

Pork Barrel Politics: Motives and Benefits

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Abstract

My Research analyzes the variance in the amount of pork barrel spending secured by members of the U.S. House of Representatives in FY2008. I examine several characteristics of house members, from institutional authority and seniority to ideology, in order to gauge the effect these attributes have on the amount of federal spending allocated to their district. From these observations I derived a secondary research focus: measuring the varying effectiveness of pork barrel spending by comparing the spending habits of a member of Congress to the percent of the vote they earn. Significant findings include that members of the house appropriations committee and those holding positions of party leadership procure larger amounts of pork barrel spending than other representatives. In addition, the model indicates that pork spending does not have a significant impact on vote percentage as previous studies have suggested.

Introduction

Conventional wisdom suggests that securing federal spending for a district will ultimately help a member of Congress at the ballot box by allowing them to claim credit for any benefits the funding provided. This is important given that gaining re-election is the paramount objective of any member of Congress (Mayhew 1974). As a result, there appears to be tremendous motivation for a congressman to procure large amounts of federal outlays for their district. However, there is significant variance in the ability of members to secure federal funding across congressional districts. To date, the literature offers very little empirical evidence examining this variance in the pork procurement tendencies of the members of the House of Representatives. Addressing this apparent void in the literature forms the first research question: What causes the variations in the degree to which Congressmen secure pork barrel spending for voting districts?

From this unanswered question one can derive another: Could one of the explanatory factors in Representatives' varying use of pork barrel spending be that it simply does not work to the expected degree? Since Mayhew's seminal work in 1974, the notion that pork barrel spending will benefit a member of Congress on Election Day has been the central theme of a large body of literature written over the course of the past thirty-five years. Considering the amount of literature promoting this concept of pork-related electoral benefits, why is it necessary to conduct more research in this area? There are several instances in which studies measuring the effectiveness of pork barrel spending have been unable to demonstrate strong empirical evidence of a relationship between the quantity of pork-barrel spending secured for a district and the voter support for the incumbent. Over the last twenty years, the research done on the effects of particularized

federal spending on re-election chances has been inconsistent or even contradictory; leaving a large grey area in a rather critical component of electoral politics. This leads to the second research question to be examined: I seek to explain the varying effectiveness of pork-barrel spending in earning increased amounts of voter support.

Defining “Pork”

There is no available definition of what exactly constitutes “pork barrel spending.” The term was coined to describe the irresponsible allocation of federal funds to particularized projects. However, what is seen as “pork” to some may be seen as a perfectly reasonable and necessary use of federal funds to another. For example, no one at Creighton thinks the Cardiac Center or parking garages on campus were pork projects, but taxpayers in a different state may have an opposite opinion. In light of this inability to perfectly define which spending project is necessary and which should be considered pork, my research features a very broad understanding of pork: any particularized federal outlay awarded to a congressional district. I take this perspective with the recognition that not all federal outlays should be negatively categorized as pork-barrel spending.

Literature Review

Across the literature, research is presented that observes the electoral benefits of pork spending from many different angles, implementing a wide variety of variables to do so. Many of the works pertaining to this subject share common concepts; the analysis of which allows one to piece together a foundational knowledge of pork spending, voter support, and the causal relationships between the two.

Congressional Pork Spending: Congress at the Trough

The first research question posed seeks to examine the phenomenon of pork barrel spending by exploring why some representatives secure several hundred million dollars of particularized federal spending to their district, while others only secure a few hundred thousand. I examine this discrepancy through two perspectives: First, the variation in pork spending in a district is likely due to differences in members' *ability* to secure federal funds. Second, the variation in pork spending within a district is also likely due to differences in members' *incentive* to secure federal funds. The literature contends that some members are more likely than others to participate in pork barrel politics because they are more *able* to do so. Another prevalent theme is that political *incentive* plays a strong role in determining how much pork a member pursues. Only measuring one of these decisive factors would leave an incomplete analysis of pork procurement tendencies in Congress.

