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INTRODUCTION

Through his White House staff, through his cabinet, and through his supporters in Congress, presidential influence must weld policy despite the separation of powers.

Pendleton Herring, *Presidential Leadership*

OVER FIFTY YEARS AGO, PENDLETON HERRING¹ OBSERVED that presidents must exercise leadership in the policy process through others and that this leadership must come in spite of the separation of powers specified in the Constitution. Richard Neustadt suggested that the Constitution created a government of “separated institutions *sharing* powers,”² yet *how* the two great branches of American government share power may be one of the most misunderstood issues in politics—ironically, because it seems to be one of the most visible. One prevalent image is that of President Johnson, physically towering over a smaller member of Congress, prodding him with an outstretched index finger and extracting support with a barrage of horse trading, back slapping, and desk pounding. Another image is of Ronald Reagan going on national television to rally citizens to his cause through fervent rhetoric and poignant stories. These instances of presidential influence make for high drama, although neither provides a realistic picture of how the president works with Congress.

Presidential leadership of Congress is inherently difficult because of the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances put in place over two hundred years ago. Bryce Harlow, who along with Wilton Persons set up the first formal lobbying operation in the White House, described his career

as “a lifetime of building bridges across the yawning constitutional chasm, a chasm fashioned by our power-fearing Fathers to keep the Congress and the President at a safe distance from one another in the interest of human liberty.”³ He reminded his audience that the president and his assistants must work against the system, to give the president some control over Congress, in Harlow’s words to “uncheck the checks and imbalance the balances.”⁴ Despite the barriers, citizens and members of Congress expect the president to exercise legislative leadership successfully. As Richard Nixon pointed out in 1980, “We choose Presidents to make things happen.”⁵

This book explores how the White House tries to overcome the institutional barriers to legislative influence and how Congress has resisted presidential leadership. This process of mutual adaptation or emulation has produced significant changes in how the president attempts to lead Congress and the periodic shifts in the balance of power between the branches. As Richard Neustadt suggested, presidents derive their power from the dependence of others,⁶ but Congress has little reason to accept a subordinate role and constitutional resources to resist becoming dependent on the president for resources they need to get reelected.

I argue that the shifting balance between the branches has been motivated by the electoral concerns of members of Congress and the president. The president needs a compliant Congress to advance his legislative agenda, but legislators need independence so that they can pursue the local interests essential to their reelection. The conflict between the constituency pressures of the two branches creates an intragovernmental lobby where local and national interests collide and the system of checks and balances is vigorously exercised.

The Myth of “Presidential” Influence

Researchers have often overpersonalized and oversimplified the relationship between the executive branch and Congress. Journalists often portray presidential leadership of Congress as a simple process in which a president negotiates for his bill as the final vote approaches, but the contemporary presidency is represented before Congress by a large corps of full-time, professional lobbyists that work for the White House, cabinet departments,⁷ and the Office of Management and Budget. By focusing so much attention on the role of the president personally, we have overlooked the efforts of the legions of officials who labor to push administration legislation at every step in the process. The president’s personal involvement represents only a small portion of the total energy expended on behalf of the adminis-

tration, and the president's time is a closely guarded resource, used only in extreme situations after all other efforts have failed. As one thirty-year veteran member of the House put it, "Congress usually has more of a relationship with the White House staff than with the president."

This study examines the broad picture of the interaction between the executive branch and Congress. The command center of this effort is the White House Office of Legislative Affairs.⁸ This office is responsible for coordinating the lobbying of the president, cabinet departments, the Office of Management and Budget, and the rest of the White House staff. Every day these administration lobbyists fan out over Capitol Hill to work quietly behind the scenes, providing members with information about legislation, counting votes, persuading reluctant members, and then returning to the executive branch to share the information they have gathered during the day. Most legislation involves no direct participation by the president, while some bills do not even receive serious attention from the White House staff and are guided through the process by the legislative relations operations of the relevant cabinet departments.

Thus, a study that includes the White House Office of Legislative Affairs brings together the full range of actors involved in lobbying Congress on behalf of the president. Stephen Wayne's *The Legislative Presidency* is the only book to examine the function of the Office of Legislative Affairs across several administrations,⁹ although several other books and dissertations have examined the liaison staffs of specific administrations.¹⁰

A study of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs and departmental liaison offices presents the best perspective for understanding the entire process. The experiences of staff members provide insights into the motives of both branches, because the legislative liaison staff of the White House carries the national agenda of the president to Congress and then returns to the White House with the more localized concerns of members of Congress. By examining the role of the president's many agents in Congress we can better see the impact that the administration has throughout the process, and by including the congressional perspective we can better understand the nature of resistance to presidential leadership.

