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**Marching Orders? U.S. Party Platforms and Legislative Agenda Setting
1948-2014**

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**Marching Orders? U.S. Party Platforms and Legislative Agenda Setting
1948-2014**

by

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Report

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Abstract

Marching Orders? U.S. Party Platforms and Legislative Agenda Setting 1948-2014

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What is the relationship between the priorities expressed in party platforms before an election and the subsequent legislative agenda? The agenda setting literature often deemphasizes the role of political parties in agenda setting. However, parties will often express different issue priorities during elections, and compete based on those priorities. The paper utilizes new data from the U.S. Policy Agendas Project and Wolbrecht (2016) on policy attention in U.S. party platforms to study the relationship between U.S. parties and legislative activities in Congress. A time series cross sectional analysis finds strong evidence to support the proposition that legislative agendas are influenced by the platform of the President's party in the short term, although the relationship differs for different types of agendas and by issue, and fades over time.

Marching Orders? U.S. Party Platforms and Legislative Agenda Setting 1948-2014

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In legislatures, “the most important part of the legislative decision process was the decision about which decision to consider.” (Bauer, Poole and Dexter 1963, 405) However, the agenda setting literature has generally minimized the role of political parties in setting the agenda for legislatures (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Given the importance of agenda setting in the policy process, the absence of political parties from determining the priorities of legislatures in troublesome. During elections, parties make appeals to voters both by taking positions on public policy and by selectively emphasizing issues (Egan 2013; Petrocik 1996). If parties in governments don’t represent these promised priorities, then the electoral conflict between parties does not structure political conflict in government over agendas.

This paper argues that political parties in the United States are able to contribute to agenda setting, but their impact varies by type of agenda and timing. Policy areas emphasized in the platform of the President’s party can predict issues emphasized in Congress, but only immediately after the Presidential election. In the Second Congress after the election, the opposition party may have some agenda setting power. The relationship between the platform and the Congressional agenda varies by issue, agenda type, and whether or not government is unified. Under divided government, Congress holds more roll call votes on their prioritized issues. Under unified government, Congress holds more referral hearings.

The paper proceeds as follows. In part one, I lay out a general theory of agenda setting and political parties. In part two, I apply that general theory of agenda setting and political parties to the U.S. system. In part three, I build a time series cross sectional model using data on U.S. roll call votes, referral hearings, non-referral oversight hearings and party platforms from 1948-2014. In part four, I present the results of the model, finding strong evidence to suggest that

parties can contribute to agenda setting, and highlight interesting cross-sectional variation. In part five, I conclude.

Agenda Setting and Political Party Platforms

A necessary first step for government to make policy is to decide what issues will receive attention from policymakers (Arrow 1951). Attention is a scarce resource; policymakers and their staff can only move on a few of thousands of possible issues at any given time. The process of prioritizing decisions is called agenda setting (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Given that most salient issues are what Egan (2013) labels “consensus issues”, where all citizens and elites would prefer an outcome *ceteris paribus*, information about the priorities of policymakers is often more important to voters than information about their outcome preferences. Attention scarcity forces a choice between these consensus issues (Mayhew 2006). If voters observe differences in the priorities of political parties during elections, they can choose between two different sets of outcomes.

However, recent agenda setting scholarship has traditionally deemphasized the role of political parties in agenda setting. Priorities are largely set by the problem space, moderated by institutional friction (Bevan and Jennings 2014; Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Jones, Larsen-Price and Wilkerson 2009; Sulkin 2005). Government attention lurches from problem to problem, leaving little discretion for individual actors to prioritize problems in advance. The literature suggests that both parties will weigh in on issues thrust on to the national agenda by circumstances in society. Often, they may apply very different solutions for those same problems, as processes prioritizing problems and generating solutions tend to operate independently (Cohen, March and Olson 1972, Kingdon 1984), but the forces that push

policymakers of one party to address an issue will push policymakers of other parties to do the same.

Party agendas can be divided into a promissory agenda pledged by the party before the election and the anticipatory agenda reaction to new information when in government (Froio, Bevan and Jennings 2016; Mansbridge 2003). Punctuated Equilibrium Theory suggests that the anticipatory agenda should carry more weight, as policymakers shift their limited attention capacity to the most pressing problems at any given time (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Government will decide that the most pressing problems are ones where the most errors have accumulated, rather than the ones highlighted by partisans during electoral campaigns (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Voters expect their representatives to solve their problems, and hold them accountable when they fail to do so (Adler and Wilkerson 2012). Froio, Bevan and Jennings (2016) find at best a very weak relationship between the promissory agenda of the majority party and legislative outputs in the United Kingdom; instead they find that policymakers are much more likely to react to newly emergent information after elections. These systems are not unresponsive, as the public signal a “public agenda” to policymakers about which problems must be addressed (Jones and Baumgartner 2004), but the responsive process occurs in between elections, rather than directly in response to elections.

