

## Making a Good Impression: Resource Allocation, Home Styles, and Washington Work

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### **Abstract:**

Members of Congress engage in a variety of representational activities, but existing research suggests that their effect on re-election margins is mixed. Reframing the question, we ask whether constituents notice the home styles of members and their efforts to communicate them through the allocation of official resources. Combining new data of member office expenditures with the NES, we find evidence that constituents perceive representational activities of their members in a meaningful fashion. Our results demonstrate that franking, office expenditures, and travel home provide a positive benefit to incumbents by shaping how constituents view them and their activities.

## **Introduction**

The notion that individual members of Congress have particular home styles is well-accepted (Fenno 1978; Parker 1986a; Taggart and Durant 1985; Adler, Gent, and Overmeyer 1998; Hill and Hurley 2002; Miler 2007; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1987).<sup>1</sup> It is less clear that the home style activities in which members engage, such as presentations of self, allocation of office resources, and Washington work, matter. Much of the existing literature about member use of official resources has focused on whether their use generates greater electoral security, and the evidence is mixed (Fenno 1978; Yiannakis 1981; Cover and Brumberg 1982; Parker 1980a, 1986a; Parker and Parker 1985; McAdams and Johannes 1988; Johannes and McAdams 1981; Cover 1985; Serra and Cover 1992). This raises the obvious question: why would members put forth so much effort to craft a particular representational face and communicate it to constituents when the payoff is questionable?

Electoral security and election margins might be the long term goal of a member's representational style, but as Fenno and others make clear, it is not the causally proximate goal. A member's home style is designed to generate particular perceptions among constituents, which may then enhance electoral performance: "The response they [members] seek from others is political support. And the impressions they try to foster are those that will engender political support" (Fenno 1978: 55). Members seeking to build a home style reputation for constituency service and casework, in particular, hope to alter a voter's electoral calculus by deemphasizing policy stances in favor of experience, seniority, and trust (Bianco 1991; Cain et al. 1987: 49). In other words, presentations of self, resource allocation strategies, and Washington work are purposeful activities designed to affect constituent perceptions of their member in a particular way. Members who bring home the pork hope to achieve recognition for their labors, as do members who craft a reputation for expertise on national defense policy. Much of the existing research misses this critical point.

We do not know whether the activities of members of Congress yield particular constituent impressions, because incumbent vote share is often used as a proxy. A focus on the specific

relationship between incumbent activities and the perceptions of constituents may help explain a disconnect in a congressional literature that emphasizes both the representative routines of members that constituents seem to expect, and empirical findings which suggest that members of Congress would be better off if they “spend less money, go home less often, abolish their district offices, fire their staffs, and cut down on constituency service activities” (Fiorina 1981b: 546).<sup>2</sup> We utilize direct measures of how constituents perceive their members, which provides a more appropriate test of the proposition that the representational activities members engage in affect the levels of political support they receive from their constituents. Using data from the National Election Studies (NES) along with additional information on how members choose to allocate their official resources, we demonstrate that the decisions of members to send franked mail or build robust district operations translates into favorable constituent impressions consistent with the choices members make about allocating their official resources. Home styles are not empty representational activities, but instead communicate important information to constituents, which is received in a manner by those constituents much as members would hope.

### **Building Relationships with Constituents**

Richard Fenno (1978) argues that constituencies in a member’s district are central to reelection. From these constituencies, members assemble support by allocating personal and staff resources, presenting their “self” to others, and explaining Washington activities. The allocation of personal and staff resources generally involves decisions about how frequently members should travel home, how members should deploy congressional staffers, and how much mail to send to constituents by utilizing the frank. Presentation of self captures the interactions that members have with their constituents in various settings. The final component of home style, explaining Washington activity, extends beyond communicating roll call votes to a broader discussion of how a

member's work benefits the district. Fenno terms these activities collectively as a member's "home style", and they are designed to build constituent trust.<sup>3</sup>

Fenno suggests that members can influence their electoral fate through their official actions. "Most incumbents," writes Glenn Parker, "want their constituents to see patterns in their home-style activities that reinforce the images they are constantly 'polishing' and promulgating" (1986a: 35). More specifically, members can develop a personal vote, which Cain et al. (1987: 9) describe "as a candidate's electoral support attributed to her personal qualities, qualifications, activities, and record." Members of Congress choose particular activities—visits to the district, highlighting legislative accomplishments, or bringing federal dollars to the district—in an attempt to "control the images that constituents have of *them*" (47, emphasis added). These efforts of members are rewarded, as the official activities of members increase the probability that constituents can recall/recognize the name of their incumbent member of Congress, report personal contacts with their member, give a positive evaluation of their member, and offer an evaluation of their member's district service (166). Others have also found evidence of that this personal vote brings electoral benefits (Alford and Brady 1993; Herrera and Yawn 1999).

The allocation of official resources is one component of home style and one tool members of Congress use to build a personal vote. Fenno claims that members who utilize their office resources successfully should enjoy long careers, but his empirical investigation does not uncover evidence of a clear relationship between trips home, staff expenditures, and electoral security.<sup>4</sup> Johannes (1983) argues this is not surprising: because of demand-side factors such as constituencies, tradition, and expectations, casework is idiosyncratic even if congressional newcomers take a more aggressive casework approach. More casework, more trips home, and more mailings does not affect how constituents vote (McAdams and Johannes 1988). Others, however, do find a clear relationship

between the use of official resources and constituent impressions as anticipated by Fenno (Yiannakis 1981; Cover and Brumberg 1982).

There are three reasons why the consequences of resource allocation strategies should be revisited. First, many studies have looked at the relationship between home styles and rather blunt measures of constituent perceptions or the personal vote—often operationalized as vote share. The result, unsurprisingly, is mixed evidence that the representational activities falling under the collective conceptual umbrella of home styles matter. Morris Fiorina (1981b) criticizes some of this early research, noting that “when complicated phenomena are analyzed simplistically, bizarre findings should come as no surprise” (546). Substituting the percentage of the vote that an incumbent receives instead of a more direct measure of constituent perception may explain why representational activities seemingly produce few electoral benefits. Fiorina stresses proper measurement in order to disentangle the existing complex relationships. If member activities are designed to produce certain perceptions, the appropriate dependent variable is the perceptions of constituents rather than incumbent vote share, which could be contaminated by external factors such as evaluations of the national party or national candidates. Theory requires going beyond measures of electoral security to those tapping directly constituent impressions of members.

Second, increasing ideological polarization and resurgent congressional parties since the 1970s and 1980s have altered the contemporary political environment. As members rely more on the party brand (Parker 2008), we might expect that home styles matter less in the current political environment. If a relationship between resource allocation and constituent impressions is found in such an environment, this is powerful evidence supporting the notion that the activities of members of Congress are important ways in which constituents learn about their members even as partisanship has become a stronger predictor in congressional elections (Bartels 2000).

