

# The Tea Party in Congress: Ideology and Compromise

Daniel Rosenblum

**Abstract:** This paper investigates the common portrayal of Tea Party-affiliated members of Congress as uncompromising ideologues. It brings to bear qualitative and quantitative techniques on six different case studies of Congressional votes in addition to broader statistical analysis. Results show that Tea Party Caucus membership is often strongly associated with uncompromising, counter-establishment Congressional voting behavior. However, endorsement by a national Tea Party organization tends not have this same effect. As a group, the “Tea Party freshmen” mostly blend with the rest of the Republican Party—except for their votes on the debt-ceiling controversy. This evidence suggests a more complex nexus between the Tea Party movement and Congress than originally hypothesized.

An honors thesis for the Department of Political Science, Tufts University, 2012

---

## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>The Tea Party, and Why It Might Matter .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1	Rise of the movement .....	3
1.2	Towards studying the Tea Party.....	5
<b>2</b>	<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	Electoral impact of the Tea Party in the 2010 midterms .....	6
2.2	Theories of voting behavior.....	8
2.3	The district angle .....	9
2.4	Extant literature on the Tea Party in Congress.....	9
<b>III.</b>	<b>Measures and Methods .....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1	Methodology Overview .....	10
3.2	Who is a Tea Partier? .....	12
3.3	Measuring District Tea Party Activism .....	15
3.4	Measuring Ideology .....	16
3.5	Measuring District Conservatism.....	18
3.6	Relating Ideology and District .....	18
<b>4</b>	<b>Overall Analytics.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>The Debt Ceiling .....</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1	Background .....	27
5.2	Analysis.....	30
5.3	The aftermath .....	34
<b>6</b>	<b>Stopgap and Budget Votes.....</b>	<b>36</b>
6.1	Stopgap Background.....	36
6.2	Final 2011 budget background .....	38
6.3	Analysis.....	39
<b>7</b>	<b>Budgeting Scuffles, Round Two .....</b>	<b>43</b>
7.1	The “Disaster” Spending Bill Background .....	43
7.2	The “Disaster” Spending Bill Analysis.....	44
7.3	An interlude: October Continuing Resolution.....	46
<b>8</b>	<b>Payroll Tax Cut Extension.....</b>	<b>46</b>
8.1	Background .....	46
8.2	Analysis.....	49
<b>11</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>52</b>
	<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>56</b>
	<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>64</b>
A.	Remaining Regression Tables and Descriptive Statistics .....	64
B.	Interview Procedure & Questions.....	66

---

# 1 The Tea Party, and Why It Might Matter

## 1.1 Rise of the movement

On February 19, 2009, CNBC's Rick Santelli delivered what has been called the "rant of the year," or "the rant heard 'round the world."

"This is America! How many of you people want to pay for your neighbor's mortgage that has an extra bathroom and can't pay their bills? Raise their hand," he yelled, followed by the supportive boos of the Chicago traders around him. "We're thinking of having a Chicago Tea Party in July. All you capitalists that want to show up to Lake Michigan, I'm gonna start organizing."

Whether or not Santelli's rant actually sparked the Tea Party movement remains unclear. While it almost certainly provides the origin of the movement's name, it seemed to have given voice to preexisting anti-Obama sentiment—phrased with the confidence and frustration that foreshadowed the Tea Party's tone. Some members cite the rant as pivotal to their involvement, including some of the Tea Party Patriot coordinators I interviewed. One described the rant as "...pouring gasoline on a fire. It sort of gave everybody the idea that they could and should do something to save the country, so it just exploded from his presentation that day on television." Other coordinators share the same experience, like one Tea Party Patriots national coordinator: "Santelli had this rant that people should have an old fashioned Boston tea party. So you know I was one of those silly people who said, 'Oh yeah I can do this in San Diego, no problem.' ...I just knew I was so outraged for the first time in my life that we have to do something."

What happened next was hard to predict: "tea parties" began sprouting up in all 50 states. These groups held meetings and rallies across the country, attempting to send a loud message of small government—often loudly enough to disrupt Town Hall meetings. The Tea Party moniker became a rallying point for fiscal conservatism, but, to the chagrin of some Tea Party purists I interviewed, also morphed into a catchall designation for general anti-Obama sentiment. The "birther" conspiracies—those alleging that Obama was not born in the United States—often found support within Tea Party rank. For example, Tea Party Nation founder Judson Phillips is a known birther<sup>1</sup> and Arizona Tea Party group co-founder Kelly Townsend worked for two years on her state's House Bill 2177 "requiring presidential candidates to show proof of citizenship to get on the state's ballot."<sup>2</sup>

For many members and organizers, this would be their first foray into politics. One Delaware coordinator I spoke to is a respiratory therapist whose Tea Party involvement represented a kind of political awakening—from voting on the basis of a candidate's friendliness towards organizing around a candidate's party and platform. The early Tea Party groups began holding meetings and rallies that exceeded the organizers' attendance expectations. I interviewed a Michigan coordinator who claimed that over 1000 people attended their first rally—far beyond the 200-300 people he expected.

---

<sup>1</sup> Burghart, D. (2010, Tuesday, 02 November 2010). Tea party nation founder declares himself a birther. *Institute for*

<sup>2</sup> Rau, A. (2011). Tea Party: Give Arizona 'birther bill' some credit. *AZCentral*.

---

National organizations formed around the Tea Party cause. Tea Party Patriots, for example, is a national network that serves as an organizing platform among grassroots iterations of the movement. Dick Armey's FreedomWorks offers resources and organizing support to local groups. The Tea Party Express embarked on a nation-wide bus tour to support favored candidates. Many new conservatives seeking office in 2010 embraced Tea Party support, and even several incumbents went out of their way to identify themselves with the movement.

My interviewees made it clear that they see the Tea Party as distinct from the GOP. For example, the national coordinator I interviewed said that her anger at Republicans was as much of an encouragement as her anger at Obama. "My initial outrage that took me to the streets was because of Republicans, it wasn't even about Democrats yet... We have watched one failed Republican policy after another throwing money out the windows, and you're not standing there in a position of right anymore to the point that we're taking to the streets and we're calling you out on it."

This disdain towards both sides' political establishments sets a tone of intolerance for all non-minimal spending, even if that spending arises from Republican policies. However, it would be a mistake to understate linkage between the Tea and Republican parties: all but one<sup>3</sup> Tea Party endorsement went to Republican candidates. Moreover, polling data reveal other connections. Early data by the Winston Group shocked the blogosphere by suggesting that 40 percent of Tea Partiers are either Democrats or Independents, but subsequent polls by CNN and Gallup ask the important follow-up question about party leanings. They found that 88 percent and 83 percent respectively lean Republican.<sup>4</sup> So while the large amount of Independent self-identification is consistent with the anti-establishment Tea Party streak, the actual political leanings of these individuals clearly bend towards the Republican Party.