Appropriation Committee Membership (Measuring: Ability)

The first hypothesis to be tested involves the connection between committee membership and pork procurement. Representatives that sit on the House Appropriations committee should secure more federal spending for their district than those who do not, given their direct involvement with decisions regarding the allocation of federal funds. In his book *Congress and the Bureaucracy*, Douglas Arnold (1989) demonstrates the positive causal relationship between a member's committee assignment and the amount of benefits they secure for their home constituency. The example used most often by

Arnold is in military employment; Arnold illustrates that members sitting on a committee dealing with military affairs enjoy disproportionate levels of influence over the geographic allocation of military employment. Applying this concept to the research question, I posit that members of the House Appropriations committee have disproportionate influence over the procurement of federal benefits to their congressional districts. In their work *Committees in Congress*, Deering and Smith (1997) supplement this position with the distributive committee perspective, which asserts that members self-select onto different panels because of a “keen interest in the legislation it produces.” Specifically, members self-select onto the house appropriations committee so that they may have a larger influence over the spending legislation it produces.

Seniority/Party Authority (Measuring: Ability)

The next hypothesis to be tested involves the relationship between an incumbent’s ability to secure pork spending and their level of seniority in the House of Representatives. The incumbency advantage is well documented within the literature (Minow and Mitchell 1976, Petrocik and Desposato 2004, Erikson 1971), as is the seniority system within Congress (Levitt and Poterba 1999, Hinckley 1969). The more congressional experience a Congressman has, the more likely they are to be promoted to a position of party authority, such as the majority leader, speaker, or minority whip. As members benefit from the incumbency advantage year after year, term after term, they gradually build up their level of Congressional seniority.

The role of seniority has been enhanced with the recent emergence of conditional party government (CPG). According to the Conditional Party Government theory, a

member of Congress will prioritize furthering the goals of their party over representing the interests of their constituents (Aldrich and Rohde 2001). The majority party will then try to alter the inner organizational structure of a legislature to reinforce the power of the party leader and therefore enact priority legislation without having to garner any support from the minority party.

As a result of CPG, party loyalty is an important factor in a member's re-election chances. This offers many incentives for members of Congress to fall in line behind the opinions of their party leaders (namely district spending). Therefore, when a senior member wants to secure spending for their district, oftentimes they face little opposition from rank-and-file members of their party or committee.

As was discussed previously, the volume of pork spending a congressman can procure is directly related to how accessible federal funding is for them. There is a definite positive causal relationship between a member's standing on a particular committee and the amount of benefits they secure for their home constituency (Arnold 1979). Additionally, there is evidence that demonstrates that this often benefits the legislator at the ballot box (Fowler 1980). If a congressman is successful in obtaining a leadership position within a committee, they are that much closer to reaping the electoral benefits that conventional wisdom suggests come when one "brings home the bacon" in the form of federal benefits for their home district (Gryski 1991)

Studies have shown that the electorate recognizes when their incumbent holds leadership posts or authoritative committee positions and rewards them for this; regardless of their committee (Owens and Wade 1984). When a member holds this kind

of authority within his or her party, they do not necessarily need to sit on a money committee to reap the rewards of pork barrel politics.

Party Identification of the Incumbent (Measuring: Incentive)

Party identification of the incumbent impacts the electoral effectiveness of pork spending. This concept stems from research that found that overall voters were more likely to reward Democratic incumbents for district benefits in the form of federal spending (Alvarez and Saving 1997; Alvarez and Schousen 1993). The converse effect of this being that Republican representatives are not as likely to be rewarded for their pork spending projects, and perhaps more likely to be rewarded for practicing fiscal restraint. This partisan voting difference could be a result of democratic members obtaining more particularized benefits for their constituents, or (if the volume of benefits secured by Democrats and Republicans was comparable) a result of Democrats engaging in more public credit-claiming for the benefits they acquire (Bickers 2007).