However, this model of agenda setting conflicts with both positive and normative theories of political parties, legislative agenda setting and democracy. Parties serve as the primary structure for political conflict in a democratic society (Schattschneider 1942). We expect responsible political parties to take positions during elections and try their best to enact those positions if put into power (APSA 1950). Once in government, legislative parties have the means to control information (Curry 2015), sanction members and set the agenda in Congress (Cox and

McCubbins 2005), and exert negative agenda control (Gailmard and Jenkins 2007). Given the importance of agenda setting and issue prioritization in the policy process, voters should be able to choose between different sets of priorities for governing attention during elections. Political parties should play an important role in issue prioritization.

Indeed, there is evidence that voters do make electoral decisions based on their expectations of party issue priorities. Petrocik's (1996) issue ownership concept argues that voters will often choose candidates based on party reputations for the most salient issues at a given time (see also Petrocik, Benoit and Hansen 2003). Egan (2013) finds that these reputations are formed not by past performance on issues, but by voter judgments about the issues that parties deeply prioritize in the long term. Elected officials in each party tend to have similar "chief motivations for seeking power" (Egan 2013, 213), which voters are able to learn. Parties increasingly compete by emphasizing issue priorities, rather than spatial positioning (Hofferbert and Budge 1992; Green-Pederson 2007).

Scholars have also found some evidence party manifestos impacting legislative agendas in proportional representation systems. Issue attention from government increases as issue attention in manifestos increases in France and Belgium (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2014; Guinaudeau et al. forthcoming; Walgrave, Varone and Dumont 2005), but only under certain conditions. Coalitions in government will prioritize the issues of the party bloc in Denmark (Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2014). Opposition parties may have considerable agenda setting power, even in parliamentary settings where they have little formal power in the legislature (Sulkin 2005; Green-Pederson and Mortenson 2010).

I argue that parties are torn between wanting to follow through with their campaign promises and enact their chief motivations for seeking power, and being pulled toward present-

day demands of the anticipatory agenda. If all else were equal, parties would prioritize policymaking in the areas which they told voters they would prioritize if elected to power. These well-laid plans frequently do not survive contact with the constantly changing problem space, but some do. Policymakers must also devote considerable attention to the basic unchanging tasks of maintaining policy subsystems, leaving only a fraction of their policy attention available for discretionary action.

Legislative Agenda Setting in the United States and Party Platforms

In this next section, I apply the general theory of party platforms and agenda setting to agenda setting processes of the U.S. Congress given its institutional characteristics. In a unitary parliamentary democracy, the causal relationship between party platform and legislative outputs can be clearly observable. In the U.S. presidential system, the causal relationship is more complicated. U.S. party platforms are drafted and presented in the context of presidential nomination conventions; national parties do not create formal platforms for off year elections. The platforms are largely written as campaign documents by the party's presidential campaign, rather than the direct result of intraparty political conflict (Maisel 1993). Thus, we should understand U.S. party platforms to represent the potential President's promises more than the party's platform generally. At the same time, platforms make broad legislative proposals, which the President does not have the power to directly implement.

Like any other organization, legislatures must choose which problems to devote their scarce resources to. Many issues, such as expiring or annual legislation, require regular attention from legislators, while others are discretionary (Walker 1977; Adler and Wilkerson 2012). Often,

exogenous events will turn discretionary problems into mandatory problems (Adler and Wilkerson 2012). Thus, legislators often have limited capacity to devote attention to solving discretionary problems that they promised to address during campaigns. Legislatures expand their agenda capacity by delegating responsibility and authority to committees, each acting somewhat independently (Adler and Wilkerson 2012, Jones 2001). Committees are able to prioritize, gather information, draft legislation, and conduct oversight somewhat independently. However, the floor of Congress still acts as a bottleneck, where only a limited number of legislative priorities can receive consideration (Lewallen 2016).

Presidents play a strong role in Congressional agenda setting. Executive offices serve often serve as a focal point of action and attention (Dahl 1960). U.S. Presidents, especially popular ones, have some ability to push certain issues on to the Congressional agenda (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Beckman 2010; Edwards and Wood 1999; Kernell 1997; Kingdon 1995; Lee 2009; Lovett, Bevan and Baumgartner 2015). The effect is strongest for co-partisans and at the early stages of the legislative process (Beckman 2010). Therefore, Presidents should be able to push Congress to emphasize the priorities expressed in their platform, especially under unified government.

Congress has two primary channels to affect public policy: oversight of the bureaucracy and statutory changes through legislation (Bawn 1997; Lewallen 2016; Talbert, Jones and Baumgartner 1995). Oversight allows committees to direct bureaucratic attention toward particular problems or solutions, using their authority over budgets to threaten bureaucrats who do not follow their instructions (Fenno 1973; Redford 1969). While Congress can make small changes to policy outputs using oversight, most oversight involves the maintenance of subsystems, and does not require much attention from the floor of Congress. Larger policy

changes normally require legislation, and thus are constrained by the bottleneck of attention at the floor (Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Lewallen 2016). Party platforms promise large-scale change, as there is little reward to making low salience, status quo promises in an election. If attention to issues in party platforms can predict attention to issues in Congress after the election, we should expect the effect to be stronger for lawmaking attention than oversight attention.