Abramowitz (2011) uses evidence from the American National Election Study to argue that Republican identifiers have been on a steady march to the right for several decades. He finds that Tea Partiers tend to be white, older, wealthier, more religious, more likely to be male, slightly less likely to have graduated from college, and more likely to be gun owners than non-supporters. Compared against demographic characteristics of Republicans at large, Abramowitz found Tea Party supporters more likely to strongly identify with the GOP, dislike President Obama, approve of Sarah Palin, and question Obama's U.S. birth—attributes "that cannot be explained simply by their Republican loyalties" (Abramowitz, 2011)

Tea Party members are demographically close to Republicans at large in that they are largely white and non-Hispanic. According to polling, the Tea Party does slightly worse at achieving support from Hispanics and African Americans than the Republican Party, and the Tea Party tends to be more male.<sup>5</sup> Despite this evidence of racial homogeneity, my interviewees insisted on the movement's diverse makeup. My Montana interviewee said, "I haven't seen those polls. The polls I've seen show that the demographics of the Tea Party mirror that of the United States—with black participation just a couple percentage points down from what the percentage of blacks are in the entire country."

---

<sup>3</sup> The only Democrat to receive a Tea Party endorsement is Walt Minnick (D-ID), who received the backing of the Tea Party Express. Minnick later rejected the endorsement in the wake of a scandal surrounding spokesman Mark Williams who penned a racist satirical blog post from "Colored People" to Abraham Lincoln.

<sup>4</sup> Blumenthal, M. (2010, April 6, 2010). A teacup 80% (or more) full. *Pollster.Com*.

<sup>5</sup> <http://documents.nytimes.com/new-york-times-cbs-news-poll-national-survey-of-tea-party-supporters>

---

A Tea Party coordinator from Kentucky had this to say: “I think, you know, naturally the illegal immigrants are not attracted to the Tea Party. I think that’s because they’re illegal. But now as far as American citizens of Hispanic decent, there are probably some of them in the Tea Party.”

Part of the Tea Party’s difficulty attracting minority groups likely has something to do with the accusations of racism floated against the movement. A coordinator from Delaware expressed concern that some minorities may be “afraid of being targeted... I don’t think perhaps we’re reaching out.” At early Tea Party rallies, some supporters carried signs that evoked Obama’s African heritage, used racial slurs, or otherwise called upon offensive stereotypes. In response, the NAACP passed a resolution “...to condemn extremist elements within the Tea Party.”<sup>6</sup> When asked about these accusations, Tea Party leaders are quick to point out that these are fringe views within the movement and never come from leadership figures. “I would say that some of our very fringe members or participants may have exercised a lack of discretion in some of the signage that was used,” said a Tea Party coordinator from Montana. “But I would challenge you or anybody... to find any of us using the kind of language being used by Jimmy Hoffa, the guy from the Black Congressional Caucus, and Maureen Dowd. I’m talking about leadership, not fringe members.”

A coordinator from Kentucky I interviewed offered this as one of his opening remarks: “Well, I guess the Tea Party is in a sense a movement of right against wrong, and truth against error. And that’s what Christianity is all about. So I think that they are kind of the same movement.” Although not all of my interviewees shared in this absolutism, this quotation does speak to the tenor of the discussion generated by the Tea Party, and possibly exemplifies the attitude that might be so worrying to critics of the movement.

Given this widespread organizing, we still must ask: did the Tea Party succeed in electing a new breed of representative who would “restore” the Republican Party and the country to what they perceive as its true conservative roots?

## 1.2 Towards studying the Tea Party

For all of its hype and media presence, the actual political significance of the Tea Party remains largely to be disentangled. The prevailing view found prominently in the media portray the Tea Party as a uniquely ideological phenomenon whose congressional membership has impeded compromise in Washington. This sentiment has come out particularly strongly around fiscal issues such as the debt ceiling votes in early August, 2011.

New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd is perhaps the most vocal adherent of this view, writing, “The world is watching in fearful—and sometimes gleeful—fascination as the Tea Party drives a Thunderbird off the cliff with the president and speaker of the House strapped in the back.” She goes on to argue that, “...the maniacal Tea Party freshmen are trying to burn down the House they were elected to serve in. It turns out they wanted to come inside to get a blueprint of the historic building to sabotage it.”<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> NAACP delegates vote to repudiate racist elements within tea party. (2010). *NAACP*.

<sup>7</sup> Dowd, M. (2011, July 30, 2011). Tempest in a tea party. *The New York Times*.

---

The essential question that I intend to test is whether the actual voting behavior of Tea Party sympathizers in Congress confirms or dispels this interpretation of events. First, can we detect any difference in the voting behavior of Tea Party affiliates compared to the rest of the party? And second, are there any patterns to that difference that could plausibly be explained by an uncompromising legislative outlook?

If it is true that Tea Party views sometimes grate against those of the Republican establishment, and if it is true that Tea Party-affiliated Representatives share those views, we should expect to find some meaningful difference in their Congressional voting behavior. The distinctiveness of this difference might be masked by an overall shift to the right—of the Republican Party establishment moving towards Tea Party positions. This possibility will be considered throughout this paper, and given explicit discussion in the concluding remarks.

Answers to these questions could have broader application for legislative voting theory. If Tea Party affiliation turns out to be a strong predictor of uncompromising ideological voting behavior, controlling for confounding variables like district preference, this would militate against the assumptions of rational choice-style analysis that may discount ideology as empty talk. If, on the other hand, district preference or other electoral incentives tell the full story, we would be forced to rethink the role that ideological strength plays in Congress—and indeed rethink the political significance of the Tea Party movement. Either direction will reveal something about the political prospects of grassroots coordination in America and, more broadly, Congressional behavior.

## 2 Literature Review

Since the Tea Party phenomenon is a new one, not much has been written. However, Congressional voting is one of the most studied fields in American political science. As such, it carries a uniquely high methodological barrier to entry. In this section, I review some of the literature that underpins my findings.

Much of the literature on the Tea Party published thus far has been about the movement itself, not necessarily measuring its Congressional impact. For more reading on the Tea Party movement more generally, see *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* by Skocpol and Williamson (2012), *The Tea Party: A Brief History* by Formisano (2012), or *Mad as Hell: How the Tea Party is Fundamentally Remaking Our Two-Party System* by Rasmussen and Schoen (2010).

### 2.1 Electoral impact of the Tea Party on the 2010 midterms

Much of the relevant literature has studied the Tea Party as a social movement, or attempted to assess its electoral implications. Although these subjects are largely orthogonal to my project, reviewing them briefly might provide some meaningful insight into the movement and its characteristics.

Recent work on the Tea Party's alleged electoral impact has been divided. How this debate settles may be significant for two reasons.

First, if Tea Party support can be shown to influence electoral outcomes, this would provide evidence of a rational reason to skew Congressional roll call votes towards Tea Party positions.

---

Ideological fortitude would be less likely to fully explain any difference between Tea Party and non-Tea Party voting behavior. In the spirit of political opportunism, this would create the perverse incentive for advantage-seeking politicians to feign Tea Party affiliation—blurring any distinction between true “Tea Party candidates” and average Republicans. It might further account for a shift in policy space by the entire Republican Party towards Tea Party positions.