Current Perspectives in the Literature

In the 1980s and early 1990s a number of books and articles examined the president's influence in Congress. Inspired by the early research of Stephen Wayne and George Edwards,¹¹ the primary motivation of these works has been to measure the impact of the president on the legislative

process. Each of these works contributed something to our understanding of the limits of presidential influence in Congress. However, in the flood of empirical studies much of the emphasis on how the relationship is conducted has often been put aside. Although the contribution of these studies has been important, some of the processes that have been overlooked can contribute to our understanding. I hope that this book will complement that literature and resolve some of the dilemmas produced by differences in their findings. Despite differences in the approach employed, the research here is motivated by the same two questions posed by George Edwards at the beginning of his most recent book: "what do presidents do to try to lead Congress, and how reliably can they use each source of influence?"¹²

IN SEARCH OF PRESIDENTIAL INFLUENCE

One disagreement in the literature is over the standard of presidential performance in Congress. Some studies have chosen to focus on *success*, which evaluates presidential performance in terms of the passage of legislation supported by the president. Others have examined *influence*, which emphasizes the president's ability to alter the actions of others.

Bond and Fleisher believe that the emphasis on presidential influence is too narrow and choose instead to study the broader concept of success: "The problem of government responsiveness in a system of separate institutions sharing power makes it important to analyze the conditions that might lead to presidential success, regardless of whether success results from the president's influence or from forces beyond his control."¹³ Their choice reflects a desire to examine the process as a whole, rather than to highlight the role of the president. Because my intention is to examine the forces under the White House's control and highlight the potential for presidential leadership, the focus of this research is *influence*. Even if the president is a marginal player, as George Edwards and others contend, the ability of a president to lead, despite the separation of power and the decentralized American system, merits study.

Finding evidence of presidential influence through quantitative analysis has produced a wide range of measures and results. While the empirical research on the topic has proven to be valuable, the research presented here suggests that there are some elements of presidential influence that have not been captured by current measures. It is unlikely that any measure of influence will ever capture every nuance of presidential efforts; however, by exploring the process in depth we can better understand the potential sources of bias in our measures.

One of the most important limitations of most measures of presidential success or influence is that such studies typically rely upon roll call votes or some other analysis of floor action. This overlooks an important goal of presidential influence: stopping legislation, preferably before it reaches the floor of Congress. Often, the most impressive victory the White House can win is for objectionable legislation to die quietly in committee. Of course, it is difficult to measure the influence of the president in votes never taken, but often the success of an administration lies in the failure of congressional opponents to get legislation out of committee. Similarly, while the sustaining of a presidential veto at the end of the legislative process appears to be a victory, it reflects a failure to stop legislation earlier in the process.

The importance of stopping legislation is most evident in the administrations of conservative presidents like Dwight Eisenhower, who see their role as much in preventing the expansion of government as in their own contribution to statutes. Charles O. Jones noted that when the Clinton administration cited its ability to stop Republican legislation as evidence of its success, "It's never been the case . . . that a president can do well by preventing things from happening. Nobody ever argued that with Republican presidents."¹⁴ However, Bryce Harlow, who worked for both Eisenhower and Nixon, described the function of the liaison staff in both positive and negative terms: "The role of the liaison staff is to lobby for the president's program and to keep Congress from doing something different."¹⁵ Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush were all conservative presidents who hoped to slow the growth of government and a standard that fully recognizes their motives is needed to understand adequately presidential influence during this period. While political scientists' measures of presidential influence in the past have always been based upon the ability to advance legislation, it is evident that presidents often may define their legislative goals in other terms.

The White House's inability to get legislation to the floor provides another example of the limitations of roll call analysis. Richard Reeves points out that Kennedy was winning on most floor votes, but that more often than not his legislation failed to make it out of committee.¹⁶ Substantial effort is often required for the executive branch to get its legislation considered, and congressional opponents have many different means of foiling presidential wishes before a roll call vote is taken.