We should also expect the agenda setting impact of party platforms to fade over time. U.S. party platforms are drafted every four years. In between two types of intervening events occur. First, the problem space changes. Issues that were important during the summer before the election compete with new issues that pop up. For example, the 2008 party platforms were released just weeks before the financial crisis began in earnest with the collapse of Lehman Brothers and subsequent worldwide recession. The subsequent Congress was forced to devote a large percentage of its attention toward responding to the crisis. Second, midterm elections bring a different set of promises and priorities, and may even change partisan control of the legislature. Overall, the relevance of the promissory agenda expressed in the party platform should decrease as time progresses.

From this theory, we can derive the following hypotheses:

Lawmaking Hypothesis: Issues emphasized in the platform of the President's party will be more emphasized in the Congressional lawmaking agenda in the first Congress after the Presidential election.

Oversight Hypothesis: Issues emphasized in the platform of the President's party will be less likely to be emphasized in the Congressional oversight agenda than lawmaking in the first Congress after the Presidential election.

Fading Effect Hypothesis: Issues emphasized in the platform of the President's party will not be more emphasized in either Congressional agenda in the second Congress after the Presidential election.

Unified Hypothesis: The effect of issue emphasis in the platform on both the lawmaking and oversight agendas will be stronger under unified government.

Anticipation Hypothesis: Problems that are emphasized in the problem space will be emphasized in both the Congressional oversight and lawmaking agendas.

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses, I analyze the policy topics addressed by both Congress and party platforms from 1948-2014. All data is drawn from the Policy Agendas Project, which categorizes the policy content of outputs into one of twenty¹ major topic areas, such as macroeconomics, environmental policy, or defense. Table 1 shows the twenty topics of the Policy Agendas Project, and the distribution of attention to these topics in all of the data used in this manuscript.

I use an autoregressive distributed lag time series cross sectional design. This design has been used by recent scholars studying the agenda setting impact of executive speeches (Lovett, Bevan and Baumgartner 2015), parliamentary questioning (Vliegenthart and Walgrave 2011) and party platforms (Froio, Bevan and Jennings 2016; Green-Pedersen and Mortensen 2010) on

¹ Observations coded as government operations were dropped from the models presented in the main body of this paper. Government operations observations include a large number of cases with little to no policy content relevant to party platforms, such as procedural votes, all nominations regardless of agency, and commemorative laws. Models including government operations are presented in Appendix tables 1-2.

legislative outputs. The unit of analysis is one topic; the time variable is one Congress. The national U.S. political parties released seventeen party platforms, one every four years just before Presidential elections, during this time period². I model each new platform as a shock, and estimate the relationship between an issue receiving more or less emphasis in the platform and attention to the same issue in the subsequent Congress. All models contain panel corrected standard errors (Beck and Katz 1995). All variables are expressed as a percent of policy attention.

² Data is not yet available for the 114th Congress (2015-2016), so the model presented for the second Congress after a Presidential election contains only 16 platforms.

Table 1: Average distribution of attention to issues

Policy Agendas Project Major Topic Area	Platform Attention ¹	Roll Call Attention	Referral Hearings	Non- Referral Hearings	Most Important Problem ²
Agriculture	3.5%	4.5%	3.6%	3.6%	0.4%
Civil Rights	6.3%	4.2%	2.6%	4.2%	8.3%
Defense	9.9%	10.9%	9.6%	12.0%	15.0%
Education	4.7%	3.1%	2.4%	1.8%	1.9%
Energy	2.7%	3.6%	4.2%	4.6%	1.8%
Environment	2.6%	2.3%	4.7%	3.5%	1.0%
Finance and Commerce	2.5%	4.2%	8.8%	8.1%	0.2%
Foreign Affairs	16.1%	8.5%	4.1%	8.4%	9.4%
Government Operations ³	5.4%	21.1%	14.1%	16.7%	3.9%
Health Care	4.8%	3.2%	4.4%	5.8%	3.9%
Housing	3.3%	2.8%	2.1%	2.2%	0.3%
Immigration	1.2%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Labor	4.2%	4.1%	3.8%	2.8%	1.0%
Law and Crime	5.3%	3.5%	5.1%	4.1%	7.4%
Macroeconomics	14.6%	6.5%	2.4%	3.9%	31.2%
Public Lands	3.8%	5.2%	16.3%	5.0%	0%
Science and Technology	1.4%	1.9%	3.0%	3.6%	0.2%
Social Welfare	3.6%	2.7%	1.3%	2.3%	3.5%
Trade	2.2%	2.3%	1.9%	2.5%	0.3%
Transportation	1.6%	4.3%	5.1%	4.2%	0%

¹ Average of both platforms.

² Some MIP responses are coded “Don’t Know/Other.” As a result, this column does not sum to 1.

³ Government operations policy has been dropped from the models presented in the main body of the paper. As a result, these percentages do not sum to 1. See footnote 1.