Second, this is important for teasing out democratic response. Later in this paper we will look at whether a district’s Tea Party activism predicts certain Congressional voting trends. If such a relationship obtains, there are two possibilities: (i) districts with larger Tea Party movements succeeded in electing more conservative Representatives who, as trustees, happen to reflect activist priorities, or (ii) Representatives are actually responsive to their Tea Party constituency subset. If we can chip away at the first possibility by ruling out any Tea Party influence on the election, it becomes more plausible that the activism variable speaks to the post-election effects of grassroots activism.

Jacobson (2011) uses the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study to assess attitudes towards the Tea Party, and concludes that the movement politically mobilized specific segments of the population—typically those older, whiter, and more conservative voters—as a counterpoint to Obama’s election in 2008. He argues that the data support the claim that the Tea Party solidified and energized conservative support, ensuring Republican victory. Additionally, Bailey, Mummolo, and Noel (2011), in a paper I will be discussing more fully in section 2.4, detects Tea Party influence in a fuller quantitative treatment.

Bond, Fleisher, and Ilderton (2011), on the other hand, find no evidence for Tea Party influence on the 2010-midterm outcomes. They operationalize Tea Party endorsement as an independent variable to tease out its effect on candidate wins or losses. Over 250 House districts, the authors found no support for the claim that the Tea Party is responsible for Republican success. Instead, other variables—previous election success, candidate spending, challenger experience, etc.—were much stronger predictors. Ansolabehere and Snyder (2011) confirm these findings. Karpowitz, Monson, Patterson, and Pope (2011) find that Tea Party associations mattered in the Republican primaries, but only FreedomWorks endorsements provided any bump (only 2 percent) in the general election.

How this debate settles is yet to be seen, but the preponderance of the evidence appears to reside on the side that finds the electoral impact of the Tea Party overstated. Even if a Tea Party endorsement carries a modest electoral advantage, such a benefit would likely not be a tipping point on the final result. As such, possibility (i) listed above seems improbable, preparing us to draw inferences about responsiveness to the movement should our activism variable help predict Congressional votes.

However, any of the perverse incentive discussed can materialize in the roll call record if Representatives merely *think* the Tea Party had an electoral effect—whether or not it actually did. As such, we will have to do better in order to disentangle whether any difference in voting behavior can be explained by electoral incentives on the one hand, or the ideological sympathies of being a Tea Party member on the other.

---

## 2.2 Theories of voting behavior

If it turns out that groups can wield impressive power over legislation, it might be fruitful to compare the Tea Party's relative success to that of other interests. One related study was conducted by Soule and Olzak entitled, "When do Movements Matter? The Politics of Contingency and the Equal Rights Amendment." Here the authors attempt to discover the role that social movements play in policy formation using the ERA as a case study. They find that the presence of elite allies amplify the strength of such movements. Even though the ERA might not be directly analogous to the sorts of issues this paper will study, to fully understand the legislative effects it is important to place the Tea Party in the context of the body of sociological literature that explores the relationship between social movements and policy. As we will soon see, it may be possible to draw parallels between Soule and Olzak's elite involvement and the activities of the Tea Party Caucus.

Additionally, one must consider two classic works on the topic of congressional voting behavior: *The Logic of Congressional Action* by Arnold, and *Congressmen's Voting Decisions* by Kingdon. These two books, though foundational, may be slightly dated in their approaches. They both, for example, rely on interview data that may or may not be relevant to the Tea Party.

Arnold writes that his argument "rests on the assumption that the quest for reelection is legislator's dominant goal" (p. 60). This may or may not be a useful assumption for studying the Tea Party. If there is evidence that the Representative's district has taken on an ideologically resolute position matched by strongly conservative voting patterns from those district's representatives, it could be the case that Tea Party affiliates are reacting to their constituents like the rest of their Republican colleagues. If this is the case, it would complicate the matter of deciding whether patterns of conservative voting owe themselves more to ideology or to self-interest. If, on the other hand, patterns of conservative voting are just as strong in less conservative districts or districts with less Tea Party activism, we may be forced to rethink the utility of this assumption. It could even be that Tea Party Congressmen employ a substantially different decision procedure than non-Tea Party affiliates when casting their votes.

The same restriction applies to Kingdon's book, which offers a flowchart-style "consensus" model. There is room, however, to build in ideological concerns at the point where he offers "good public policy" as a primary legislative goal. He refers to ideological considerations as a type of "preconsensus process"—not as an alternative to forming consensus, but as an influence on the resulting consensus.

Kingdon also published a paper ("Models of Legislative Voting") summarizing several theoretical models of Congressional action: the Matthews-Stimson cue-taking model, the MacRae policy dimensions view, the Cherryholmes and Shapiro predisposition-communication model, the consensus view in Kingdon's own work, the past behavior model, and the goal-based model, which structures voting decisions around some objective like re-election. Kingdon then sets out to synthesize these positions into one integrative approach, for which he reiterates many of his arguments found in *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*.

In principle, these articles could serve as a starting point to assess what theories of congressional action are best fitted to the empirics of Tea Party voting behavior. In practice, however, these different theories have very limited implications for this paper. Each of these models is intensive to



---

operationalize, and requires subjective coding that may be difficult to reproduce. Beyond those drawbacks, it is hardly worth comparing the quantitative performance of the different approaches outright: virtually any plausible model of Congressional voting is a “good fit” to the data. Kingdon writes, “...a good quantitative performance is a necessary, but not sufficient condition to accept a model, since outcomes are quite easy to predict” (Kingdon, 1981).

The goal of this paper is not to vindicate a specific model of Congressional voting. Instead, I aim to assess the broader role that ideology may play in Congressional voting expressed through Tea Party orientation. If such an influence is detected, it must be accommodated by future voting theories if they are to remain descriptively plausible.

### 2.3 The district angle

One purpose of this paper is to assess whether or not district-based influences are better predictors of voting than ideological Tea Party affiliation, or whether such affiliation has any influence over and above district pressure. “Ideology, Electoral Incentives, and Congressional Politics: The Republican House Class of 1994” by Crespín, Gold, and Rohde is analogous to this paper: it assesses the voting behavior of a new conservative resurgence during a Democratic presidency. The authors compare the W-NOMINATE scores of the freshmen legislators to the leanings of their district based on presidential vote. They argue that the district mean preferences play a strong but non-exhaustive role in explaining voting behavior—that a substantial portion of the 1994 Republican freshmen were influenced by factors like their individual preferences, beyond what would be expected on the basis of their district. Gerber and Lewis (2004) use a similar methodology with comparable results.

Clinton has similar findings in his paper “Representation in Congress: Constituents and Roll Calls in the 106th House.” He employs a different methodology than Crespín et al., using survey data instead to measure district preferences. He comes to the similar conclusion that median voter preference is an incomplete explanation for Congressional voting behavior.