Third, a series of rules changes in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress transformed the official resources available to members into a single Members Representational Allowance to be allocated however they wished.<sup>5</sup> Changing the rules forces members to make tradeoffs: dollars spent on franking cannot be spent on travel or staff. Members have more flexibility in how they chose to apply their official resources, which might affect their home styles and constituent impressions. In particular, this flexibility likely generates more consistent representational behavior across the three components of home style: the allocation of resources, presentations of self, and Washington work. Those wanting to highlight their access to constituents can easily travel home more often, while those wanting to develop legislative expertise can now spend more money on staff. While party brand names seem to obviate the need to cultivate a personal vote, the reforms of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress have made it easier to do just that with the allocation of official resources.

Disentangling the relationships between the activities of members and the perceptions of constituents is no easy task. First, measuring the exposure of individuals to incumbent activities with surveys is tricky. Aggregate measures of incumbent franking and bill sponsorship are readily available, as are measures of constituent impressions about members. The best measure of whether constituent impression is affected by an incumbent's office activities, however, is constituent recall of that activity—such as receiving a newsletter from the member or having attended a rally where the member spoke. These measures, unfortunately, are not readily available in surveys. Using aggregate measures of incumbent activities also assumes that their effect is constant across constituents. Such an assumption is unlikely (Fiorina 1981b).

Second, the possibility of reciprocal causation is problematic. As documented in the campaign finance literature, expectations about outcomes in the future can affect current behavior (e.g. Green and Krasno 1988). Incumbents who spend a lot of money early in a campaign do so anticipating a hard fought election, whereas those raising and spending comparatively little do so

exactly because they do not expect a particularly tough re-election challenge. The end result is incumbents who spent little money with large margins of victories and incumbents who spent lots with small margins, creating the impression that electoral support is inversely related to campaign expenditures. Add the possibility that members of Congress likely become captive of their representational habits and are unwilling to risk changing them (what worked before will work again), and the causal arrows seem intertwined hopelessly (Fenno 1978; Fiorina 1981b).

These issues are not insurmountable. If one can measure the amount of contact between incumbents and individual constituents, the problem of reverse causation is reduced.<sup>6</sup> Variation among voters in reporting the receipt of a member newsletter can then be more confidently attributed to the amount members spend on franking. We do not have a measure of whether constituents received newsletters or know about the bills members sponsor. We do have a measure of whether the constituent can articulate something very particular about their member: can the constituent cite a like or dislike about them. Given that the like and dislike responses are very specific statements, they can be associated quite easily with particular activities undertaken by members. Using an individual measure of incumbent knowledge avoids some of the problems associated with reciprocal causation, such as the possibility of inflated standard errors masking a true relationship. Using individual level measures of incumbent contact and knowledge from the Congressional Policy Study Survey (1978), Cain et al. (1987) did find a relationship between office expenditures and reported levels of contact with incumbents. By utilizing a similar approach, we minimize the problems associated with reciprocal causation. If a relationship emerges from our analysis which is statistically significant, we have strong reason to suspect that that relationship might even be substantially greater given the possibility of inflated standard errors.

### **The Dependent Variables**

To test whether voters perceive home styles members communicate, we make use of the likes and dislikes questions the NES employed in 1996, 1998, and 2000.<sup>7</sup> The NES asks respondents if there is anything they like or dislike about their incumbent congressman. In each case, individuals are allowed a maximum of ten responses (five likes and five dislikes). Totaling each respondent's likes about the incumbent and subtracting the number of dislikes can create an advantage score indicating how much a respondent likes or dislikes the incumbent. If a respondent answered don't know or negatively to the screening question inquiring whether there was anything they liked or disliked about their member of Congress, this was coded as a neutral (zero) response. If an individual only volunteered either one like or dislike and no other, the other four response opportunities were also coded neutrally at zero. This relatively untapped source of data provides valuable insights into how the activities of members of Congress are perceived.

Each response is placed into one of four discrete categories that serve as our home style dependent variables: constituent service, policy expert, "one of us", and miscellaneous. Responses that related to a representatives' ability to bring projects back to the district or to help individuals with their problems were coded as constituent service. If a respondent mentioned an issue stance, this is classified as policy expert. Finally, if the respondent focused on a member's personal characteristics, his connections to a particular group or to the district broadly conceived, this was coded as "one of us".<sup>8</sup> Anything not fitting into these three categories was lumped into miscellaneous.<sup>9</sup> This creates four measures of representational style ranging from positive five to negative five, with a positive score associated with the respondent having an overall positive impression of the incumbent in that representational area and a negative score a negative impression. In the analysis that follows, we restrict ourselves to three of these measures: policy expert, constituent service, and one of us.

Tables 1A through 1D provide descriptive information on our three home style measures. Are constituents able to form particular impressions of their members' home styles? A glance at Tables 1A-1C suggests a wide amount of variance in the types of impressions members form. Only 17 percent develop either a positive or negative impression of their member as a constituent servant, while nearly 43 percent make a comment about their member classified as "one of us". Another way to look at this is whether respondents report any like or dislike about their member on any of our home style measures. Viewed in this light, 60 percent of respondents in our NES sample offer at least one positive or negative comment on our three home style measures. While a sizeable minority do not have a clear perception of their member as either a constituent servant, policy expert, or "one of us", it is clear that a substantial portion of the public do. Furthermore, that image tends to be fairly distinct.<sup>10</sup> Nearly 60 percent of those who report at least one like or dislike about their representative do so on only one of the three representational dimensions. Given how few people can recall the name of their member of Congress when asked and even fewer can recall specific information about them (Jacobson 2008: 122-126), the fact that 60 percent can volunteer at least one like or dislike about their member on our home style measures is impressive.

**-- Tables 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D about here --**

### **Hypotheses**

While the fact that members adopt different home styles is not controversial, designing tests to uncover the effects of those home styles is more challenging. Fiorina (1981b) argued that previous election outcomes might influence how much mail members choose to send to their constituents or how many offices to open in the district. In an innovative bit of research, Romero (2006) demonstrates that the simultaneity concerns raised by Fiorina were important and once those effects were controlled, the use of official resources did have a positive effect on the probability that respondents would support the incumbent member of Congress.

In contrast to the direct effects approach, Cain et al. (1987) argues that the activities of members affect how constituents perceive them. Similarly, Jacobson (2008) suggests that rather than focusing on winning votes, the activities members of Congress engage in are designed to influence perceptions of politically active citizens in the district. The value of incumbency is less about using congressional perquisites to produce votes on Election Day, and more about utilizing their resources to appear invincible and keep potential challengers from entering the campaign. However, while Fenno (1973) notes that members pursue multiple goals while in office, Jacobson suggests that members may have to make trade-offs where spending time and resources shoring up support in the district might weaken the ability of legislators to influence public policy or achieve influence on Capitol Hill.

Starting with Fenno's argument that members develop home styles reflecting the needs and wants of their constituents, we develop testable hypotheses concerning the perceptions or impressions that constituents have of their member's home style. For example, Yiannakis (1981; 1982) demonstrated that the messages members choose to communicate to their districts was contingent on the nature of their districts. Moving the argument beyond franked mail, members have even more flexibility today in crafting their home styles because their decisions about trips home or how much money to spend on franked mail is part of a zero-sum game where a dollar spent on franked mail is a dollar less available for travel.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the home styles that members adopt are even more likely to be distinct and if constituents miss these patterns, the projections of home styles are simply empty representational exercises.