For each dependent variable, I ran two models. The first predicts the Congressional agenda at time t , the first Congress after the Presidential election. The second predicts the Congressional agenda at time $t+1$, the second Congress after the Presidential election. The models are as follows:

First Congress after the Presidential election (t):

$$\begin{aligned} Agenda_{it} = & \alpha_i + Agenda_{it-1} + WinningPlatform_{it} + WinningPlatformXUnified_{it} \\ & + LosingPlatform_{it} + Unified_t ProblemSpace_{it} + ProblemSpace_{it-1} + \varepsilon_{it} \end{aligned}$$

Second Congress after the Presidential election (t+1)

$$\begin{aligned} Agenda_{it+1} = & \alpha_i + Agenda_{it} + WinningPlatform_{it+1} + WinningPlatformXUnified_{it+1} \\ & + LosingPlatform_{it+1} + LosingPlatformXUnified_{it+1} \\ & + Unified_{t+1} ProblemSpace_{it+1} + ProblemSpace_{it} + \varepsilon_{it+1} \end{aligned}$$

Dependent Variables: Congressional Policymaking Attention to Lawmaking and Oversight

I report models with three different dependent variables representing Congressional policymaking attention to policy issues. The first two represent attention to lawmaking. The first model uses the percent of attention to each policy issue in roll call votes from 1948-2014. Roll call votes are familiar to political scientists who study Congress, and represent the chamber floor's decision to devote scarce floor time to a priority. The second model uses the percent of referral hearings devoted to the issue from 1948-2014. Referral hearings are defined by the Policy Agendas Project as any hearing where a bill is considered. These hearings also represent a scarce resource, although a different kind of one from roll call votes. Hearings require intensive work from committee staff and members, but are not constrained by the floor's limited agenda. Much of the legislation outputted by committees passes through the floor of Congress by voice vote or without objection with no roll call vote recorded. We should expect these two processes to function similarly, as they both involve changing the laws of the United States, but with some key differences. Roll call votes will generally be more contentious, and may involve position-

taking on laws that do not end up passing. Parties may prefer to use roll call votes to highlight the priorities promised in their platforms

The final dependent variable, which represents attention to oversight policymaking, is the percentage of Congressional non-legislative hearings devoted to each issue. These hearings are the primary venue through which Congress directs oversight attention (Baumgartner and Jones 2016; Bawn 1997; Lewallen 2016; Workman 2015). Congress has held more non-legislative hearings and fewer referral hearings as the federal bureaucracy has grown (Lewallen 2016; Jones, Whyman and Theriault, forthcoming). When Congressional attention lurches to a different policy area, we can expect them to devote a larger proportion of non-legislative hearings to that policy area.

Independent Variable: Party Platform Attention

Every four years, the American political parties release platforms stating their policy priorities if elected to office. If party agendas influence legislative agendas, we should see a response in legislative outputs following the shock of a new party platform in the subsequent Congress. To measure the party agenda, I include data on the policy content of U.S. party platforms. Data is coded at the quasi-sentence level, then aggregated yearly. These data were originally collected by Christina Wolbrecht (see Wolbrecht and Hartney 2014), and are now maintained by the Policy Agendas Project.³ I include the percent of policy attention to each issue topic in the platform of both the majority and minority parties in the previous election.

³ Christina Wolbrecht, American Political Party Platforms: 1948-2008. These data are made possible in part by support from the Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, College of Arts

Independent Variable: Unified Government

Presidents are more successful at agenda setting with co-partisans (Beckman 2010). Thus, we should expect the effect of party platforms to be stronger under unified government than divided government. I included a dummy variable which is coded as a 1 when the government is unified under one party and 0 when there is divided government, and interacted it with both the platform of the party of the President and the losing party.

Independent Variable: Problem Space

The problem space is a difficult concept to operationalize. Policy problems bubble up to the surface and demand the attention of policymakers, often with little notice. Problems can arise both exogenously and within government (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). If policymakers fail to address a problem, voters may hold them accountable (Adler and Wilkerson 2012). Many of these problems are quickly dealt with by policy subsystems. However, many are not, and macro political actors such as Congress are forced to confront them (Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Some issues are dealt with before they become salient in the mass public; others rise to become highly salient and mobilizing issues. To measure changes in the problem space, I included average responses to Gallup's Most Important Problem (MIP) question. MIP is often used to measure the prominence or salience of policy problems to the mass public (Wlezien 2005; Jones

and Baumgartner 2005; Jones, Larsen-Smith and Wilkerson 2009). As problems become more severe, a higher proportion of respondents will declare a particular issue the most important problem facing the country. MIP tends to be dominated by macroeconomic issues and war (see Table 1). MIP is clearly an imperfect operationalization of the problem space, but functions as a useful proxy for problem severity among the mass public that can be measured over a time period spanning six decades.

Results

Table 2 displays the results of the model during the first Congress after the Presidential election. These results vary by type of agenda, but overall support for the *Lawmaking Hypothesis*. As issue emphasis platform of the President increases, Congress tends to hold more roll call votes on that issue. The effect is positive and statistically significant under divided government ($p=0.015$), while slightly smaller under periods of unified government ($p=0.095$). These effects are quite similar, indicating that the agenda setting relationship between the platform of the President's party and roll calls is not conditioned on divided government. Issues emphasized in the party out of the White House's platform are no more or less emphasized by Congress. This relationship works slightly differently under referral hearings. There is a strong and significant relationship between the President's platform and referral hearings under unified governments ($p<.001$), but not under divided governments ($p=0.160$). There is also a negative and significant relationship between issue attention in the platform of the party out of the White House and referral hearings under both divided ($p=0.090$) and unified ($p=0.011$) governments. Lawmaking through roll call votes and referral hearings appears to function differently under divided and unified government.