### 2.4 Extant literature on the Tea Party in Congress

In October 2011, Bailey, Mummolo, and Noel released a working paper titled, “Tea Party Influence: A Story of Activists and Elites.” The second part of their study relates directly to my thesis: how Tea Party identity influences roll call voting. First they use Poole and Rosenthal’s NOMINATE procedure to test where Tea Party candidates are on the left-right spectrum relative to other Republicans. They find no statistically significant difference over 741 votes. They then assess specific votes that relate to aspects of the Tea Party’s explicit agenda, e.g. budget votes. The data reveal that Tea Party endorsement has no statistically significant effect on voting behavior. However, they find that Tea Party Caucus membership does indeed entail a higher probability of convergence on the Tea Party position. They further found that representatives from districts with strong Tea Party activism repeatedly voted for Tea Party positions. They summarize the legislative effects of the Tea Party as “a story of activism and elites.”

Bailey et al. analyze some Congressional votes that I do not, but are worth briefly addressing. For example, they look at a vote on funding a controversial fighter jet engine. Unlike the other votes, FreedomWorks endorsements appeared to have an effect on the final roll call following a lobbying

---

push by the group. Additionally, they look at the PATRIOT Act renewal, which may help to determine whether Tea Party members veer libertarian. They find that members from districts with high Tea Party activism are more likely to oppose the bill, suggesting, “districts with lots of grassroots activity do produce members whose skepticism of the government extends even to the national security apparatus” (Bailey et al., 2011). The Tea Party endorsees, however, did not appear to go especially one way or another.

Where our projects intersect, I confirm the broad strokes of their conclusion but occasionally dispute some of the specifics. Their methodology was highly influential in firming up the quantitative procedures for this paper, but there is still work to be done on assessing Tea Party influence. For example, is unwillingness to compromise the common thread that explains why certain votes might provoke divergence and others might not? I will also look at different individual votes, and use fairly transparent case selection criteria. While the data analyzed by Bailey et al. is certainly useful, the matter is ripe for further assessment.

### III. Measures and Methods

#### 3.1 Methodology Overview

This paper will begin with an overall analysis of voting trends in the 112<sup>th</sup> House using the measures described in following few sections. Although some Tea Party favorites like Rand Paul were elected to the Senate, the larger sample size offered by the House promises more robust results. Although the Tea Party movement began during the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, any influence exerted by the Tea Party on legislative outcomes is likely to be most visible following the first election in which the movement was active—the 2010 midterms. As such, I restrict the sample to Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> House.

For the overall analysis, I will use NOMINATE scores and adapt a methodology of pioneered by Kalt and Zupan to assess the relationship between the Representatives and their districts with the goal of determining whether Tea Party members are more, less, or equally close to their districts’ general ideology. This section will also help to determine the relative strength that electoral incentives play in voting outcomes compared to ideological Tea Party identity.

Overall trends, however, might mask or downplay Tea Party influence if it is exerted selectively (e.g. on spending bills). To compensate, the rest of this paper will focus on individual vote case studies selected by the following three criteria:

- Does the vote center around a “Tea Party issue?”
- Is there notable division within the Republican Party in the roll call result?
- Was it a “major” vote?<sup>8</sup>

The first criterion restricts cases to spending bills—the presumed locus of Tea Party influence. The second criterion is simpler to eyeball than it might seem. With high levels of party unity on the Right, votes of Republican disagreement stand out. While I do not use a specific formula to determine a cutoff of contentiousness, I do attempt to find the vote of maximal disagreement given

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://politics.nytimes.com/congress/votes/112/major/house>

---

close alternative case. For example, the House passed a series of stopgap budget measures leading up to the final compromise. I settled on vote 179 on March 15, 2011 due to its higher level of dissent. The larger sample of Nay votes should make it easier to identify trends, and the smaller margin of victory for the bill's passage raises the stakes of dissent, making it more likely that a Nay vote represents a refusal to compromise instead of a merely symbolic stand.

As for the third criterion, I limit my inquiry to major votes simply because such votes are more likely to provoke ideological conflict. Minor resolutions are less likely to generate intra-party dispute for the reasons I am looking to assess. Furthermore, there are enough "major" votes to help account for considerations like publicity exposure—from relatively obscure yet significant votes to legislative battles played out largely in the press like the debt ceiling.

This paper will assess the following six roll calls:

- House vote 179: Stopgap Budget Bill, March 15, 2011
- House vote 268: Final budget vote, April 14, 2011
- House vote 690: Final debt ceiling compromise, August 1, 2011
- House vote 719: Stopgap Spending and Disaster Aid Bill, September 21, 2011
- House vote 745: Continuing Resolution, October 4, 2011
- House vote 72: Payroll Tax Cut Extension, February 17, 2012

Each case study will have a qualitative and quantitative component. The former will describe the circumstances surrounding the bill, the nature of the disagreement, and the possible role of the Tea Party. It will rely largely on credible news reporting and simple numeric descriptions of the roll call in addition to insights from the interviews I conducted with Tea Party coordinators (see Appendix B for the interviewing procedure). The latter will be based on probit regression for each vote, with the roll call as the binary outcome variable. For formal descriptions of each variable, see Appendix A.

But what inferences can we appropriately draw from a Yay or Nay vote? The analysis section of each case will offer a context-sensitive argument to justify coding decisions, but for the most part Nays are coded as votes against the compromise position worked out by House leadership, and a vote for the "Tea Party position."

However, there are difficulties in making inferences about compromise from the roll call record. For example, there could be situations when it is generally known that Speaker Boehner has the votes to pass the bill, in which case a Representative might be inclined to cast a Nay vote to beef up his Tea Party credentials. Even so, however, even a protest vote would reveal some degree of uncooperativeness, which would still tell us something about the Tea Party if membership robustly predicts Nay voting trends.

Additionally, one might challenge that Yay votes may not be indications of compromising or cooperative behavior in every instance. A bloc of Tea Party affiliates might have held out during early negotiations to skew the final result towards their preferences, assenting only after House leadership agrees to their inflexible demands. Such a pull to the right would be invisible in the final vote. But again, a sufficiently thorough qualitative report on each vote should help account for this possibility by clarifying the reasons dissent exists and by weighing in on what we can fairly infer in

---

terms of compromise from a Yay or Nay. And even so, based on interviews and qualitative support from the news media, there is usually an identifiable “Tea Party position” that is even more conservative than the deal worked out by House leadership—even if that deal is more conservative than it would have been without the Tea Party.

### 3.2 Who is a Tea Partier?

Most House Republicans have been quoted as saying something positive about the Tea Party. On top of this, the movement prides itself on an amorphous grassroots image, making it difficult to pin down parameters for Tea Party affiliation. Many local Tea Party groups further complicate the matter by not explicitly backing candidates. Yet some members of Congress clearly sympathize with the Tea Party message, accepted support from Tea Party groups, and were—at least unofficially—Tea Party favorites. For example, I discussed Tea Party darling Christine O’Donnell with a Delaware Tea Party coordinator: “Now the Tea Party did not officially endorse anyone; we would send out information from the candidates. It was up to each individual who they wanted to help. I didn’t say ‘the Tea Party is endorsing Christine O’Donnell, go help her.’ But most of our members supported her, because she was closer to what they wanted than Mike Castle, and of course Chris Coons.”