While constituent impressions serve as the dependent variable in our analysis, we hypothesize that the different activities members undertake influence the number of responses that fall into each category. Some members of Congress take a great deal of pride in their relationship

with their districts and see themselves as staunch defenders of their district in Washington, D.C. We develop two hypotheses for the constituency service impressions:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *Members who spend more on travel are more likely to be perceived as constituency servants.*

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *Members who spend more on franked mail are more likely to be perceived as constituency servants.*

While travel is nowhere near as difficult as it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it still imposes significant costs on legislators, especially those representing districts on the West Coast or hard to reach rural areas. Fenno (1978) notes that he found evidence of regional effects when studying how many trips members made home in 1973 and 1974 and there is little reason to expect that this will change. However, Lee and Oppenheimer (1999) argue that population has a significant effect on representation in the Senate and we might expect that House members whose districts are more rural spend more money on travel not only because it is more costly to reach parts of the district, but because the district's nature itself might require close, personal contact with constituents. In particular, junior legislators are usually seen as more vulnerable and they need to spend their first couple of terms expanding their support (Fenno 1978; Jacobson 2008).

In addition to travel, franking can have a positive effect on the number of constituency service mentions. Mayhew (1974) argued that franking enabled members to engage in advertising and credit claiming. The advantage of using franked mail is that it presents legislators in an overwhelmingly positive light devoid of any competing considerations (Zaller 1992; Bianco 2000).<sup>12</sup> Cover and Brumberg (1982) demonstrated that members could use franked mail to communicate effectively with constituents and improve name recognition while Yiannakis (1981; 1982) demonstrated that members could target their franked mail to the needs of their constituents. Members have tremendous flexibility in the messages they send in their franked mail pieces and some members use it to announce projects they have secured for the district while others use

franked mail to inform constituents of impending town hall meetings or let constituents know how the district office can help.

Our second set of hypotheses concerns the number of mentions of legislators as policy experts. As Fenno noted, members of Congress are interested in producing good public policy and some members of Congress are more interested in being known for their policy accomplishments rather than engaging in retail politics. We develop two hypotheses concerning the number of mentions as a policy expert:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *Members who spend more on franking are more likely to be perceived as policy experts.*

**H<sub>4</sub>:** *Members who spend more on district office expenditures are less likely to be perceived as policy experts.*

Franked mail can be used to send a variety of messages to constituents (Yiannakis 1981; 1982).

While some members may use franked mail for advertising, Mayhew also suggests that members can accrue positive benefits from engaging in position-taking, which means making pleasing public statements to relevant political actors. Recent research provides additional evidence that members can use franked mail as a means for communicating substantive policy positions to their constituents (Lipinski 2004; Middlemass and Grose 2007).

Achieving influence in the policy-making process is not something that happens instantly for most legislators. Hibbing (1993) notes that more senior legislators demonstrate greater levels of specialization and efficiency and this provides opportunities to remind constituents of substantive policy accomplishments. However, as Jacobson (2008) notes, there are trade-offs involved and there is a concern that pursuit of policy goals might result in members losing touch with their districts. Franked mail provides a relatively easy way to remind constituents about Washington work and members might be willing to devote more resources to franked mail in lieu of traveling home.

Besides traveling home, Fenno (1978) classified district staff as one of the key decisions members make when allocating resources. Working with a limited sample, Fenno does not uncover

any clear patterns in how members choose to allocate their staff resources, although staff allocation decisions appear complementary to the decision to travel home. The policy-making environment in Congress today is more complex and members are likely to need more staffers in Washington if they hope to demonstrate their relevance in the policy-making process. Wawro (2000) provides evidence that taking on the responsibility for introducing bills provides members with internal rewards and our expectation is that members who spend more money on their district operations are less likely to be regarded as policy experts.

Our final category of comments is whether constituents perceive their legislators as “one of us.” We develop the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>5</sub>:** *The allocation of resources is not related to constituent impressions of their representative as “one of us”.*

**H<sub>6</sub>:** *Members with district “roots” are more likely to be seen as “one of us” by constituents.*

The allocation of representational allowances should not affect whether members are viewed as “one of us” by the folks back home. Many members of Congress establish their representational bona fides by making connections between the district and their past: I grew up here or I played sports there (Fenno 1978: 58). Shafer and Johnston argue that the ability of Southern Democrats to resist the rising Republican tide rested on the ability of Democratic congressional candidates to “prime class” over race (n.d.: 8). Candidates more “rooted” in the area understood this better than candidates new to the South (ibid). Candidates who are immersed in the politics and habits of the district are more likely to evoke the sense from constituents that they are “us”, and these candidates are more likely to engage in a representational style drawing upon personal constituent connections (Fenno 2000). The perception of closeness to the district and its people is more likely a function of congressman’s biographical background than the representational activities in which they engage.

## **Data and Methodology**

We utilize the 1996, 1998, and 2000 NES surveys to test our hypotheses, and for each respondent, we add district- and member-level data. We collected data on member representational

allowances from the 104<sup>th</sup> through the 106<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1995-2001) and added this to the Cumulative NES file from 1996-2000. The National Taxpayers Union provided data from the 104<sup>th</sup> through the 106<sup>th</sup> Congresses for our use and we collected additional data from *The Statement of Disbursements of the House*.<sup>13</sup> Members use the MRA to pay for travel, franking, and other office expenditures. We have three key three independent variables: franking, travel dollars per mile to the district, and district office expenditures. For franking, we utilize the raw dollar amount spent by each member on congressional mailings. For travel, we divide the variable by the distance between the district's largest city and Washington, DC to control for the cost of travel and the willingness to go home (Fenno 1978: 38-9). All dollar amounts are converted into 2000 dollars to account for inflation.

The percentage of district staff is a common indicator of a member's attentiveness to constituency service (Fenno 1978; Schiff and Smith 1983; Bond 1985; Fiorina 1989). It is less clear that the reverse is true: more staff in Washington does not equal less attention to constituency service. Members of Congress employ caseworkers and policy-related specialists on their D.C. staffs, suggesting that the percentage of office staff assigned to Washington is not a clean measure of a policy home style. Utilizing *CQ's Congressional Staff Directories* to determine what percentage of each member's staff worked in the district, we multiply the dollars spent on office expenditures (minus the frank and travel) by the district staff percentage. This provides an approximation of the total office resources devoted by members to district work.

The measure of a member's ties to the district, termed "Local", ranges from zero to two, with members not born in the district and not attending college there coded zero. Members coded a one were either born in the district or attended college there, and members coded a two were born in the district and attended college in the district.<sup>14</sup>

Other explanatory variables are grouped conceptually below and operationalized as follows:

*Policy activity:* Legislative activities can generate positive benefits (see Box-Steffensmeier, Kimball, Meinke, and Tate 2003; Box-Steffensmeier and Grant 1999; but see Ragsdale and Cook 1987; Johannes and McAdams 1981). “Bills” is the total number of bills the member sponsored in each Congress according to the Library of Congress’ *Thomas* database. Members of Congress hope that increased bill sponsorship activity leads to additional positive policy expert comments from constituents.<sup>15</sup>

*District Geography:* How big the district is affects the propensity of member travel home and the closeness of representational style (Fenno 1978: 38-46; Lee and Oppenheimer 1999; Schiff and Smith 1983). “Size of District” is measured in square miles. We would expect that the larger the district, the more positive “one of us” and constituent service comments offered by constituents.