Ideology (Measuring: Incentive)

Related to the notion that party affiliation has an impact on the effectiveness of pork barrel spending is the widespread belief that the ideological composition of the electorate does too. Fiscally conservative incumbents perform better in low pork districts (Sellers 2007). Fiscally liberal incumbents gain higher percentages of the vote in high pork districts. Other research has demonstrated that Republican voters punish Republican incumbents for high levels of pork spending in their district (Sellers 2007). On the other end of the spectrum, liberal Democratic voters were found to reward

Republican incumbents for higher levels of fiscal benefits allocated to their district. The same study demonstrated that a Democratic incumbent has only a slight chance of gaining support from Republican constituents or losing support from Democratic constituents, no matter their spending patterns (Sidman and Mak 2006).

While previous research focused on voter choice in regards to party affiliation or political (mainly fiscal) ideology, much is left to be said about those who do not subscribe to a certain ideology, or do not align themselves with a political party. These individuals are called “moveables” (Bickers 2007). The term “moveable” forms a category which includes independents, undecideds, and individuals with a weak candidate choice or party affiliation. These individuals are shown to be much more susceptible to pork benefits and the corresponding credit-claiming by the incumbent in their district (Hillygus and Jackman 2003).

Side note: Electoral Vulnerability

It is a common hypothesis that incumbents who are less likely to get re-elected exert more of an effort to bring federal outlays to their district (Levitt and Snyder 1997, Stein and Bickers 2007). If there is no electoral threat posed to a member of Congress, there is only a marginal incentive to extend the effort to secure federal benefits for their district. Since time is the most valuable asset to any legislator, why would one waste it if their re-election chances are secure? On the other hand, members who are likely to face an uphill battle for re-election have tremendous incentive to subscribe to the conventional wisdom of pork barrel politics and attempt to buy votes through credit claiming, earning their way into office for the next term (Stein and Bickers 2007).

From analyzing the body of literature surrounding pork barrel spending, it is evident that a two-part study would shed additional light on the grey areas within this significant component of U.S. electoral politics. The first facet of this study will break down what enables or incentivizes one member of Congress to seek hundreds of millions of dollars in federal outlays for their district, while another secures only a few thousand for their own. Based on that data, a second analysis will be done to examine just how effective pork barrel spending is in terms of impacting the percentage of the vote a member of the House of Representatives receives on Election Day.

Hypotheses

Research Question 1: Explain the variation in the degree to which Congressmen secure particularized federal spending for their district.

Hypothesis 1: *Members sitting on the house appropriation committee will have greater ability to secure pork spending than those who do not sit on the money committee.*

Hypothesis 2: *Members with more seniority will have will have greater ability to secure pork spending than inexperienced members.*

Hypothesis 3: *Members with higher levels of party leadership will have greater ability to secure pork spending than inexperienced members.*

Hypothesis 4: *Democrats will have more of an incentive to utilize pork spending than their republican colleagues.*

Hypothesis 5: *Members who represent conservative districts will have less incentive to utilize pork spending than those who represent more liberal constituents.*

My first hypothesis stems from the theory that the greater the accessibility to federal funds a member has, the greater the extent to which he or she takes advantage of these funds will be. Even if this member falls into the several categories enumerated as being disincentives to the utilization of pork barrel spending (Senior, republican,

committee chair), the fact that he or she has such direct access to these funds as well as a certain measure of appropriative authority over them will provide significant incentive to make use of their position to gain support of their constituents through pork spending and credit claiming.

Also, literature has shown political ideology to play a major role in incentivizing (or de-incentivizing) the use of pork barrel spending. The third and fourth hypotheses measure just how much of an impact ideology has on pork barrel politics. First I observe this exchange from the top down, measuring the incentive of Republican members to procure federal funds for their district and then comparing that to the level of incentive for Democrats to do the same. Next, I will gauge how these benefits (or lack thereof) are received within their district or state, and how that reception plays out at the ballot box.

Research Question 2: Explain the varying effectiveness of pork barrel spending in increasing a member's percentage of the vote.

Hypothesis 1: *An increase in pork spending by a member will not cause a significant increase in voter support for them; all else being equal (support the null hypothesis). Note: this hypothesis acknowledges that an increase in voter support may exist, just not to the statistically significant extent that previous studies have suggested.*

This hypothesis was formed from the desire to explore the discrepancies found between the research and the conventional wisdom on this issue (Fowler 1980, Gryski 1991). I suggest that pork spending does not provide a large amount of electoral support for the incumbent. I posit that when voting, the electorate prioritizes several other characteristics of the incumbent (seniority, party affiliation and leadership, ideological alignment, etc.) over the amount of federal benefits they provide. The importance of these

traits minimizes the electoral effects of pork barrel spending. I will control for these characteristics while testing my hypothesis.