The content of legislation poses an additional challenge for evaluating presidential influence. Passage of legislation is assumed to represent success, but it is often the case that the bill the president signs bears little resemblance to what the president originally requested. Quite often, presidential

accomplishment cannot be measured by asking if a bill passed; rather, the most telling fact often is what version of the bill passed. Legislation can be watered down or dramatically altered by amendments that may change the bill while leaving the title of the bill the same. Presidents may see much desired legislation altered beyond recognition and yet still claim political victory after the bill passes.

Strategic behavior on the part of a member of Congress or the president makes the task of gauging presidential clout difficult. Most measures of presidential success rely on public statements by the president to derive presidential intent. However, as Stephen Wayne points out, "a high score may indicate that Congress is persuading the president to support, or at least not to oppose its most popular bills."¹⁷ Presidents may attempt to inflate their success rates by claiming a role on a winning issue after the fact or by avoiding taking a position when polls of members indicate that defeat is likely.

The impact of executive branch lobbying is hard to gauge because it is an ongoing process with no clear beginning. Since the executive branch is often involved in drafting legislation, influence (in both directions) begins before a piece of legislation is drafted. It is widely held that smart presidents consult with Congress before introducing legislation. When presidents modify their proposals or negotiate with legislators before legislation is officially introduced, the degree and even direction of influence may not be evident. Presidents may alter their legislative agenda to fit what they believe can pass Congress so that presidents with high levels of public approval or large congressional majorities may push an ambitious legislative agenda, while presidents in weak strategic positions may limit their agenda and make substantive concessions to congressional opposition. The decision about how aggressive an agenda the White House can hope to achieve is often based upon the political intelligence gathered by the congressional liaison staff. Bryce Harlow would often tell others in the White House, "you can't come running in here and give us a lead weight and tell us to float it across a pond."¹⁸ Clinton's head lobbyist, Howard Paster, described this function as part of the job. "Your job is to listen to everybody, and talk to everybody and feed information back. You shape the policy around the edges by determining what flies and what won't fly."¹⁹

One crucial issue in measuring influence revolves around the principle of presidential involvement. Both Cary Covington and Barbara Kellerman dispute the validity of some aggregate measures of presidential success because they may include issues of little interest to the president.²⁰ A similar criticism of such scores was volunteered by several White House veterans, who complained that these measures were virtually useless because they in-

cluded issues that never received the attention of the president and should therefore not be used to measure their impact on the process. One veteran of two administrations argued that presidents only get involved in “cosmic issues” and that a president will work seriously on only ten to twelve issues each year. Therefore, researchers must be cautious when saying that a vote offers an opportunity to measure a president’s influence unless there is clear evidence of presidential effort.

At the same time, the number of issues that a president chooses to involve the administration in may be an important aspect of presidential influence. It is tempting to measure the ambitiousness of an agenda in the number of bills the president proposes, but policy goals cannot be measured by the volume of legislation, since many issues can be contained in a single piece of legislation, while other bills may carry little more than symbolic meaning and face little opposition.

Some authors have refined their measures by including only “key” votes and by excluding near-unanimous votes.²¹ While this approach improves the validity of the measure, it still does not insure that those issues selected by scholars are the same as those selected by the president. Some studies have used White House records to identify those issues most important to the president and this may provide the best foundation for including presidential involvement.²²

White House veterans object to the exclusion of “noncontroversial” votes (those with very few opposing votes) from measures of influence,²³ because stripping the White House of large victories underestimates their impact. At the same time, measures that rely too heavily on the size of the coalition may be misleading. The assumption of simple vote maximization is problematic because the utility of a large winning coalition is unclear. If we assume that presidents are interested in gaining passage of legislation, either for policy or credit claiming, votes beyond a minimum winning coalition are of limited value. Presidents would obviously prefer lopsided victories, but there are often costs to members supporting the president on controversial issues and the support of some members may be held in reserve. One account from the Nixon administration’s struggle to extend the 10 percent income tax surcharge dramatically illustrates the process of calling upon reserve support to cast difficult votes.

After the second call of the roll, the nays had it, 201–194. Then the Administration began committing its surprise reserves—conservative Republicans who had promised their votes only if absolutely necessary. Behind the House rail, a small knot of congressmen hud-

dled together drawing straws. Shortstraw men trudged disconsolately down to the well to switch sides or withdraw their nays. The final tally: 210 ayes, 205 nays.²⁴

Even when empirical measures provide an indicator of an overall level of influence, they are not well suited to uncovering statistical relationships with strategies that are used selectively. If, for example, presidents alternate between public appeals and personal bargaining, then a measure that tests for the impact of these continuously across time is less likely to find a statistical relationship. The challenge of presidential leadership of Congress is to know what will win votes at a particular moment, and any study of presidential influence that expects to find the same mix of strategies across administrations will likely produce disappointing results.