*Institutional Position:* John Hibbing finds that the involvement of members in legislative activities increases over time (1993: 80-1), but the relationship is not linear.<sup>16</sup> More senior members with institutional leadership positions should also attract more positive comments from constituents for their policy expertise.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, it is possible that more senior members might do less constituent service themselves, but their past attention to such concerns over time might have created a healthy “reservoir” of good will (Bennett and DiLorenzo 1982: 1157).<sup>18</sup> “Committee Chair” is coded one if the member is the chair of a committee. We include both the number of terms served (“Seniority”) and the squared value (“Seniority<sup>2</sup>”) to capture any non-linear relationship between seniority and constituent likes.

*Representative Characteristics:* There is evidence that more ideologically extreme members are more likely to take positions on national issues in franked mail (Yiannakis 1982) and to give special order speeches (Maltzman and Sigelman 1996); this should be related to more positive policy comments from constituents. Of course, if a constituent does not agree with these strong policy positions, they might report fewer positive and more negative comments on policy; however, we

control for this using a variable measuring partisan closeness of constituents to members (see below). Even those who disagree with a member's strong policy stances may recognize and applaud the member taking a clear stance on an issue, and this should be reflected in more positive policy comments. We do not hypothesize a specific relationship between this variable either "one of us" or constituent service comments. Members with NOMINATE scores one standard deviation above the party mean are coded as "Ideologically Extreme". Hard fought campaigns feature more negative advertising resulting in less positive impressions of incumbents (Goldstein and Rivlin n.d.: 27-8). "Previous Margin" is the vote percentage the incumbent received in the last election. "Member's Party" is coded one for Republicans, zero for Democrats to control for any party specific effects.

*Characteristics of Respondents:* Partisanship and ideology color perceptions, and some have argued that reporting contact with a member is related to how close the respondent is ideologically to the member (Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes 1960; McAdams and Johannes 1988: 417-8). Individuals sharing the incumbent's party and ideology will probably make more positive comments about their member's representational style, while those who are attentive to the news are more likely to speak positively about their member of Congress as well. Given that members of Congress receive most of their media coverage from local as opposed to national outlets, and as much of that local coverage is positive (see Arnold 2004), constituents paying attention to the news should have overall positive impressions of their member. "Shared Incumbent PID" is coded a one if the respondent shares the incumbent's party identification, and "Ideological Distance" is the absolute value of the difference between the respondent's placement of the incumbent on the seven-point ideology scale and an objective measure of the incumbent's ideology (NOMINATE) collapsed to a similar seven-point scale. "Media Use" is simply the sum of the number of days the respondent reported reading the paper and watching the national and local news. Finally, dummy variables for the 104<sup>th</sup> and the 105<sup>th</sup> Congresses are included to capture any Congress specific effects.

## Findings

As our dependent variables are continuous, we use standard OLS regression as our method of estimation with robust standard errors to correct for heteroscedasticity. Table 2 reports OLS regression coefficients for variables predicting whether respondents perceive their incumbent congressman as a constituent servant, policy expert, or as “one of us”. As anticipated, how members spend their representational allowances generally relates to positive home style comments made by constituents while controlling for individual and district level effects. We find strong support for all but one of our hypotheses.

Focusing on the first model in Table 2, the more members of Congress spend on travel, the more positive comments they receive as constituent servants. More franking is also associated with additional positive comments about constituent service. Franking neither generates positive or negative comments about policy expertise. Why is franking associated only with additional positive service comments but does not generate more positive policy comments? Perhaps constituent service advertising and local credit claiming represents new information to constituents, while a member’s stance on an issue is already well-established. Additional policy information is then less likely to cause constituents to “update” their priors about members either positively or negatively (Fiorina 1981a; Popkin 1994).

**--Table 2 about here --**

More franking may not be associated with more policy likes, but other member activities are. Members who allocate more resources to district staff and offices are less likely to be perceived positively as policy experts, as indicated by the negative sign on the district office expenditure coefficient (see model 3, Table 2). A higher percentage of office staff allocated to the district is a sign that the member is more interested in constituency service than in developing policy expertise. While there appears to be no benefit in terms of the number of positive service comments generated

by such a shift in resources (see model 1 in Table 2), it does increase the number of negative policy comments. A D.C. staff variable, included in other models not reported here, is significantly and positively related to like comments on policy.

Our final set of hypotheses claims that a member's personal connections to the district will be associated with additional positive "one of us" comments from constituents, while members will be unable to alter these perceptions based upon their allocation of office resources. If representation and home styles are about building trust, "one of us" suggests closeness based more on who the member is rather than what they do. We uncover no relationship between a member's franking, district office expenditures, and the generation of either positive or negative "one of us" comments from constituents (see model 2, Table 2), as we expect. More travel to the district is associated with additional like "one of us" comments from constituents, but this finding should not be overly emphasized given the p-value of  $\leq 0.10$ . It is clear, however, that personal connections to the district do not yield the anticipated "one of us" advantage. Only 23 percent of incumbents in our data have no local connection to the district, so there is little variance to explain. Another explanation is that communicating a "one of us" home style to constituents requires members to make explicit connections highlighting their biographical relationship to the district. Fenno reports one congressman's talk as the essence of establishing empathy and "one of us" connections:

"I managed to grow up thirty-five miles down highway 80 in Montrose. So I know this county. My father worked for twenty-six years in this county for U.S. Steel as a member of Local 121, United Steelworkers. So I know something about you and your problems"  
(Fenno 1978: 60).

"One us" is also about understanding district needs and concerns of various groups. The "old pro" highlighted by Fenno, for example, was embedded deeply in the district: "[H]e had been born, raised, educated, and had earned his livelihood as a lawyer in that place" (2007: 110). As a

lawyer, he did not reflect the predominantly agricultural nature of the district. Nevertheless, the old pro indicated that “If I leave Agriculture, I’ll leave *my* people behind” (114, emphasis added). The old pro is not a farmer, but sees them as his people. This suggests that biographical connections alone do not establish a “one of us” relationship.<sup>19</sup>

Our control variables generally operate as anticipated.<sup>20</sup> Members who sponsor more bills generate more policy expert likes from constituents. Media consumption is associated with more positive responses from constituents across all three representational categories. Greater margins of victory are also generally associated with more positive comments about home styles, and senior members receive more positive service related comments, although staying in Congress too long can yield some negative comments as well (as indicated by the negative sign on the seniority squared variable). Those representing geographically larger districts—which exhibit lower population densities—benefit from additional constituent service like comments. Finally, the rewards of committee chairmanships are not readily apparent to constituents. Constituents are more likely to perceive a member’s constituent service negatively if they are a committee chair, but are no more likely to consider their member positively as a policy expert given their committee chairmanship.