Identifying which candidates are meaningfully associated with the Tea Party presents a methodological barrier. To account for these ambiguities, I operationalize Tea Party affiliation as four different dummy variables:

- Tea Party Caucus membership
- FreedomWorks endorsement
- Tea Party Express endorsement
- Tea Party freshmen

Table 3.1 presents the number of members in each group, as well as how many members overlap. The correlation coefficients are in parentheses.

The Tea Party Caucus is a group of mostly incumbent Representatives started by Michele Bachmann in 2010. Membership would likely be a clear case for Tea Party self-identification, but there is also the possibility of members joining the Caucus to appear affiliated with the popular movement. Bailey et al. identify Tea Party Caucus membership as conveying “elite” status (Bailey et al., 2011) Although Caucus membership is easy to determine, using it as the final word on Tea Party affiliation is too narrow. Some Tea Party self-identifiers such as Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) have refused to join on the grounds that organizing as such overlooks the truly grassroots nature of the movement by institutionalizing the Tea Party brand. Chaffetz told *POLITICO*, “Structure and formality are the exact opposite of what the tea party is, and if there is an attempt to put structure and formality around it, or to co-opt it by Washington, D.C., it’s going to take away from the free-flowing nature of the true tea party movement.”<sup>9</sup> Most of my interviewees were unfamiliar with the Caucus specifics, but a national Tea Party coordinator from California had this to say:

---

<sup>9</sup> Vogel, K. (2010, 8/2/10). Tea party vs. tea party caucus. *POLITICO*.

TABLE 3.1  
TWO-WAY TABULATIONS FOR TEA PARTY AFFILIATION: NUMBER OF MEMBERS AND OVERLAP

Groups	Tea Party Caucus	FreedomWorks	Tea Party Express	Tea Party Freshmen
Tea Party Caucus	<b>62</b>			
FreedomWorks	14 (-0.0788)	<b>70</b>		
Tea Party Express	15 (-0.1304)	29 (0.0878)	<b>85</b>	
Tea Party Freshmen	18 (-0.0516)	69 (0.8805)	35 (0.1239)	<b>81</b>

“When this idea had come up that they were going to start a Tea Party caucus we were all really upset by that. Our attitude was that you are taking something that is of citizens, grassroots-driven movement for absolute change, and you are trying to capitalize on it politically. If you were really all about endorsing what this movement, citizens, and voters are about you could have called it anything—the Constitution Caucus....”

However, not all Tea Party leaders share this attitude. Tea Party Express chairwoman Amy Kremer even expressed “disappointment” that Senator Rubio was undecided on joining the Senate version of the Caucus.<sup>10</sup>

There is little overlap between the Caucus and the other Tea Party identities, as many freshman Tea Party candidates resisted joining. We would not expect this to be the case if there really were a wide-scale scramble to appear associated with the Tea Party. If anything, some may even have attempted to distance themselves from the movement in order to improve their electoral viability with moderate voters.

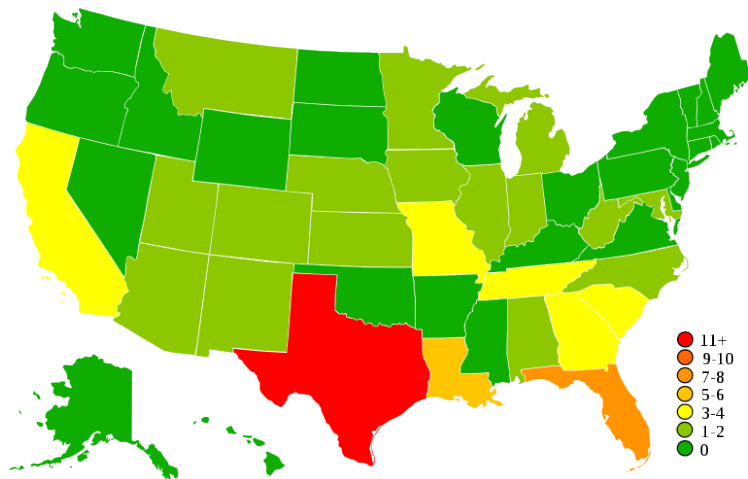
As we can see from the tabulations in Table 3.1, only 18 of the 81 total Republican freshmen receiving Tea Party endorsement of some kind joined the Caucus—with freshmen comprising 29 percent of the Caucus’ membership. POLITICO makes the same observation: “freshmen, who account for one-third of the House Republican Conference, are under-represented in the Tea Party Caucus.”<sup>11</sup> It is not always obvious, however, *why* certain representatives declined membership. For some it might concern respect for the grassroots nature of the movement, but others might have accepted electoral support from the Tea Party without having ever truly identify with the movement.

Several current House Republicans used to be members of the Tea Party Caucus but left: Tom Graves (R-GA), Ralph Hall (R-TX), Walter Jones (R-NC), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), and Sue Myrick (R-NC). Graves and Lummis appear as Tea Party data points due to Tea Party Express endorsements, but the other three do not. One could argue that these Representatives should be included since they have all shown some degree of Tea Party self-identification by virtue of joining in the first place. However, I have opted to exclude all five from the Tea Party Caucus group (and thus three from Tea Party identity entirely) for fear that including them would be more distortive than excluding them. Although a few data points might be lost, they are not the tipping point on

<sup>10</sup> Clark, L. (2011, Sunday, January 23, 2011). Rubio, a tea party favorite, may not join its senate caucus. *McClatchy*.

<sup>11</sup> Allen, J. (2011, 9/14/11). Tea party caucus short on frosh. *POLITICO*.

FIGURE 3.1  
TEA PARTY CAUCUS MEMBERSHIP BY STATE<sup>12</sup>



any of the forthcoming analysis. Moreover, given the public nature of this disavowal, there is a good chance that they are not “true” Tea Party sympathizers during the votes I will be studying, if they ever had been.

Gervais and Morris use Tea Party Caucus membership as an outcome variable to assess what factors influence the probability of joining. They find that Caucus members are more conservative, but also come from economically well-off districts with low unemployment rates. The racial makeup of their districts does not appear to matter, and neither does their seniority or leadership positions in the House (Gervais and Morris, 2012).

FreedomWorks and the Tea Party Express are two national Tea Party groups that made endorsements during the election. Treating them separately allows us to attempt measuring whether one or both has any influence on Congressional voting behavior once the endorsee has taken office, and whether one is more influential than the other. Although the FreedomWorks website has since removed its 2010 endorsements, the Washington Post has the data preserved in a comparative graphic.<sup>13</sup> The official Tea Party Express website lists their previous endorsements, but this list includes almost all of the Republican candidates. Instead, I will again use the list in the Washington Post’s endorsement comparison with the hope that it reflects a more selective interpretation of who the Tea Party Express backed, and is at least consistent with my source for FreedomWorks endorsements.

Lastly, I isolate the group of Tea Party freshmen. I begin with the New York Times’ list of Tea Party candidates,<sup>14</sup> which justifies each placement on the list. Even if the candidate did not receive “official” backing, it picks out identifying features like appearing at Tea Party engagements or signing the Contract from America. It also includes the sole successful Palin endorsee not covered by the

<sup>12</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tea\\_party\\_membership\\_112\\_congress.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tea_party_membership_112_congress.svg)

<sup>13</sup> Tea party endorsement overlap. (2010). *The Washington Post*.