With the second research question, the dependent variable is the percentage of the vote earned by the incumbent. The independent variables to be tested mirror those analyzed in the first research question. My independent variables are: amount of federal spending in a particular district, seniority of the member, whether the member holds a position of party authority, and the incumbent/constituent party affiliations. Again, in controlling for these variables, I will examine how effective pork barrel spending actually is in earning a member of the House of Representatives a greater percentage of the vote, testing pork barrel spending against a host of other electoral determinants.

In the 1970s, David Mayhew established that a member of Congress can expect to gain electoral popularity by credit-claiming for the federal spending they had secured for his or her district. Thirty years later, I do not believe this political phenomenon occurs to the same extent that Mayhew, and others, have suggested.

Data and Methodology

I tested my hypotheses using an OLS regression model, measuring two different dependent variables. In the first test, pork barrel spending per district is the dependent variable. This is a ratio variable, where the amount of pork spending per district is measured in billions of dollars (example: 0.490 = \$490,000,000).

My first independent variable measures appropriation committee membership, which is a dichotomous measurement of whether or not a representative sits on the House Appropriations committee. In analyzing this variable, a “1” indicates that the

representative does sit on the House Appropriations committee, and a “0” indicates that they do not. My next independent variable is Seniority. This variable measures how many years a certain member has been in office, ranging from two through the mid fifties, this is an interval variable. My next independent variable is committee leadership. This is another dichotomous variable measuring whether or not a member chairs a committee within the House of Representatives. For this binomial variable, a “1” indicates that the member is a committee chair within the House, and a “0” indicates that he or she is not a committee chair. My next independent variable is also a dichotomous variable that measures party authority. A “1” indicates that the member of the House holds a position of party authority (majority/minority leader, speaker of the House, etc.), and “0” indicates that the member does not hold a position of authority. My next independent variable measures the partisan identity of the Congressman. In this case, a “1” indicates that the congressman is a Democrat, and a “0” indicates that the Congressman is a Republican. The final independent variable, also dichotomous, measures constituent ideology. A “1” indicates that the majority of registered voters in a Congressional district are Democrats, and a “0” indicates that the majority of registered voters in a Congressional district are Republican or independent. The regression equation for the first research question is as follows:

$$Y = .682 + .62X_1 + .01X_2 - .07X_3 + .77X_4 - .17X_5 - .01X_6$$

The variables analyzed in my second research question are very similar to those discussed in the first. The dependent variable is voting percentage earned by the

incumbent. This variable is expressed in percentage (theoretically, ranging from 0 to 100). The independent variable most crucial to this analysis is the dependent variable of the first research question: pork spending per district. Although this variable has shifted from dependent to independent, it is expressed in the same way (in Billions, with $0.490 = \$4,900,000$). The next two independent variables are measured and expressed in the same way they are for the first research question: Seniority and Party Leadership. One additional Independent variable has been added to model 2: Incumbent/Constituent ideology alignment. This dichotomous takes on a value of “1” if the incumbent’s party affiliation is aligned with the majority of his constituency (A democratic incumbent in a democratic district or a republican incumbent in a republican district), and a “0” if the respective party affiliation of the incumbent and the district they represent are not aligned. The regression equation for the second research question is as follows:

$$Y = 56.53 + .31X_1 + .48X_2 + .05X_3 + 4.76X_4$$

Findings

Table 1 reports the findings of the OLS regression for the first set of hypotheses pertaining to the incentives and motives behind a congressman’s procurement of federal spending. The dependent variable is pork barrel spending per congressional district (expressed in billions). In analyzing this variable, appropriation committee membership, seniority, committee leadership, party authority, and incumbent and constituent party affiliation were all examined.