Advantages and disadvantages aside, roll call votes are used in quantitative studies because there are few alternatives. The challenge for researchers is to understand the limitations of their use and to accommodate them.²⁵ While the research presented here cannot replace the results of quantitative studies, I hope that it can help better explain some of the findings in the current literature and refine the hypotheses tested in future studies.

WHAT IS THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE?

Recently, the most visible debate in the literature on presidential-congressional relations has been between "presidency-centered" and "Congress-centered" perspectives. Richard Neustadt is often cited as being a prominent representative of the presidency-centered perspective, although this perspective has been attributed to the work of many well-regarded scholars, including James McGregor Burns, Edward S. Corwin, Thomas Cronin, Samuel Huntington, Barbara Kellerman, Harold Laski, and Clinton Rossiter.²⁶ Some scholars regard Neustadt's classic work on presidential power as presidency-centered because it describes presidential leadership of Congress in terms of the president's bargaining skill, public prestige (or public support), and professional reputation.²⁷ However, implicit in Neustadt's description of two branches sharing power is a recognition of the limitations of the president, and his emphasis on the powers of the presidency results from his selection of the president as a subject of study. Jeffrey Tulis has described the tendency of presidency scholars to view the political process from the perspective of the presidency as "institutional partisanship."²⁸ While Neustadt may be criticized for demonstrating institutional partisanship, given the goals of his study this is completely understandable. The label *presidency-centered* results

more from Neustadt's desire to illuminate the resources and strategies of the president specifically than his arguments about the balance of power in the government.

The presidency-centered perspective has recently come under attack with two similar alternatives being offered. The Congress-centered perspective has been represented recently by several prominent works in the field. Jon Bond and Richard Fleisher attempt to shift the emphasis away from presidential bargaining skills and offer the makeup of Congress as a predictor of presidential success. They do not deny the significance of leadership skills, but they argue that the partisan balance and political ideology of Congress is much more important in understanding presidential success in Congress.²⁹ George Edwards made his perspective clear with his title: *At the Margin*. Edwards finds that presidential resources like public approval, electoral strength, and legislative skill have a marginal effect on Congress and that researchers should "focus less exclusively on the president and devote more attention to the context in which the president seeks to lead Congress."³⁰ Like Bond and Fleisher, Edwards used aggregate data sets to test predictors of presidential victories and finds that factors beyond the control of the president, like the ideology and partisanship of members, predict much better than presidency-centered variables such as bargaining skills.

The presidency-centered and Congress-centered labels have outlived their utility and may now detract from a more constructive debate. No scholar expects the legislative process to be "centered" around anything other than Congress and even the most enthusiastic believers in executive power do not expect to find the work of Congress centered around the presidency. While the Congress-versus presidency-centered labels were clearly intended to serve as end points for a spectrum of beliefs, one extreme remains so clearly beyond the terms of the actual debate within political science that describing scholars as subscribing to that camp is to do an injustice to the subtlety of their work. For example, even though he has been identified as a presidency-centered scholar, James McGregor Burns's remedy for the Clinton administration's problems with Congress was to seek out a larger Democratic majority—a clearly Congress-centered view.³¹

Mark Peterson, in *Legislating Together*, offers a promising alternative. He proposes a "tandem institution" perspective in which the president and Congress compose a partnership in the policy process.³² The tandem institution perspective describes a symbiotic rather than hostile relationship between the branches. Leadership by one branch can be included under this perspective by "the placement of one member behind another, as on a tandem bicycle," but overall the emphasis is the need for cooperation.³³

Peterson's model represents a significant step forward and we can learn much from the balancing of tension between the branches with the need for cooperation, although my findings emphasize the tension more than Peterson's. It is true that the two branches must cooperate in order to make policy; however, underlying this cooperation are serious institutional conflicts arising from differences in the electoral needs of the two branches. Walter Mondale, after serving in both Congress and the vice presidency, emphasized the distance placed between the president and lawmakers by the differing demands of their constituencies.