<sup>14</sup> Where tea party candidates are running. (2010, October 14, 2010). *The New York Times*.

---

FreedomWorks and Tea Party Express endorsements, Randy Hultgren (R-IL 14). I then added to this set any Republican freshmen left off the New York Times' list but who fell within any of the above three categories. I treat the freshmen separately in order to investigate whether the newly elected Tea Party Representatives really are a new breed of politician strongly indisposed to compromise. Most of the freshman class has some kind of Tea Party connection, but eight do not. Consider, for example, Robert Hurt from Virginia's 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional district. Although he was not popular with Tea Party groups during the primary, at least one Tea Party leader agreed to back him in the general election—even though he was more moderate than the activists wanted.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, this endorsement is one of electoral expediency, and does not reflect true Tea Party affiliation of the sort we are trying to measure. Given these circumstances, Hurt and others like him are excluded from the list of Tea Party freshmen.

The entire dataset includes 244 GOP Representatives, which does not correspond to the number of Republican House members at any given time. This is due to variations in membership composition mid-session. For example, Dean Heller (R-NV) was appointed to the Senate in 2011, and Mark Amodei filled his seat. Other anomalies include Bob Turner (R-NY) who filled Anthony Weiner's vacant seat after salacious images of Weiner surfaced, and Chris Lee (R-NY) who resigned under similar circumstances.

### 3.3 Measuring District Tea Party Activism

In 2010, Devin Burghart and Leonard Zeskind of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights compiled data on levels of Tea Party activism across the United States. They aggregated online membership records from Tea Party Nation, Tea Party Patriots, 1776 Tea Party (TeaParty.org), FreedomWorks, and ResistNet Tea Party.<sup>16</sup> Although some members might not have registered online, the Burghart data represents the closest approximation available of a continuous variable for Tea Party activism.

Bailey et al. then divvied the data by Congressional district, being contentious of cross-district cities. They graciously shared their adaptation of the Burghart data with me. Following their example, I report the activism variable by the thousands in order to generate palatable coefficients.

If a Representative's activism score successfully predicts his or her voting behavior, there are two inferences we might draw: either that Representative is responding to Tea Party activism post-election as a delegate, or a district's activists succeeded in electing a trustee whose conservatism reflects that of the movement. Based on the extant literature, however, it seems unlikely that the Tea Party exercised a unique influence on the electoral outcomes. As such, we can begin to rule out the latter possibility, and make more plausible inferences about responsiveness to sub-constituencies.

Three important cautions: first, the data refer to membership statistics, which may be only indirectly related to the intensity of Tea Party lobbying activities. While the two likely go together, it is important to be clear about what the variable is actually measuring. Second, scores are absolute and are not scaled to district size. It could be the case that a smaller Tea Party group in absolute terms

---

<sup>15</sup> Amos, C. (2010, June 09, 2010). Republicans united around Hurt to face Perriello. *GoDanRiver.Com*.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on their methodology, see: <http://www.irehr.org/the-report/tea-party-faction-data-collection-methodology>

---

from a tiny district exercises a relatively more influential voice than a larger Tea Party group drowned out by a massive district. Third, the scores are temporally static. We will be looking at votes at different times during the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, but the activism scores do not reflect any fluctuation in Tea Party membership or favorability.

### 3.4 Measuring Ideology

Quantifying ideology is a historically problematic endeavor in political science. One of the most popular and often-thought reliable measures is Poole and Rosenthal's NOMINATE procedure. NOMINATE stands for Nominal Three-Step Estimation, and is a widely used scaling method for interpreting Congressional roll call data. It is a probabilistic spatial model that estimates the ideal point of a legislator's preference.

It places legislators within a two-dimensional space in which the first dimension estimates economic ideology and the second estimates position on regional and social issues. While the second dimension has elevated importance on some votes (e.g. gun control-related bills), Poole and Rosenthal find that the first dimension carries the brunt of predictive power. They argue that Congressional "...structure is largely unidimensional, with a second dimension having a more minor although sometimes important influence... virtually no substantive concern is served by going beyond two dimensions" (Poole and Rosenthal, pp. 21-22). The analysis in this paper will be based on the first dimension score since it is most directly interpretable as an overall measure of ideology.

Poole and Rosenthal have developed different flavors of NOMINATE over the years, such as the latest DW-NOMINATE (dynamic, weighted NOMINATE). However, DW was created with the intention of enabling comparisons across chambers and years, whereas this paper focuses on the behavior of a particular House. I follow Poole and Rosenthal in using W-NOMINATE for static models of a single Congress (Poole and Rosenthal, p. 30), which has the advantage of being calculable from the roll call data of a single House with the power of a personal computer.

I used the W-NOMINATE plugin for the statistics software R to run roll call data that was up-to-date for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress as of December 2011—collected by Jeff Lewis and Keith Poole.<sup>17</sup> This generated a new batch of NOMINATE scores for 437 legislators over 864 votes. Figure 3.2 displays the scatterplot of the results, with the x-axis representing the predictive economic ideology dimension, and the y-axis displaying variation on regional and social issues.

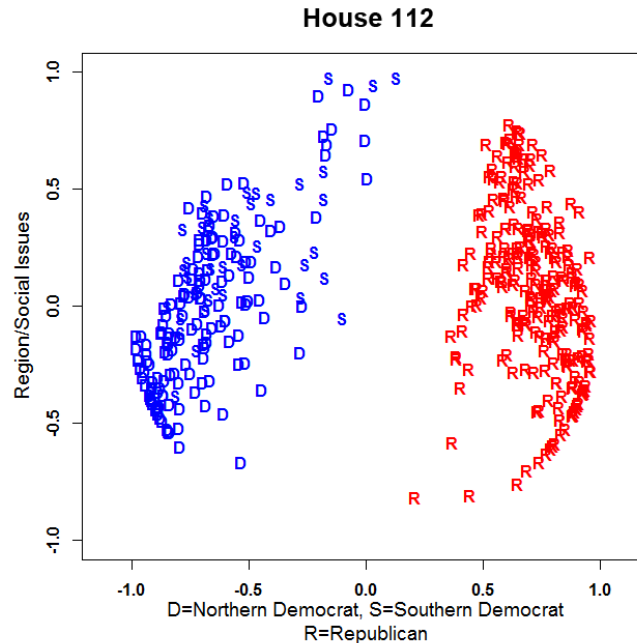
Some like Roberts (Roberts, 2007) have expressed reservations about large statistical interpretations of roll calls of the sort conducted by Poole and Rosenthal. He argues that the simple utility function that drives the NOMINATE procedure overlooks sophisticated strategic voting, often driven by rule and procedure peculiarities that make it difficult to make inferences based on the roll-call record. However, these sorts of criticisms are mainly leveled against analyses that span multiple Congresses and attempt to pull together a unified theory of voting. My use of the NOMINATE data is more targeted as an expression of a Representative's general voting pattern within a single Congress.