The model shows that two of the variables measured were statistically significant: Appropriation committee membership and party leadership. Appropriation committee membership came through as the most convincing variable, significant at the 0.01 level.¹ Interpreting the coefficient tells us that, on average, members who sit on this committee secure \$620,000,000 more of federal benefits than their colleagues on different committees. The constant included in the model illustrates the discrepancy between the procurement tendencies of a member sitting on the appropriations committee and a member who does not: The constant's coefficient value of 0.682 indicates that, on average, a representative will secure \$682,000,000 of federal outlays for their district. Therefore, members serving on the appropriations committee tend to secure almost double the amount of federal benefits for their district as other representatives do.

Members of Congress who hold recognized positions of party leadership also secure more pork spending. This variable was significant at below the 0.10 level, and indicates that party leaders secure \$770,000,000 dollars more than rank-and-file representatives. Again, bear in mind that the average member will secure \$628,000,000 for their district. Party leaders, on average, secure more than double the standard amount of particularized federal benefits for their constituents.

In contrast to expectations, seniority was not a significant factor in how much pork spending is procured by a member, nor was committee chairmanship in the House of Representatives. Similarly, neither the party affiliation of the representative, nor the

¹ Note: I hypothesized that only the *appropriations committee* would have a significant effect on federal allocations, even though there are two other house committees that deal with federal assets (Budget and Ways & Means). Including these committees in the data set was necessary to ensure a comprehensive committee perspective. Findings showed that neither the budget nor ways and means variable were statistically significant.

ideological orientation of the constituents reach statistical significance. This model included a sample size of 367 observations. However, the r-squared value of 0.0297 suggests that there is a lot more to the issue of securing federal benefits than is explained by this model.

Table 1: Influences on Pork Barrel Spending

Variable	District Pork
Appropriation Committee	0.62** (.25)
Seniority	0.01 (.01)
Committee Leader	-0.07 (.50)
Party Leader	0.77* (.43)
Party Affiliation	-0.17 (.22)
Constituent Ideology	-0.01 (.22)
_cons	0.68 (.18)

N = 367

R-Squared = 0.0297

*Pr<0.10; **Pr<0.05; ***Pr<.01

Note: Standard Error in Parentheses

Table 2 reports the findings for the second research question pertaining to the effectiveness of pork barrel spending in obtaining a higher percentage of votes for re-election. In this test, vote percentage is the dependent variable, and was tested across four independent variables: Pork spending per district, seniority, party authority, and incumbent/constituent political alignment. These variables are expressed in the same manner as they appeared in table 1. The model shows two variables of statistical significance in this test: seniority and party alignment, both with a significance level of

.001. Interpreting the coefficients shows that for every year in office, an incumbent can expect to gain .48 of a percent of the vote. Since the term of a representative is two years, this means that for every term, a member can expect to gain nearly an additional one percent of the vote.

The coefficient for party alignment was calculated to be 4.76. Therefore, if the member is a republican in a conservative district or a democrat in a more liberal district (according to cook's PVI), he or she can expect to gain almost 5% more of the vote. This model shows an acceptable sample size of 338 observations, and an R-squared value of .2132. Although the r-squared is less than the recommended level of .30, it still demonstrates that the model does a fair job of explaining the dependent variable. However, as is the case with RQ1, the low R-square value indicates that several other aspects must be taken into consideration which are not accounted for in the model.

Table 2: Measuring impact on vote percent

Variable	Vote Percent
District pork (FY2008)	.31 (.28)
Seniority	0.48*** (.05)
Party Leader	0.05 (2.50)
Party Alignment	4.76*** (1.22)
N = 338	
R-Squared = 0.2132	

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01

Note: Standard Error in parentheses

Discussion on RQ1

To explain the variation in the degree to which Congressmen secure particularized federal spending for their district, my first hypothesis suggested that members sitting on the house appropriations committee will have a greater ability to secure pork barrel spending than those who do not sit on the committee. Results of the linear regression show that appropriation committee members are in fact more likely to secure larger amounts of federal money for their district, and do so to a large extent (or \$610,000,000 more than others). This could be attributed to the fact that these members have a direct hand in appropriating federal funds.