We see a slightly different but generally consistent pattern for oversight attention in the first Congress after the election. Under unified government, there is a positive and significant ($p=0.050$) relationship between issue attention in the platform of the President's party and non-referral hearings in Congress. Under divided government, there is no significant relationship ($p=0.325$). There is no significant relationship between the losing party's platform and oversight attention, although the coefficient is negative under unified government ($p=0.268$). There is little evidence to support the oversight hypothesis; the effect of platform attention on attention to policy in referral and oversight hearings is not significantly different under either unified or divided government.

What explains the different processes for attention to policy for referral hearings and roll call votes? Both processes are performing a fundamentally similar function in considering changes to laws. Roll call votes highlight political conflict, while referral hearings are often held on bills that pass Congress through a voice vote or by unanimous consent. It may be the case that parties in power under unified government are less likely to force votes that highlight political conflict, and are more willing to enact their expressed priorities on less controversial legislation.

The results change when the dependent variable changes to the agenda of the second Congress after the Presidential election (see Table 3). There is no significant relationship between roll call votes and the platform of the party holding the Presidency under either divided or unified government. However, there is a positive and significant ($p=0.046$) relationship between issues emphasized in the losing party's platform and Congress under unified government. This result is surprising, as the party in power in these cases holds neither the White House nor either chamber of Congress, and saw their issue priorities deemphasized in the prior Congress. In the referral hearing model, Congress holds fewer hearings on issues emphasized by

the platform of the President's party under both divided ($p=0.026$) and unified ($p=0.08$) government, and more on issues emphasized by losing party's platform under divided government ($p=0.083$). While many of these results are not significant at a 0.05 threshold, they suggest that referral hearings in the second Congress after the Presidential election follow similar pattern as roll call hearings. In the oversight model, no platforms are significant at even a 0.1 threshold.

How do we explain these surprising results? The literature may point to two explanations. First, they may be caused by disproportionate information processing (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). When policymakers allocate scarce resources toward a priority, they must neglect other priorities. Eventually, they are forced to address those issues, as ignore problems bubble up to the surface. Thus, party platforms may have little to no long run effect on the agenda, but can change priorities in the short term. Second, the party in the opposition may be able to push the agenda toward their issues, as Green-Pederson and Mortenson (2010) observed in their study of Danish agendas. The opposition may also gain strength after the mid-term elections.

Finally, Congress is responsive to changes in the problem space. The coefficient on MIP is positive and significant for both roll call votes and non-referral hearings during first Congress, and for roll call votes after the second. Interestingly, effect size on MIP is more than twice as large in the second and significant ($p<.001$). With the previous election deep in the past, policymakers appear to be using their most visible agendas (roll call votes) to address current problems, rather than the problems they promised to emphasize in the last platform, in anticipation of the next election.

Table 2: Effect of the Platforms of the President's Party on Congress,
First Congress After the Presidential Election (t)

Independent Variables	DV: Roll Calls _t	DV: Referral Hearings _t	DV: Non- Referral Hearings _t
Lagged DV _{t-1}	0.55*** (0.06)	0.90*** (0.04)	0.75*** (0.04)
Winning Platform _t	0.19* (0.08)	0.07 (0.05)	0.07 (0.07)
Platform _t x Unified _t	0.12+ (0.07)	0.15*** (0.04)	0.13+ (0.07)
Losing Platform _t	-0.002 (0.08)	-0.07+ (0.04)	0.04 (0.07)
Losing Platform _t X Unified _t	0.02 (0.07)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.07 (0.06)
Unified _t	0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Most Important Problem _t	0.07* (0.03)	0.03 (0.02)	0.06* (0.03)
Most Important Problem _{t-1}	-0.07* (0.03)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.06+ (0.03)
r^2	0.63	0.85	0.68
n	323	323	323
Wald χ^2	368.93	716.52	629.08

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05. All models use panel corrected standard errors.

Table 3: Effect of the Platforms of the President's Party on Congress, Second Congress After the Presidential Election (t+1)