---

<sup>17</sup> <http://adric.sscnet.ucla.edu/rollcall/>



FIGURE 3.2  
112<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS W-NOMINATE SCORES



It is important to understand that “ideology” can be used in two senses. NOMINATE scores measure where a member of Congress falls on the political spectrum (what I would call “locational” ideology). For example, a Representative with a score of 0.950 has a voting record that is ideologically conservative. That score does not mean, however, that the member of Congress in question is uncompromising, or acts without regard for electoral consequences. To earn such a high score he may have to, but there is no necessary connection in principle. NOMINATE scores are concerned with locating legislators’ utility curves, and comparing their preferences to their peers’. These utility curves—wherever they may reside on the spectrum—are compatible with diverse legislative attitudes.

Other times when we discuss ideology in politics, however, we refer to a legislator’s *approach*—specifically, his or her propensity to make decisions on unwavering principle (“attitudinal” ideology). This sort of ideology is usually understood to stand in opposition to “rational self interest.” For example, a Representative with a low NOMINATE score of 0.213 may not be very ideologically conservative, but may still act ideologically in the sense that he votes on principle alone, and refuses to make political compromises or concessions. The only difference is that his principles stake out a resolute position closer to the center of the political spectrum.

In other words, Poole and Rosenthal’s procedure measures what a legislator’s preference is, but not why it is. Other times when we discuss ideology, we are primarily interested in a particular explanation for *why* legislators structure their preferences the way that they do: foisting adherence to principle above pragmatism and self-interest.

This paper will attempt to assess the Tea Party’s relationship with both types of ideology. First we will assess locational ideology by looking at whether Tea Party affiliates tend to be further to the

---

right than their colleagues. If they turn out to be more ideologically conservative, we would then have to explain how much of this extra conservatism owes itself to conventional self-interest. Some factors like district conservatism can be controlled for quantitatively (see next section). Others, like susceptibility to conformity pressures, will have to be handled qualitatively. Although it is impossible to account for every conceivable rational explanation, the objective is to construct a sufficiently plausible account of attitudinal ideology by gradually ruling out self-interested explanations for Tea Party members who vote more conservatively than their colleagues.

### 3.5 Measuring District Conservatism

To approximate for the strength of a given district's ideology I use the Cook Partisan Voting Index (PVI)—a rating system based on comparing the average win percentage points from the last two presidential elections to the national results. It was developed by Charlie Cook of the Cook Political Report. A PVI of R+10, for example, would denote that a Republican presidential candidate would receive ten percentage points more votes than the national average. I translate Democratic-leaning districts (e.g. D+3) as negative values.

Other papers that try to measure district ideology use different techniques. For example, Bailey et al. (2011) use the district's Bush vote as a control variable, Crespín et al. (2006) and as well as Gerber and Lewis also use the last presidential election, and Clinton (2006) relies on survey data. While these approaches certainly have merit, the Cook PVI has the advantage of being more stable over time since it considers the last *two* presidential elections, and is thus less subject to fluctuations of historical circumstance. The disadvantage of a stable measure is that it might downplay any uptick in conservatism due to Tea Party furor, but so would any measure based on the last presidential election. Levels of Tea Party activism are accounted for by the Burghart data, and there is little risk of distortive collinearity between the two ( $r = 0.3054$ ).

### 3.6 Relating Ideology and District

The W-NOMINATE and PVI scores are not meant to be directly related. But if theories of voting behavior that reference the median voter are to be believed, an accurate measure of a district's ideological leaning should account for considerable variation in a Representative's roll call voting. The Crespín and Gerber analyses have investigated explanatory power of the median voter theorem and found that it is predictive yet incomplete. Their methodologies, however, do not lend themselves to isolating groups within each Congress to decide whether district effects are more or less predictive for those groups. So in order to test the question of whether Congressional Tea Party members more, less, or equally consistent with the median voter in their district compared to the rest of the Republican Party, we have to look elsewhere.

I begin by regressing the W-NOMINATE scores on PVI, median household income, and other demographic and economic characteristics of the districts. I include dummy variables for geographic region (South, West, and Midwest defined by the U.S. Census Bureau) in an attempt to capture any effects of political culture from different geographies. I also include the district's unemployment rate to approximate for any effects the economic condition of a district might have on its representative's voting behavior. I include the percentage of black and Hispanic voters in each district because of the Tea Party's allegedly poor relationship with each demographic. The goal of this model, however, is

TABLE 3.2  
DISTRICT MODEL OF NOMINATE SCORES

DV: W-NOMINATE Scores		Coefficient
PVI		.0082643** (5.66)
Median household income (100,000s)		.0753193 (0.96)
South		.0760306* (2.12)
Midwest		.1128429** (3.82)
West		.101981** (2.89)
Unemployment rate		.0101674* (2.37)
Percent black		.0019923 (1.51)
Percent Hispanic		.0007393 (0.99)
Constant		.4043206** (5.32)
N		243
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>		0.2385

† significant at  $p < 0.10$  | \* significant at  $p < 0.05$  | \*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$   
t-statistic in parentheses

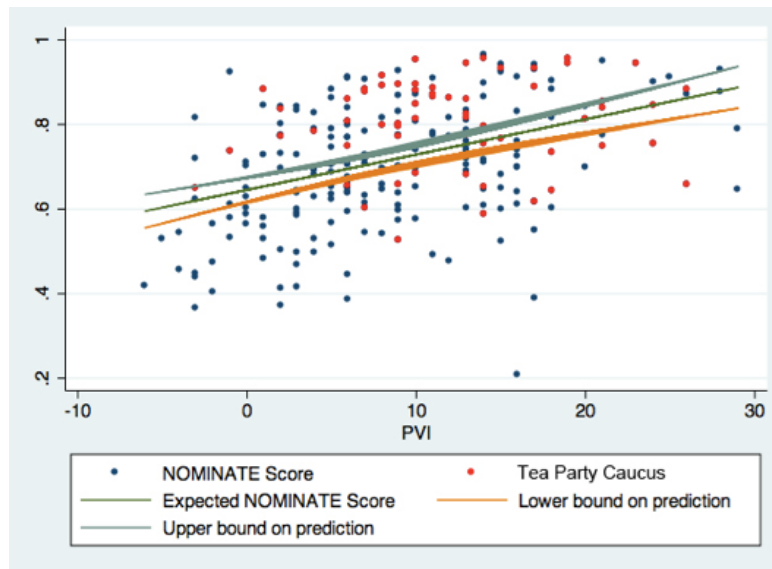
not to assess the strength of each independent variable; instead I want to predict on average how conservative a Representative we can expect coming from a district of given properties.

The results are reported in Table 3.2. First, notice the relatively low  $R^2$ . It suggests that these district-base indicators—or at least the ones I use—explain just over 26 percent of the variability in NOMINATE scores for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress. We should be cautious about predictions based on this model, but hopefully it should approximate well enough for our purposes.