My second hypothesis posits that members with more seniority will have greater ability to secure pork spending than inexperienced members. This data says otherwise, with no statistical significance had by that variable, and the coefficient (0.01) suggesting that the number of years a representative is in office has very little affect on how much pork barrel spending is allocated to a district. A second part of that hypothesis suggests that party leadership would give a member greater ability to secure pork barrel spending. Findings show that acknowledged party leaders acquire 770 million pork dollars more than their rank-and-file counterparts.

Thirdly, I made the assertion that democrats will have more of an incentive to utilize pork spending than their republican colleagues. With the significance pointing in the expected direction, the model suggests that republican members do secure less pork spending for their district than democrats, but not to a statistically significant degree. The results for my fourth hypothesis, that representatives from more conservative districts will have less of an incentive to secure spending, are comparable to the results from the

third hypothesis. Conservative districts do in fact see less pork spending than liberal districts, but not to a statistically significant degree.

Discussion on RQ2

The second research question asks about the varying effectiveness of pork barrel spending on the percent of the vote in congressional elections. I hypothesized that an increase in pork spending by a member will not cause a significant increase in voter support for them. Again, this is not to say that no increase in voter support exists, it just seeks to refute conventional wisdom by demonstrating that pork barrel spending as a whole may not be as effective as some believe it is. I posit that there are several aspects of a representative that are far more important to his or her electoral success than the amount of pork barrel spending they procure for their district. These characteristics are tested in our model for RQ2. First and foremost, empirical evidence suggests that members who secure more particularized federal spending for their district will not see a statistically significant increase in vote percentage in congressional elections.

In discerning what it was that won re-election, if not pork barrel spending, I first look at seniority. The number of years a representative is in office was in fact significant in determining what percent of the vote would be won by the incumbent. The longer you are in office, the more votes you will receive on Election Day. This notion is supported at the .001 level of statistical significance, and the data shows that for every additional term a member is in office, they can expect an additional one percent of the vote. Surprisingly, party leadership did not come back with any statistical significance in determining vote percentage, but one more variable did. Ideology is very important in

determining how much of the vote an incumbent will receive. The data shows that incumbents whose party affiliation is aligned with the dominant ideology within their district will see almost 5% more votes than those not aligned. This measurement, like seniority, was statistically significant at the highest (.001) level.

Conclusion

These findings allow us to predict the general tendencies of each representative regarding their ability to secure federal benefits. Appropriations committee members procure more because they have direct access to federal funds. Republicans may get less, but this is up for debate as this was not statistically significant. Those who have no need to pad their electoral chances procure less federal spending than those who do. Party leaders secure more; inexperienced members tend to secure less. These are all additional pieces of the theoretical puzzle that may enhance our understanding of pork barrel politics. This research is my attempt to shed some light on the issue. I found some significant tendencies within the system and refuted conventional pork barrel wisdom by upholding the null hypothesis on pork spending as it pertains to voting percentages.

Analysis shows that while pork barrel spending it may have worked once, constituents are not buying it in 2007 – 2009. Understanding whether or not pork barrel politics is effective is more important than some may think. If the conventional wisdom on pork spending is overturned and Congress made aware of its shortcomings, the committee system would be more selective about which spending projects are passed. This transformation to a more fiscally conservative system of federal allocations could end up putting money that was going to useless pork projects back into the pockets of American taxpayers.

Data Appendix**Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Name	416	-	-	-	-
YrsService	416	10.336	8.365	1	52
RepID	416	0.492	0.501	0	1
DistrictPork	366	0.153	0.321	0	3.08
Ways_Means	416	0.086	0.281	0	1
AppComm	416	0.156	0.363	0	1
BudgComm	416	0.091	0.288	0	1
VotePerce	385	64.612	10.543	46	98
CommLdr	416	0.036	0.018	0	1
PartyLdr	416	0.048	0.214	0	1
Un_Cont	416	0.074	0.262	0	1
LostRe	415	0.113	0.317	0	1
DPork09	368	0.732	1.708	.007	24.63
ConID	415	0.467	0.499	0	1
PartyAlign	415	0.720	0.449	0	1

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Codebook

Variable 1: Name

This variable set contains the names of the 366 members of the U.S. House of Representatives that were incumbents after the 2006 midterm elections.