The substantive effects of member spending on the frank, travel, and district staff can be calculated, but the interpretation of those effects is perhaps more meaningful if understood in relationship to the different resource strategies members might choose to pursue. Table 3 presents a variety of office allocation scenarios a member of Congress might chose to adopt. This approach allows us to evaluate the best strategies to maximize positive constituent impressions.

**-- Table 3 about here --**

Representational allowances generate only modest changes in the number of specific home style likes that individual respondents have about incumbents. A shift of spending on the frank from one standard deviation below the mean to one standard deviation above the mean (an additional

\$137,000 in mail expenditures) generates an additional .09 positive constituent service comments (see Table 3A). The same shift in travel expenditures produces nearly the same number of additional positive comments (.08). Large changes in impressions on constituent service are only possible if members drastically alter their spending patterns: maximizing spending on the frank and travel (and, by implication, spending virtually nothing on other office expenditures) yields .5 constituent service likes. Although it appears that the increase is fuelled by travel (.29 constituent service likes when moving from the minimum amount spent on travel to the maximum compared to .20 likes when moving from the minimum and maximum spent on franking), it is difficult to conclude this. There is simply more variance between the minimum amounts spent on travel when compared to the amounts spent on the frank. Given that the change is roughly the same when both franking and travel varies from one standard deviation below to the mean to one standard deviation above the mean suggests that the effect on constituent impressions of dollars spent on franking and travel is similar.

If one compares the mean level of resources devoted to the development of a constituent service reputation to the mean level of resources devoted to the development of a policy expert home style, it appears that constituent work more readily yields positive constituent impressions (see lower half of Table 3). Even substantial changes in legislative behavior by members of Congress generate only small shifts in the probability that constituents will make additional like comments on policy. Take bill sponsorship. As a member moves from sponsoring four bills (one standard deviation below the mean) to sponsoring 25 bills (one standard deviation above the mean), the number of additional positive like comments on policy is only .02.

Spending money on district staff is a perilous strategy because it does not yield additional constituent service comments while detracting from the perception that a member is a policy expert. Shifting more staff home from Washington (moving from one standard deviation below the mean

to one standard deviation above) decreases the number of like comments made by constituents by .07. In other words, while a member may want to develop a constituent service reputation, it appears that does not mean sending the staff back to the district is the way to achieve that goal. Rather, the member should travel home often and communicate with constituents through the frank instead. Nevertheless, neither allocation of staffing resources nor additional legislative involvement produces dramatic changes in constituent perceptions. Recall, however, that constituents do not often report a like about their member, and when they do, they often report only one in any given home style category. Seen in this light, the office allocation decisions of members can have an important effect on constituent impressions at the margins and among those are the most important to influence: those who pay attention to politics and, therefore, more likely to act upon their impressions by voting on Election Day.

### **Discussion**

Fenno argues that home styles and the allocation of member resources matter: they condition the relationship between incumbent members of Congress and their constituents. Although scholars have certainly demonstrated that members of Congress engage in credit claiming, position taking, and advertising and communicate these activities to constituents, it has been less clear that the sum of these activities generates a personal vote. Focusing on constituent impressions rather than electoral margins, however, yields possible indirect effects. Respondents do perceive the distinctive home styles of their members, and their perceptions in part reflect member allocation decisions and their work in Washington. The activities of incumbents are not for naught, but scholars have been looking for their effects in all the wrong places (Parker 2008). The problem stems from the measures used to assess incumbent activities and the choice of dependent variables, which typically involves examining election outcomes (e.g. Ragsdale and Cook 1987; McAdams and Johannes 1988; Johannes and McAdams 1981).<sup>21</sup> Voting decisions are a function of partisan and demographic factors, so incumbent activities unsurprisingly do not affect election outcomes directly.

Bringing pork barrel projects to the district, voicing the concerns of interested parties in the district, and helping constituents navigate the federal bureaucracy helps shape voter perceptions of the incumbent. Voters who receive help from their legislators tend to hold more positive views towards the incumbent, which then translates into an effect at the ballot box (Hinckley 1980; Jacobson 2008). Glenn Parker makes the point directly: “The performance ratings they [members of Congress] receive from constituents are the best predictors of electoral support and a key component in their electoral safety” (1980b, cited in Parker 1986: 118).

Our most important finding is that members can develop a personal vote through their activities. We provide quantitative evidence that, across a series of congresses and election cycles, constituents perceive distinctive home styles and the work that members of Congress do generates generally positive impressions among constituents. Our results suggest that a constituent service reputation generates the most positive notice among citizens, which might explain why senior members are reluctant to reduce their constituent work over the course of their careers (Hibbing 1993: 78-79). Policy expertise appears to be less valuable to, or noticed by, constituents. Hibbing also found that more senior members are more likely to increase their legislative activity (1993: 80-83) and our results provide some insight as to why: more junior members, seeking to establish the foundation of representational trust, need to focus on activities providing the most bang for their office resource buck. Those activities appear to be centered on travel to the district and use of the frank. More senior members, however, might maintain their travel and franking to protect their reputations while they engage in less “valuable” impression-forming, but perhaps more professionally fulfilling, legislative activities. Finally, our findings also recommend that members carefully consider the tradeoffs between travel, franking, and spending more on district office staff. While many representational activities generate positive benefits, more staff in the district does not and comes at a cost: negative comments on policy expertise. It is far better for members of

Congress to employ their representational dollars on travel to the district or the frank if they wish to generate positive constituent notice.

The second finding is that representational allowances do not create an overwhelming advantage for incumbents.<sup>22</sup> Lots of money must be spent to create even the slightest voter impression. It is not surprising that some scholars have not found a significant relationship between vote margins and spending on franking, travel, and office activities. The amounts that the average member spends likely affect election outcomes only marginally. But, as Fiorina (1989) notes, that is precisely the point. The indirect effects of office expenditures, by generating media attention and coverage, provide information to voters unavailable to challengers. This alone might explain the dramatic advantage incumbents have in name recognition over all but a very select few challengers they might face during a campaign. This advantage should not be overlooked. Redistributing one's time and office resources can provide an immediate way to re-establish the constituent connection weakened during a tough reelection battle and perhaps fend off future challenges.

Third, the activities of members generate positive as opposed to negative impressions among constituents. The allocation of resources helps members build their home styles with constituents—spending on the frank, travel, and the office do not decrease the number of respondent likes about a member of Congress. They also do not increase the number of dislikes about a member. The only exception to this is the percentage of office expenditures devoted to district staff. The negative impressions in our model, however, are generally a function of a respondent's ideological and partisan position relative to the incumbent. The ideologically distant who do not share the party of the incumbent perceive the incumbent less positively on each measure of home style. While the coefficient values on these variables suggest the production of far more negative and positive comments about members than a member's office resource allocation strategy, members cannot alter these fundamental constituent characteristics. This is not to say that members cannot create

negative constituent impressions. It does say that attentiveness and policy expertise effectively communicated through a careful allocation of official resources can yield rewards. Yet these positive impressions can only go so far to overcome being out of touch, out of step, or ideologically distant from the district. Office expenditures, travel, and franking alone will not save an at risk incumbent from defeat.

