***	0.56***	0.53***
	(0.018)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.010)	(0.020)	(0.023)	(0.0045)	(0.11)	(0.17)
Num. Other Bills in Report		0.14***	0.14***		-0.0081	-0.0093		0.0027	-0.0011
		(0.034)	(0.039)		(0.0086)	(0.0093)		(0.026)	(0.029)
Num. Multiple Referral		0.030	-0.022		-0.0062	-0.016		0.21	0.11
		(0.033)	(0.054)		(0.012)	(0.014)		(0.17)	(0.21)
Num. Cosponsors		-0.0031	-0.0058**		0.00048	0.00058		0.00056	-0.0017
		(0.0017)	(0.0024)		(0.00027)	(0.00031)		(0.0026)	(0.0038)
Sponsor Ideology			0.12			0.026			-0.16
			(0.22)			(0.036)			(0.17)
Congress FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Committee FE		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Topic Controls		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Observations	279	98	84	1014	936	748	1247	60	49

Standard errors in parentheses. ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$