Variable 2: YrsService

Independent Variable

This variable set lists the seniority of each member in terms of how many years they have been in office (until 2006)

Value: 2.00	Rep. has been in office for two years
Value: 16.00	Rep. has been in office for sixteen years

Variable 3: RepID

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

In this variable set, I measure the partisan makeup of the house incumbents in 2006.

Value: 0	Rep. is a member of the Democratic Party
Value: 1	Rep. is a member of the Republican Party

Variable 4: DistrictPork

Dependent Variable

This variable set consists of the particularized federal benefits (PORK) secured for their district by each of the house incumbents in the fiscal year of 2005.

This number is displayed in billions (1.500 = \$1.5 Billion, 0.650 = \$6.5 million)

Value: 1.500	District received \$1.5 Billion in federal benefits in FY2005
Value: 0.650	District received \$6.5 Million in federal benefits in FY2005

Variable 5: Ways_Means

Independent Variable:

Binary Variable

This variable measures whether or not each member sits on the house Ways and Means Committee.

Value: 0	Rep. does not sit on the house Ways and Means committee
Value: 1	Rep. does sit on the house Ways and Means committee

Variable 6: AppComm

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

This variable measures whether or not the representative is a member of the Appropriations committee.

Value: 0	Member does not sit on house Appropriations committee
Value: 1	Member sits on house Appropriations committee

Variable 7: BudgComm

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

This variable measures whether or not each representative sits on the house budget committee.

Value: 0	Member does not sit on house budget committee
Value: 1	Member does sit on house budget committee

Variable 8: VotePerce

Dependent Variable

This variable represents the percentage of the vote carried by each incumbent member of the U.S. House of Representatives during the midterm congressional elections of 2006.

Value: 52	Member earned 52% of the vote in the last election
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Variable 9: CommLdr

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

This variable measures whether or not a member serves as the chairman of a house committee.

Value: 0	Rep. is not the chairman of a house committee
Value: 1	Rep. is the sitting chairman of an active house committee

**subcommittee chairs are not measured

Variable 10: PartyLdr

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

This variable measures whether or not a representative holds a position of authority within their party. Specifically, this measures whether or not the representative holds any of the following positions: Speaker of the House, Majority Leader, Minority Leader, Majority Whip, and Minority Whip.

Value: 0	Member does not hold a position of authority within their party
Value: 1	Member does hold a position of authority within their party.

Variable 11: Un_Cont

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

This variable measures whether or not a congressman ran uncontested in the last election.

Value: 0	Member did not run uncontested in the last election
Value: 1	Member ran uncontested in the last election.

Variable 12: LostRe

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

This variable measures whether or not a representative was successful in being re-elected from the 110th to the 111th Congress.

Value: 0	Representative was re-elected to the 111 th Congress.
Value: 1	Representative was not re-elected to the 111 th Congress.

Variable 13: DPork09

Dependent Variable

This variable set consists of the particularized federal benefits (PORK) secured for their congressional district by each of the house incumbents in the fiscal year of 2008.

This number is displayed in billions (1.500 = \$1.5 Billion, 0.650 = \$6.5 million)

Value: 1.500	District received \$1.5 Billion in federal benefits in FY2008
Value: 0.650	District received \$6.5 Million in federal benefits in FY2008

Variable 14: ConID

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

This variable set measures the ideological makeup of each congressional district according to the analysis of Cook's PVI.

Value: 0	Congressional district has a liberal leaning.
Value: 1	Congressional district has a conservative leaning.

Variable 15: PartyAlign

Independent Variable

Binary Variable

This variable set measures whether or not the partisan identity of a representative matches the ideological makeup of his or her district.

Value: 0	Partisan identity of representative does not match ideological makeup of district. (Ex: Republican member in a liberal district)
Value: 1	Partisan identity of representative does match ideological makeup of district. (Ex: Democratic member in a liberal district)