When the time comes for heavy lifting, a president finds just how lonely it gets at the top. Only one person—the president—is elected to watch out for the interests of the whole country. Regardless of party, members of Congress are elected, first of all, to represent their state or district. If it comes down to a question of what is good for the nation as described by the president and what is good for the district, a Congressman might wish to stick with the president—and he might actually take a day or two, praying for guidance—but in the end he will probably vote for his district.³⁴

The two branches are joined together in a partnership in the policy process and the two branches have mutual needs, but they are often reluctant partners who must share power even when they do not share interests. As Charles O. Jones points out, these are separated institutions that must often compete for shared powers and “for how credits are shared for a race well run.”³⁵ Richard Cook, a legislative assistant for Richard Nixon, described a close relationship between Congress and the president as an unnatural state. “The only time in 30 years that it occurred was during the 89th Congress, following the Kennedy mourning period and we had a President who literally ran the Congress from the Oval Office. That was unnatural.”³⁶ In the 1920s, Congressman Robert Luce argued that “Something is to be said for the benefits of hostility in moderate degree. Friction has its advantages in state craft as well as in mechanics. The rivalries encouraged by the present system, the antagonism, yes, even the controversies, invigorate and stimulate.”³⁷ The founders created separation of powers to make difficult the possibility of such a close relationship between the president and the Congress, and history demonstrates that they were successful. As Jones declares, “Institutional competition is an expected outcome of the constitutional arrangements that facilitate mixed representation and variable electoral horizons.”³⁸

The debate between Congress- and presidency-centered perspectives—if it still exists—is no longer instructive. Scholars who have been labeled presi-

dency-centered brought close scrutiny to the role of the president in the process. Congress-centered scholars have demonstrated that there is much more to the legislative process than the president. Likewise, Mark Peterson's tandem institution perspective has demonstrated convincingly that presidential relations with Congress involve cooperation as well as conflict and that we have forgotten Neustadt's claim that the institutions do share power.³⁹

There seems to be little utility left for scholars to continue to line up according to whether they cast their lot with the powers of the president or the institutional forces in Congress. The most compelling reason to abandon the existing debate is that the advocates of the Congress-centered and tandem institution perspective have offered up a compelling case and it is time to focus our debates on the deeper causes of the president's influence or lack thereof. Previous research has raised these issues, but the debate has not been organized along these particular lines and the energies of researchers have not been directed toward the most important questions.

Rather than engaging in the existing debate, I would offer terms for a new one. I argue that the relationship between the president and Congress is guided by electoral concerns. The question becomes: do elections guide the policy-making process in a direct way to past elections or in an indirect way to future elections?

Of course, any democratic system is driven by electoral forces. Here I am concerned whether the most important linkage is direct or indirect.⁴⁰ Bond and Fleisher, for example, see a very direct, mechanical linkage between the previous election and a president's success in Congress. They argue that "presidential success is determined in large measure by the results of the last election. If the last election brings individuals to Congress whose local interests and preferences coincide with the president's, then he will enjoy greater success."⁴¹ When Bond and Fleisher point out that ideology and party are at the core of congressional decision making they are arguing that representation is the dominant force in the relationship between the president and Congress. An argument that the preferences of constituents are excluded from influencing the process would be disturbing. The president's bargaining skills should not be expected to overwhelm the representative link between lawmaker and constituent in order to be significant. We should expect to find evidence of a direct linkage to presidential success because it determines the level of support for the president. What is unclear is how much presidential success results from shared interests and how much results from the powers of the presidency. This issue distinguishes presidential support in Congress from presidential influence.⁴²

An emphasis on the direct linkage may not be satisfying to many readers

who wish to consider what the president's ability is to construct coalitions in the Congress created by the last congressional election. I do not deny the importance of the partisan balance of Congress or the ideology of individual members. Rather, I suggest that the last election is only one barometer of a more important concern to lawmakers: the next election.

Indirect linkages involve electoral dynamics that are potentially within the grasp of the president as he works to build a coalition. Indirect linkages are connections to future elections, whereas direct linkages connect the process to past elections. The indirect linkage speaks to the level of influence the president has that enables him to go beyond the environment created by the last election. Indirect linkages are the product of concerns about future elections, and congressional uncertainty about the future provides opportunities for presidential influence. Members are always looking to the next election and it would seem that this is where the president can find influence. Such an impact may be marginal, but I argue that it is significant, or at least perceived as significant by members of Congress. The study of indirect linkages, while drawing attention to sources of presidential influence, does not require that this impact is large. Rather, a study of the indirect linkage acknowledges that presidential influence is inherently limited, given that it is indirect. This new perspective should not preclude the discussion of the balance between the branches; it should place this debate in the context of explanations.