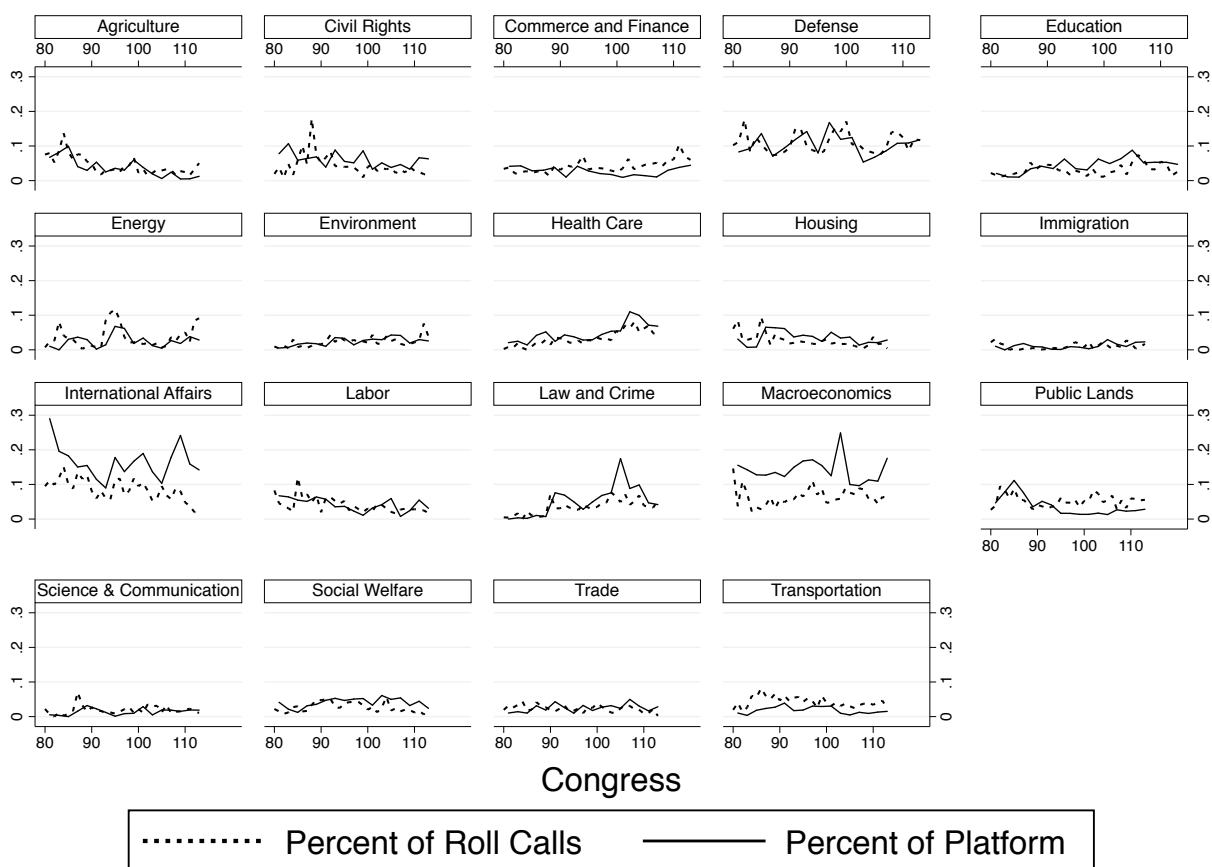
Independent Variables	DV: Roll Calls _{t+1}	DV: Referral Hearings _{t+1}	DV: Non-Referral Hearings _{t+1}
Lagged DV _t	0.79*** (0.07)	0.93*** (0.05)	0.86*** (0.05)
Winning Platform _t	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.12 (0.08)
Platform _t x Unified _{t+1}	-0.08 (0.10)	-0.12+ (0.07)	0.02 (0.08)
Losing Platform _{t-1}	-0.02 (0.06)	0.07+ (0.04)	0.12 (0.07)
Losing Platform _{t-1} X Unified _{t+1}	0.17* (0.08)	0.06 (0.05)	0.06 (0.06)
Unified _{t+1}	-0.01** (0.02)	0.001 (0.002)	-0.004 (0.003)
Most Important Problem _{t+1}	0.16*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	0.003 (0.03)
Most Important Problem _t	-0.12*** (0.002)	0.002 (0.02)	0.003 (0.03)
r2	0.67	0.84	0.72
n	304	304	304
Wald chi2	404.33	428.93	516.34

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05. All models use panel corrected standard errors. N=304 instead of 323 as data is not yet available for the 114th Congress (2015-2016).

We can also observe some interesting cross-sectional variation across issues. Figure 1 plots roll call attention against attention in the platform of the President. On many issues, such as energy and defense, the two series tend to track each other. However, there are notable exceptions. International Affairs and Macroeconomics do not follow party platforms. On both issues, Congress has a narrower role than on other issues. For international affairs, the President tends to set policy. For macroeconomics, actors such as the federal reserve often ultimately make policy. We see similar patterns on referral hearings, but also see the importance public lands