There are two potential problems with our analysis. The NES is designed to produce a representative national sample, not a representative sample of congressional districts. This creates a problem concerning the generalizability of our results if the NES sample is biased. For example, if more respondents from geographically larger or more rural districts are over-sampled, we might find a stronger relationship between the allocation of office resources and constituent impressions than we might find with a sample drawn to reflect congressional districts. A comparison of the NES sample to all congressional districts indicates that it is reasonably representative. The mean percentage of urban population among all congressional districts is 63 percent ( $\sigma = .877$ ), while in the NES it is 60 percent ( $\sigma = .443$ ). Smaller (and hence more densely populated) congressional districts are slightly overrepresented: the average square mileage is 6,348 ( $\sigma = 142$ ) in the NES sample but 8,035 ( $\sigma = 845$ ) among all congressional districts. There are no respondents from the nation's largest congressional districts (such as Alaska and Montana, states with only one congressional district), which accounts for the lower variance in the NES sample. The mean seniority in the NES sample is nearly the same as the House itself: 3.6 terms of service versus 3.8. This indicates a slight overrepresentation in the NES sample of more rural and geographically smaller congressional districts. Given that the conventional wisdom suggests rural legislators representing larger districts are more apt to develop close constituent connections and benefit from office resources, we do not believe our findings are an artifact of the NES sample.

A second problem with our analysis is the large number of zero responses. First, one might wonder if the range in like/dislikes responses is at all meaningful: perhaps the most important difference is simply whether a respondent can communicate a like or dislike about the member at all. Second, all zero responses in our data are not equal. Some respondents truly have no opinion about their member: when asked if they have a like or dislike about their member, they say no. Other zero responses reflect respondents who communicate both a like and a dislike on the same home style measure. In the first case, the respondent may not be informed enough about their member to elicit any likes or dislikes. In the second case, the respondent is likely informed, but feels truly indifferent about their member of Congress. In either case, the process by which the zero is generated differs, and therefore, it is unclear these two zero responses should be scaled the same way on our ordinal measures of home styles. This might affect the validity of our hypothesis tests.

We tackle these problems a number of ways. First, we created a dichotomous dependant variable for each measure of home style. A value of one represents respondents in the NES survey who report no likes or dislikes about a member on that measure and a zero represents respondents who report at least one like or dislike. This construction allows us to measure the differences between those truly have no opinion about their member of Congress, and those who do (including those who may report one like and one dislike on a particular home style measure). We ran a logit analysis using this dichotomous variable and, as we anticipate, the more a member spends, the less likely will constituents report no opinion about their member. In addition, we captured the predicted values from this analysis and then controlled for them in our full OLS likes/dislikes models. Finally, we added the no opinion variable as an independent variable in our models to control for the differences between true no opinion respondents and those who have a neutral opinion (one like/one dislike on a particular home style dimension). In all three instances, the resource allocation decisions by members continued to effect constituent impressions as we hypothesized. This suggests

that our results are indeed robust and not merely the result of how our dependent variables are constructed.

Second, we employ a zero-inflated poisson to reflect the different processes which generate a zero response in these data. A zero response may mean that an individual has no likes because they are politically ill-informed or has no particular like or dislike about the member. The assumptions that all respondents are at “risk” of producing no likes/dislikes and that all respondents might produce one or more likes/dislikes is unrealistic. The zero inflated poisson allows nonresponses “to be determined by the characteristics of the individual” (Long 1997: 243). This generates two computational models: one predicting membership in a group where the outcome must be zero, and a second group where the outcome might be zero or anything between zero and five likes/dislikes. The first model (“the inflation model”) is generated by a binary logit, and the coefficients are interpreted as the likelihood that the individual is in the “must” zero group. The second model is generated by a poisson distribution, and the coefficients are interpreted as predicting the number of like or dislike comments generated by the respondent.

The inflation model requires parameters predicting an individual’s likelihood of existing in the “must” non-response category. We chose various combinations of predictors, including media use, those who can correctly identify the congressional candidates running for election, whether the respondent is a minority or not, the age of the respondent, the respondent’s length of residence in the community, educational attainment, strength of party identification, and whether the respondent shares the incumbent’s party identification. The logic, of course, is those who are more rooted in their communities, older, educated, more politically engaged, and more partisan are less likely to generate a zero response. Using these variables in a variety of combinations, we ran a number of zero-inflated models with our three home style dependent variables. Unfortunately, the zero-inflated

poisson construction allows us to utilize only the number of like or dislike responses (given that the poisson is a count model). We ran models on like and dislike responses separately.

The results largely confirm our findings, and again point to their robustness.<sup>23</sup> The home style advantage variables in the zero-inflated poisson models exhibit the same patterns between resource allocation and constituent impressions: franking and travel are associated with positive constituent service impressions, spending less on the district office generates a net negative view of policy expertise, and resource allocations does not affect whether a member of Congress is viewed as “one of us”. In the same vein, it is difficult for members of Congress to spend themselves out of favor. Franking and travel do not generate additional “one of us” or constituency service dislikes, and expenditures on district staff does not generate negative impressions of members on constituency service or policy expertise. The only relationships among the resource allocation variables that rise to a substantial level of significance concern policy expertise. Franking only generates additional dislike comments concerning policy expertise in some of the models, while franking had no statistical effect on the generation of positive comments. The negative relationship between franking and policy expertise is not unusual: taking a stance, which members frequently do in newsletters (see Yiannakis 1982), is bound to excite some and upset others. Given that the effect of resource allocation, when there is a statistical relationship, almost always generates a positive outcome, it is hard to conclude from these final analyses that franking, travel, and office expenditures are anything but incumbent tools to build closer, and stronger, relationships with constituents. Office perquisites appear to make a good impression among the folks back home.

## **Conclusion**

In closing, it is important to stress a significant non-finding: the inability of members to use their allowances to become “one of us” in the eyes of constituents. To be seen as “one of us” by constituents is a difficult feat—far more difficult than establishing a reputation as a fine constituent

servant or policy expert. It represents the deepest type of trust voters can give their member of Congress. In examining the durability of David Pryor and Claiborne Pell's Senate careers, Fenno was struck by the differences in their styles: Pryor as the "gregarious, instinctive, emotional politician [and] Pell [the] awkward, bookish, cerebral one" (1996: 324). Although Pell sounds like the policy wonk and Pryor the constituent servant, they shared three characteristics that belie their different representational styles: authenticity, consistency, and good character (ibid., 324-5). These characteristics appear to be at the heart of the "one of us" home style, and according to Fenno, might be a reason for their political longevity. These qualities cannot be bought with office expenditures, travel, or franking, but can only be established by repeated negotiation between constituents and members (326). Although our research demonstrates that office resources are an important tool of incumbents which can provide a personal vote advantage over prospective challengers in the short term, believability, honesty, and stability are the keystone to a long-lasting congressional career. And no amount of franking, travel, and office expenditures can buy these.