A Theory of Electoral Expectations

The central argument of this book is that presidential influence in Congress is the product of the White House's ability to shape the electoral expectations of members of Congress. This theory of presidential influence resembles both the presidency- and Congress-centered perspectives because it deals with presidential ability to shape expectations about the Congress-centered variable of election outcomes. However, it is most similar to Mark Peterson's tandem institution perspective, which defines the relationship in terms of the needs of both branches.⁴³ The role of electoral forces is not entirely new to the study of the presidency, but it has seldom enjoyed a prominent position in theories of presidential power. David Mayhew's classic *Congress: The Electoral Connection* has played a central role in the congressional literature for twenty-five years, but his contribution is seldom incorporated in models of presidential influence.⁴⁴ Congressional interest in elections was not lost even on the least political president studied here. President Eisenhower, in a letter to a close friend, commented that "Each congressman thinks of himself as intensely patriotic; but it does not take the average mem-

ber long to conclude that his first duty to his country is to get himself re-elected."⁴⁵

Presidents, like members of Congress, are concerned with winning reelection and, in the face of the two-term limit, the broader goals of gaining public approval or standing in history. Richard Reeves describes history as a "goddess" that John Kennedy pursued.⁴⁶ Presidents understand that voters will judge them for a second term and scholars for history in part on the basis of the policy changes they produce and their ability to get Congress to cooperate. George Edwards points out that while the president's position in the constitutional system is weak, the public fails to recognize this, and when they do, they fail to incorporate it into their evaluations of presidential success.⁴⁷ This motivation has drawn the presidency further and further into the legislative process as expectations increased. William Leuchtenburg has described the extent to which modern presidents operate in the shadow of Franklin Roosevelt,⁴⁸ and the expectations of the legislative presidency has been an important force in the modern presidency. Dwight Eisenhower was judged harshly by contemporaries and historians for his lack of activism, and even Eisenhower revisionism has relied on the "hidden-hand" argument of Fred Greenstein, who argued that Eisenhower was more activist than he appeared.⁴⁹ Paul Light quotes a Kennedy aide who noted, "We looked at the legislative program as a major weapon in our struggle for both reelection and national influence."⁵⁰

My model of influence incorporates "expectations" because of the prospective concerns of both branches. The uncertainties of prospective evaluations in a volatile political world are important because they create presidential opportunities. The president will enjoy influence when lawmakers believe that the White House might be able to influence the next congressional election. Thus, a theory of electoral expectations only requires that legislators believe that the president might be able to play a pivotal role in the next election, not that this influence be demonstrated by previous electoral performance. One senior Republican congressional staff person suggested that "Congress is a very human institution, complete with insecurities." These insecurities, he reflected, helped Ronald Reagan create more fear among members than was fully justified. Members of Congress may understand that the president's influence on the next congressional election likely will be small, but there is often little reason to risk incurring the wrath of the White House, especially for lawmakers who feel their next election may be close.

Congressional scholars have debated how to best describe electoral security.⁵¹ A large margin of victory in one election is no guarantee of a similar victory in the next, and a strong challenger or voter dissatisfaction can

quickly change the climate of the next campaign. In his study of lawmakers' behavior in their districts, Fenno observed that "knowing or sensing or fearing these several unhappy electoral possibilities, House members will continue to be a lot more uncertain than the statistics of their last election would warrant."⁵² Lawmakers may believe that while the potential risk in opposing a president is likely low, there may be little point in taking that risk. The president, while perhaps a small player in a congressional campaign, can motivate contributors and challengers, making reelection more difficult.

Thus, the prospective element of the theory adds a subtle yet significant opportunity to gain influence. Clearly, congressional expectations of the president's impact on the next election are closely tied to his impact in the last election. However, if Congress only looks back in judging presidential clout, we would expect to see little change in presidential influence between elections. The prospective view of Washington is also evident in the lame-duck status that befalls presidents fortunate enough to win a second term. The second-term victories of Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan failed to produce a receptive Congress, despite the declaration of Nixon's and Reagan's reelection victories as "landslides" and the fact that both second-term victories were larger than the initial victories. Both presidents saw less success in their second term, despite a stronger showing at the polls.