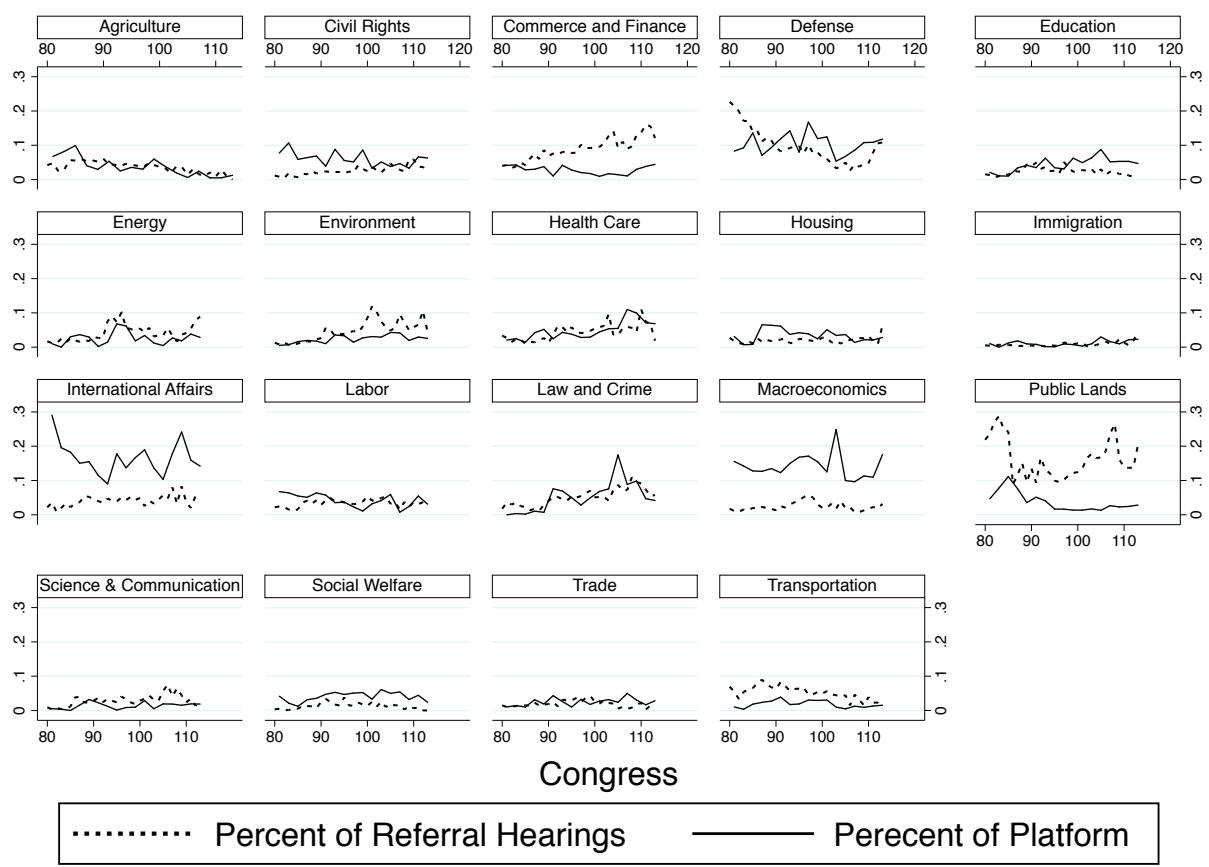
policy, which makes up just 3.7% of platforms but 16.2% of referral hearings. Public lands is one of the least polarized issue areas (Jones and Jochim 2013); Congress may be able to move through the committee process on public lands bills with lower levels of conflicts than other issues. These cross-sectional differences by issue deserve further study.

Figure 1: Attention to Issues in Platform of President's Party and Roll Call Votes



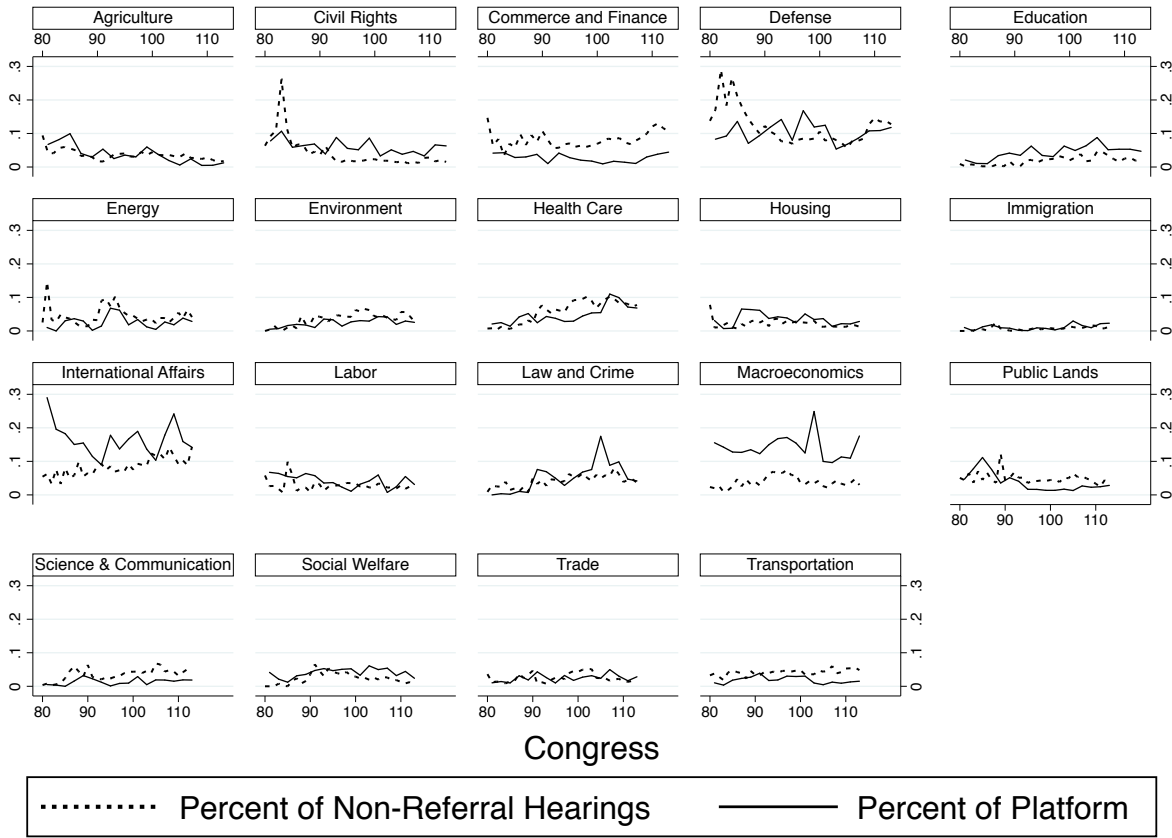
Source: Policy Agendas Project and Wolbrecht (2016)