**Table 1: Constituent Impressions of their House Members**

<b>A. Member as Constituent Service</b>		
Relative Likes/Dislikes	Cases (N)	Percentage of Total
-2	1	0%
-1	22	1%
0	1855	83%
1	288	13%
2	55	2%
3	1	0%
4	1	0%
TOTAL	2223	100%

  

<b>B. Member as Policy Expert</b>		
Relative Likes/Dislikes	Cases (N)	Percentage of Total
-4	2	0%
-3	11	0%
-2	37	2%
-1	133	6%
0	1613	73%
1	316	14%
2	87	4%
3	20	1%
4	2	0%
5	2	0%
TOTAL	2223	100%

  

<b>C. Member as “One of Us”</b>		
Relative Likes/Dislikes	Cases (N)	Percentage of Total
-4	6	0%
-3	6	0%
-2	40	2%
-1	146	7%
0	1267	57%
1	436	20%
2	212	10%
3	79	4%
4	20	1%
5	11	0%
TOTAL	2223	100%

  

<b>D. Total Impressions</b>		
	Cases (N)	Percentage
Respondents with no like or dislike comments on any dimension	899	40%
Respondents with at least one like or dislike comment on any dimension	1324	60%
TOTAL	2223	100%
Respondents with like/dislike on only one dimension	784	59%
Respondents with like/dislike on two dimensions	470	35%
Respondents with like/dislike on all three dimensions	70	5%
TOTAL	1324	99%

**Table 1:** Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

**Table 2: The Allocation of Resources and Home Style Impressions**

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Constituent Service</b>	<b>“One of Us”</b>	<b>Policy Expert</b>
<b>Predicting Number of</b>	Relative Likes/Dislikes	Relative Likes/Dislikes	Relative Likes/Dislikes
<b>Travel</b>	.0006***	.0005*	.0000
<b>(Dollars per mile to district)</b>	(.0001)	(.0003)	(.0006)
<b>Frank</b>	.0632***	.0063	.0058
<b>(100,000)</b>	(.0161)	(.0373)	(.0244)
<b>District Office Expenditures</b>	.0040	-.0030	-.0198**
<b>(100,000)</b>	(.0055)	(.0134)	(.0097)
<b>Member’s Party</b>	-.0050	-.0854*	.0972***
	(.0213)	(.0495)	(.0348)
<b>Seniority</b>	.0392***	.0186	.0129
	(.0074)	(.0211)	(.0109)
<b>Seniority<sup>2</sup></b>	-.0018***	-.0014	-.0006
	(.0004)	(.0016)	(.0006)
<b>Committee Chair</b>	-.1020**	.0432	-.1209
	(.0514)	(.1282)	(.0929)
<b>Local</b>	.0074	.0041	.0018
	(.0127)	(.0293)	(.0206)
<b>Ideologically Extreme</b>	-.0188	-.0965***	.1004**
	(.0074)	(.0188)	(.0481)
<b>Bills</b>	-.0005	.0027	.0047***
	(.0010)	(.0022)	(.0016)
<b>Previous Margin</b>	.0004	.0019**	.0000
	(.0004)	(.0010)	(.0006)
<b>Size of District</b>	.2159**	.4282	.0074
<b>(100,000 Square Miles)</b>	(.0895)	(.2959)	(.1476)
<b>Media Use Index</b>	.0098***	.0300***	.0090**
	(.0022)	(.0051)	(.0004)
<b>Share Incumbent PID?</b>	.0238	.3605***	.2111***
	(.0216)	(.0495)	(.0307)
<b>Ideological Distance</b>	-.0188**	-.0965***	-.1192***
	(.0074)	(.0188)	(.0130)
<b>104<sup>th</sup> Dummy</b>	.0511**	-.0881	-.0653*
	(.0239)	(.0612)	(.0374)
<b>105<sup>th</sup> Dummy</b>	.0277	.0543	-.0226
	(.0241)	(.0616)	(.0405)
<b>Constant</b>	-.2036***	-.0287	.1261
	(.0635)	(.1507)	(.1147)
	N=2223	N=2233	N=2223
	R <sup>2</sup> =.05	R <sup>2</sup> =.08	R <sup>2</sup> =.11
	F=5.92***	F=11.73***	F=11.41***

**Table 2:** \*p < 0.10; \*\*p < 0.05; \*\*\* p < .01, two-tailed. Estimates are OLS regression coefficients. Robust standard errors are in parentheses beneath the parameter estimates. Franking and District Office Expenditures are expressed in hundreds of thousands of dollars, travel in dollars per mile to the district.

Table 3: Effects of Member Activity on Constituent Service and Policy Expert Comments

<i>A. Constituent Service Comments</i>		
Franking		Additional Constituent Service Like Comments
Minimum (\$5,700)		.0036
1 SD below Mean (\$48,500)		.0307
Mean (\$117,00)		.0739
1 SD above Mean (\$185,500)		.1172
Maximum (\$329,000)		.2079
		<b>Difference (Min to Max): .2043</b>
Travel (per mile)		
Minimum (\$1.57)		.0009
1 SD below Mean (\$14.10)		.0085
Mean (\$83.34)		.0500
1 SD above Mean (\$152.58)		.0915
Maximum (\$487.30)		.2924
		<b>Difference (Min to Max): .292</b>
Franking	Travel (per mile)	
Minimum	Minimum	.004
Mean	Mean	.124
Maximum	Maximum	.500
		<b>Difference (Min to Max): .496</b>
<i>B. Policy Expert Comments</i>		
Bills		Additional Policy Expert Comments
Minimum (0)		0
1 SD below Mean (5)		.0235
Mean (7)		.0329
1 SD above Mean (9)		.0423
Maximum (13)		.0611
		<b>Difference (Min to Max): .061</b>
District Expenditures		
Minimum (0)		0
1 SD below Mean(\$557,300)		-.1104
Mean (\$737,000)		-.1459
1 SD above Mean (\$916,700)		-.1815
Maximum (\$1,285,000)		-.2544
		<b>Difference (Min to Max): -.254</b>
Bills	District Expenditures	
Minimum	Maximum	-.2544
Mean	Mean	-.1130
Maximum	Minimum	.0611
		<b>Difference (Min to Max): .133</b>

**Table 3:** Franking and Travel were set at the values indicated in the table. All other variables set at their means, except for Local set at 1 and Committee Chair, Member's Party, Share Incumbent PID, and the congressional dummy variables all set at 0.

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## Appendix

### Home Style Coding Scheme for NES Likes/Dislikes Candidate Summary Codes

We report here how we apportioned the likes/dislikes into our four home style variables. The NES provides a description of each response type in the appendix to the NES cumulative file:

[ftp://ftp.electionstudies.org/ftp/nes/studypages/cdf/anes\\_cdf\\_app.txt](ftp://ftp.electionstudies.org/ftp/nes/studypages/cdf/anes_cdf_app.txt) . We provide a few

examples of our home style categories to give the reader a feel for how we coded each of them.

**“Policy Expert”**: 203, 211-13, 217-21, 297, 413, 414, 601-02, 605-09, 622, 626, 697, 805, 902-33, 942-53, 959-69, 972-74, 977-97, 1001-09, 1013-33, 1038-49, 1053-61, 1104-99, 1300, 1302-04.