Means of Influence

How then does the president influence congressional elections, or at least convince members that the White House may influence the next election? The answer to this question varies with the political environment within which the presidency must lead. The broad political context shapes presidential attempts to manipulate electoral expectations. Presidential influence over future elections in the period described by Samuel Kernell as "institutionalized pluralism" requires a different set of leadership techniques than the context labeled as "individualized pluralism." Kernell described how members of the Washington community moved from relying upon the bargaining powers found in political institutions like party to a system in which individuals in the bargaining community have few loyalties.⁵³ In 1989, looking back over the twenty years of change since its first publication, the *National Journal* described the change in remarkably similar terms: "Under the influence of the TV camera and the journalistic pack, the cult of the individual has replaced that of the institution."⁵⁴

In response to the shifting contexts of Washington politics, presidents developed new resources for leading Congress. In response, Congress protected itself from presidential control over election-related resources by capturing or copying these tools of persuasion. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has suggested that Congress is driven by “the iron law of emulation.” Moynihan observed, “Whenever any branch of government acquires a new technique which enhances its power in relation to the other branches, that technique will soon be adopted by those other branches as well.”⁵⁵ As soon as a president develops a tool for legislative leadership, Congress will adapt that tool for its own use to protect its independence from the executive branch. Thus, presidential success produces a perception of increased presidential power that triggers a congressional adaptation that will, in turn, spur further presidential innovation.

The White House Office of Legislative Affairs is the best focal point for a study of relations between the executive and legislative branches because it has come to serve the needs of Congress as well as those of the president. The dilemma of the modern White House legislative shop was made clear to me by the comment of one White House legislative assistant, who described the staff of the White House Office of Legislative Affairs as members of one branch but answerable to another: “The job is positioned about Eighth street, one-half way between the two great institutions.” In order to conduct relations between the president and Congress, the congressional liaison staff must be able to understand the electoral concerns of the Oval Office and Capitol Hill.

As Joseph Pika has pointed out, these White House lobbyists are, by the nature of their jobs, outsiders within the White House.⁵⁶ Their days are spent trying to bargain with members of Congress, while some in the White House staff think they should be less concerned with congressional needs. The policy people in the White House become very attached to their policy proposals and expect the liaison staff to protect their policy initiatives from compromise. At the same time, members of Congress often need compromises to avoid electoral problems at home. One journalist described the job of Max Friedersdorf, the first head of Ronald Reagan’s Office of Legislative Affairs:

Friedersdorf’s position makes him a high-tension conductor in the alternating current of information between the Hill and the White House, the pro in the quid-pro-quo symbiosis of government: The executive branch wants congressional compliance; and the legisla-

tors need a bewildering range of services and favors from the executive.⁵⁷

It is the White House legislative affairs staff that must construct a harmony of purposes between the two branches with their different electoral needs. They are the managers of an uneasy alliance that must constantly be maintained, and their dilemma becomes an opportunity for research because they are witnesses to both sides of the struggle.

PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP UNDER INSTITUTIONALIZED PLURALISM

As Samuel Kernell has pointed out, for many years Washington operated under a system in which individuals functioned through a set of institutions in Washington.⁵⁸ This arrangement facilitated bargaining within Washington by providing a stable community with institutional norms that regulate behavior and reduce uncertainty. Public opinion and elections represent disruptions to this stable system, and presidential attempts to bring them into bargaining were not welcome. This left the president to bargain with the resources he could access through Washington institutions. While these resources were accessed through Washington, their significance to legislators was decidedly electoral. For example, because the national committees of the two parties were able to control a significant amount of money flowing into congressional campaigns, presidents could attempt to influence elections through institutions like national parties and Washington-based interest groups.

Although the techniques below were most important in the period of individualized pluralism, they remain today, just as some evidence of the tools associated with individualized pluralism can be found throughout both periods. While each period is dominated by a particular form of politics, elements of the other exist. These different periods of pluralism only suggest what the most prevalent form of bargaining was and should not be interpreted to completely exclude the other.

The Office of Legislative Affairs and the Autopilot Approach

One of the first adaptations that the president made in order to manage congressional leadership was to create a specialized lobbying unit within the White House. This was necessitated both by the proliferating demands from Congress as the president became more involved in legislative business and by the increase in other demands on the presidency. The creation of what