Figure 2: Attention to Issues in Platform of President's Party and Referral Hearings



Source: Policy Agendas Project and Wolbrecht (2016)

Figure 3: Attention to Issues in Platform of President’s Party and Non-Referral Hearings



Source: Policy Agendas Project and Wolbrecht (2016)

Conclusions

This paper offers two key contributions to the literature on agenda setting and legislative behavior. First, it found that the elected officials do indeed follow through on the priorities promised in the platform of the party of the President. Voters can observe emphasized issues during in the platform during the campaign and expect the party who wins the Presidency to shift the government's attention toward those issues. Previous work has suggested that the majority party often is forced to respond to new problems, rather than prioritizing issues emphasized in the campaign (Green-Pederson and Mortenson 2010; Froio, Bevan and Jennings 2016; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). The results presented here suggest both that parties can indeed influence the legislative agenda while other factors do as well.

However, they can only influence the agenda in the short run. The effect of platform attention on the Congressional agenda fades after the first Congress after the platform is issued, and in some cases, becomes negative and significant. It theorized that two processes contributed to the short run-long run differences in platform agenda setting. First, the information contributed to the policy process by party platforms fades quickly, requiring policymakers to respond to new information in the problem space. Second, policymakers are forced to increase attention to underemphasized immediately after devoting disproportionate attention to those policies. Both mechanisms are interesting on their own, and deserve further study.

Finally, the relationship between issues emphasized in the platform of the President's party and the Congressional agenda also varies by instrument and by issue. Congress holds more roll call votes under divided government on issues emphasized by the President's platform, but not under unified government. The opposite is true of referral hearings. Contrary to expectations,

there is some weak evidence that oversight attention also increases following platform attention. Domestic policy issues tend to have a stronger relationship with the platform than international affairs, especially on roll call votes.

Appendix

Appendix Table 1: Effect of the Platforms of the President's Party on Congress, First Congress After the Presidential Election (t), Government Operations Included

Independent Variables	DV: Roll Calls _t	DV: Referral Hearings _t	DV: Non-Referral Hearings _t
Lagged DV _{t-1}	0.90*** (0.05)	0.89*** (0.03)	0.92*** (0.05)
Winning Platform _t	-0.03 (0.09)	0.06 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.09)
Platform _t x Unified _t	0.01 (0.09)	0.10* (0.05)	0.04 (0.07)
Losing Platform _t	0.07 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.05)	0.14 (0.09)
Losing Platform _t X Unified _t	-0.02 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.03 (0.07)
Unified _t	0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)
Most Important Problem _t	0.12*** (0.04)	0.03 (0.02)	0.06* (0.03)
Most Important Problem _{t-1}	-0.12** (0.04)	-0.04* (0.02)	-0.06 (0.03)
r ²	0.80	0.87	0.77
n	340	340	340
Wald chi ²	574	766	605

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05. All models use panel corrected standard errors.

Appendix Table 2: Effect of the Platforms of the President's Party on Congress, Second Congress After the Presidential Election (t+1), Government Operations Included

Independent Variables	DV: Roll Calls _{t+1}	DV: Referral Hearings _{t+1}	DV: Non-Referral Hearings _{t+1}
Lagged DV _t	0.89*** (0.04)	0.95*** (0.04)	0.83*** (0.03)
Winning Platform _t	-0.01 (0.07)	-0.11* (0.04)	-0.08 (0.08)
Platform _t x Unified _{t+1}	-0.15 (0.11)	-0.23** (0.07)	0.04 (0.07)
Losing Platform _{t-1}	-0.06 (0.07)	0.08* (0.04)	0.11 (0.07)
Losing Platform _{t-1} X Unified _{t+1}	0.20* (0.09)	0.15* (0.06)	0.06 (0.06)
Unified _{t+1}	-0.007* (0.003)	0.003 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Most Important Problem _{t+1}	0.16*** (0.03)	0.02 (0.02)	0.003 (0.03)
Most Important Problem _t	-0.12*** (0.03)	-0.003 (0.02)	0.0001 (0.03)
r2	0.83	0.87	0.81
n	320	320	320
Wald chi2	923	652	979

Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05. All models use panel corrected standard errors. N=320 instead of 340 as data is not yet available for the 114th Congress (2015-2016).

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