#### **Some examples of “Policy Expert”:**

Understands the nation's/district's problems; well-informed; studies up on issues (413);

Experienced (211); Dependable/Trustworthy/Reliable; a man you can trust with the

responsibilities of government ("trust" in the capability sense, rather than the honesty sense)

(213); His record in public service; voting record in Congress (217).

**“One of us”**: 201, 215-16, 222, 302-20, 323, 334-35, 401-12, 415-29, 431-57, 459-66, 495-8, 500-01, 603-04, 701, 707, 954-55, 970-71, 975-76, 1011-12, 1201-36, 1239-48, 1297, 1300.

#### **Some examples of “One of us”:**

Strong/decisive/self-confident/aggressive; will end all this Indecision (303); Inspiring; a man

you can follow; "a leader"; charisma (305); not a politician, not in politics, above politics, a

bad politician (314).

**“Constituent Service”**: 321-22, 325-32, 621.

#### **Some examples of “Constituent Service”:**

Response to/handling of domestic crisis or natural disaster--riot, hurricane, tornado,

earthquake, flood, etc (621); Helps people in the district on a personal level; has helped R

personally with a problem (specific mention); tries to do things for the people (321); Doesn't

help people in the district on a personal level; was not helpful to R with a personal problem

(specific mention)(322); Keeps people well informed about governmental matters; communicates with constituents; any mention of R receiving newsletters or communications from him/her; explains matters well so people can understand (325).

**“Miscellaneous”:** 223-225, 397, 502- 503, 504-21, 531-36, 541-44, 551-56, 597, 610-20, 623, 625, 627, 702-06, 708-11, 718- 32, 734-35, 796-97, 801-04, 806-24, 827-38, 841-43, 845-49, 897, 900-01, 934-42, 956-58, 1010, 1035-37, 1050-52, 1101-03.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We are grateful to Marshall Garland and Laura Giardina for their help in collecting data and to Peter Sepp at the National Taxpayers Union, Scott Adler, Gary Jacobson, and John Wilkerson for generously providing data. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Midwest Political Science Association’s 2007 Annual Meeting. Christian Grose provided extensive comments, and we thank our fellow panelists for additional suggestions. Members of the Faculty Research Colloquium at Texas Tech University and the Project in American Democracy at the University of Notre Dame raised a number of good questions. The authors are solely responsible for the analysis presented, and any errors which might remain.

<sup>2</sup> The representational routines of presentation of self and travelling home are important because “it is the belief of House members that constituents want their congressman to be accessible to them” (Fenno 1978: 131).

<sup>3</sup> Whether members establish a representational style reflecting the district or whether the district favors a style because their member portrays it demonstrates representation’s recursive nature. Endogeneity likely becomes more of an issue with well-established incumbents. Restricting the analysis to freshmen avoids these problems, and so doing does not change our results.

<sup>4</sup> Overby’s (1993) piece demonstrates the perils of not effectively using official office resources.

<sup>5</sup> The Member's Congressional Handbook details how members may utilize their representational allowance. Details can be found on the website for the Committee on House Administration at <http://cha.house.gov>. See Young 2005 for an explanation of the allocation of office resources.

<sup>6</sup> But not eliminated. See Fiorina (1981b) and Johannes and McAdams (1981) for a discussion.

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, the NES dropped the likes/dislikes question after the 2000 NES.

<sup>8</sup> "One of us" was difficult to classify. Fenno's discussion of Senator Mark Andrews served as a guide: "In all of his speeches, Andrews wove a web of community feeling between himself and his audience. They were not partisan bonds. All of it seemed perfectly natural, a matter of consolidating longstanding relationships rather than reaching out to establish new ones . . . . Namely, this kind of relationship—the 'I am one of you, I am working for you'; 'He is "one of us", he is working for us' relationship is one of special significance in North Dakota." After coding "one of us", it is clear there are three distinct conceptual components: personality, group connections, and district connectiveness. Separating these three components into unique measures yields the same results.

<sup>9</sup> The detailed classification scheme is reported in the Appendix.

<sup>10</sup> The rank order correlations between policy expert, constituent servant, and "one of us" measures are significant, but weak. There is a modest tendency for respondents who closely identify with their representatives as "one of us" to see them as constituent servants or policy experts (correlations of .23 and .22 respectively), while the correlation between constituent service and policy expertise is only .11. It appears that respondents perceive their members as projecting one particular home style.

<sup>11</sup> Campaign ads provide another way for incumbents to do this. We do not have a comparable campaign measure of Fenno's representational styles, but we suspect that the styles communicated by particular office allocations are reflected in the messages sent by members in their television ads. Using Wisconsin Advertising Project data, we find a significant correlation (.21) between spending on travel and ads focusing on personal qualities for those cases for which we had non-missing data.

Other correlations between spending and ad type were weak. Running the analyses with campaign spending yields the same results.

<sup>12</sup> See Arnold (2004) for an alternative perspective.

<sup>13</sup> Detailed studies on office expenditures are available at the National Taxpayers Union website.

<sup>14</sup> Johnston and Shafer (2006) and Shafer and Johnston (n.d.) find that “local” Southern Democratic candidates survived the Republican tide sweeping the South post-World War II. We employ their cosmopolitan-local concept, using biographical data from *The Almanac of American Politics*.

<sup>15</sup> The number of bills sponsored might be too blunt. We downloaded data for the 104<sup>th</sup> and the 105<sup>th</sup> Congresses from the Bills Project database at <http://congressionalbills.org>. Adler and Lipinski measure whether a bill is referred to a committee upon which the sponsor resides and whether the bill is commemorative. Of members sponsoring bills, the median value of sponsoring commemorative legislation was zero. The correlation between total bill sponsorship and whether a bill was sent to a committee on which the member serves (suggesting that the bill subject is something on which the sponsor could be considered an expert) is .87.

<sup>16</sup> But see Parker (1986b) and Parker and Parker (1985).

<sup>17</sup> Fenno finds no relationship between seniority and the amount of district staff (1978: 43, table 2.7).

<sup>18</sup> They argue that “older incumbents have already invested in the production of ‘political information’” so it is less necessary to continue this focus later in their careers (1157). Alternatively, constituents have prior knowledge of senior incumbent constituent service activities and see no need to update their “priors” in that area; hence, long serving incumbents are free to allocate their efforts and resources to the policy production process.

<sup>19</sup> We do not have a comparable measure of “one of us” activity. Biography is a poor measure of the effort members do or do not make to highlight their personal connections to their district.

<sup>20</sup> To further demonstrate the robustness of our results, we ran our model with the miscellaneous home style measures as the dependent variable. There was no relationship between the number of positive miscellaneous comments and the amounts spent on franking, travel, or office expenditures.

<sup>21</sup> McAdams and Johannes defend the use of electoral outcomes dependent variables (1988: 417-19).

<sup>22</sup> Perhaps there is a cumulative effect of office resources on impressions.

<sup>23</sup> Full results available from the authors.

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