I then calculate the studentized residuals, i.e. the distance of each data point from the model's prediction weighted by standard deviation. This should give us a rough measure of how far a Representative's actual voting behavior diverges from the conservatism we would expect to see given certain facts about his or her district included in the model.

For convenience, I refer to this resulting value as the “District Deviation” (DD) score. A high number suggests that a Representative is more conservative than we would expect on the basis of his district; a negative number suggests that the Representative is actually *less* conservative than facts about his district might predict. For example, Congressman Jo Bonner comes from the very

FIGURE 3.3  
PVI PREDICTING NOMINATE: 95% CI OF PREDICTION



conservative Alabama 1<sup>st</sup> district (PVI 14). Given the model, on average a Representative from a district with his PVI and demographic characteristics would have a NOMINATE score roughly around 0.800. Bonner, however, clocks in around only 0.609, producing a negative DD (-1.515). Now consider Steve Southerland from Florida’s 2<sup>nd</sup> district. The model predicts that the district’s PVI of 6 along with its other characteristics would on average produce a NOMINATE score of around 0.728, but Southerland’s actual voting puts him at roughly 0.910—a high positive DD (1.444).

To illustrate how this works, consider a simple regression with NOMINATE score as the outcome variable and PVI as the only explanatory variable. Figure 3.3 shows the scatter plot of the data for the 112<sup>th</sup> House, including the regression line and 95 percent confidence interval of the prediction. We can then use the regression line to derive “expected” NOMINATE scores at any PVI based on the relationship between the two. The difference between the actual and “expected” scores—i.e. the vertical distance of each data point from the fitted values—is the residual. For visual interest I highlighted Tea Party Caucus data points in red. Notice how the red points seem to reside predominantly above the regression line. In Section 4 we will take a closer look at these values and compare them across Tea Party groups.

After devising this technique I found precedent in the literature for its use. Notably, Kalt and Zupan (1990) use the residuals of a model estimating Americans for Democratic Action ratings in the Senate. Kau and Rubin (1982) and Carson and Oppenheimer (1984) also use this method. Kalt and Zupan employ a slightly different battery of explanatory variables, but mostly due to the broader availability of statewide data. There is no reason on the basis of their research that I excluded some game-changing variable. Kalt and Zupan as well as the other scholars take high residuals as evidence of a Senator “shirking” his district.

---

This interpretation, however, is controversial for several reasons. First, Jackson and Kingdon (1992) point out the inherent bias of using ADA scores as the outcome variable. I do not encounter this problem, as NOMINATE scores are calculated without any potential political motivation. This too has precedent: Schonhardt-Bailey applies the Kalt-Zupan model to NOMINATE scores in her book *From Corn Laws to Free Trade* (2006).

Jackson and Kingdon further object, “The problem is that the constituency variables do not accurately measure constituency positions as perceived by the legislator.” They are correct to point out that referring to a measure like PVI and other district characteristics alone is insufficient grounds to draw inference about *responding* to that level of conservatism. Consider the following cases:

- False negative for “democratic response:” the representative might try to be responsive but over- or underestimate the ideology of his or her district. Perhaps also the general read on district conservatism given by the PVI undersells strong public opinion on sets of specific issues
- False positive for “democratic response:” more conservative districts might simply elect more conservative representatives. Even if each is Burke himself, refusing to respond to the vicissitudes of constituency opinion, their voting decisions might incidentally tend to align with a broad measure of district conservatism.

Unlike what we did with the activism variable, there is no clear way to blunt the possibility of a false positive. However, these difficulties are not grounds to dismiss such district measures wholesale. If PVI and other district characteristics predicts overall voting patterns—which they appear to limitedly do—that would still tell us important information about the relationship between voting decisions and districts even if every representative is a perfect Burkean trustee. Of course it seems reasonable to assume that representatives have at least a vague sense of what their constituencies are like, and perhaps even take a more moderate stance on the delegate-trustee continuum. Plausibly at least *some* of the relationship between voting decisions and districts could be explained by democratic response even if there is no such guarantee in every case.

Jackson and Kingdon also argue that this approach fails to measure ideology because it omits the effects of “interest group pressures, presidential agendas, committee and subcommittee activities...” and so on. However, this objection is inferential—that the authors who use this technique claim that the residuals represent “personal ideology.” Jackson and Kingdon are correct to point out that the residuals would also soak up deviation from their constituencies provoked by, say, interest groups. Thus a representative with a high residual might still be acting out of self-interest, not ideologically. However, unlike Kalt and Zupan, I do not offer DD scores as a complete account of ideology, nor is this procedure meant as a backbone to an exhaustive theory of Congressional voting. I even outright reject a “personal ideology” interpretation in the next section in favor of a self-interested explanation for high DD scores. I am mostly interested in district deviations for any reason—ideological or otherwise—and whether Tea Party group affiliations help explain any trends among those Congressmen furthest from their districts.

So we should indeed be cautious about inferring “democratic response” for DDs close to zero and inferring “shirking” from outliers. But (a) with sufficient qualitative support these inferences are possible, and (b) these challenges hardly disqualify all methodological interest in the variable.

## 4 Overall Analytics

The measures discussed thus far can give us some preliminary insights into the overall voting trends in the 112<sup>th</sup> House. Table 4.1 shows the mean NOMINATE, PVI, DD, and activism scores for each Tea Party group designation. The table also displays the results of quick mean-comparison tests. Each is an independent t-test of the group in question against the rest of the party.

Based on NOMINATE scores, only the Tea Party Caucus members demonstrate a more ideologically conservative average voting pattern than the rest of their Republican cohorts. The FreedomWorks, and larger Tea Party freshman groups had mean NOMINATE scores that were no more or less conservative than the rest of the party. Additionally, the Tea Party Express group appears to have a slightly *less* conservative voting pattern than the rest of the party, but the mean comparison test returns only borderline significance.

The average PVIs in each group, however, are significant—but in different directions. The Tea Party Caucus members, on average, come from more conservative districts. As such, Caucus members may be able cross Republican leadership more sustainably since they appear more insulated from political risk.

The other group members, on the other hand, tend to come from more contested electorates. This has a relatively straightforward explanation for the FreedomWorks and freshmen categories: new members of Congress are more likely to come from swing districts. The most conservative constituencies would likely already have an incumbent Republican in place. However, the lower PVIs are slightly more difficult to explain for the Tea Party Express endorsements since they go mostly to incumbents (50 for incumbents 35 for freshmen). The most likely explanation is that the

TABLE 4.1  
KEY VARIABLE MEANS BY TEA PARTY IDENTIFIER

	Mean NOMINATE	Mean PVI	Mean District Deviation	Mean Activism
Tea Party Caucus	.8043601** (.0132153)	12.1129** (.8182558)	.3926427** (.0995736)	.5328081** (.0247585)
FreedomWorks	.7335343 (.0179873)	6.785714** (.8054917)	.2558042* (.116664)	.4699895 (.0195448)
Tea Party Express	.698417† (.0161463)	7.082353** (.7567089)	-.0534683 (.0972175)	.4661059 (.0176979)
Tea Party Freshmen	.7267663 (.0165153)	6.185185** (.7036306)	.2568178** (.104567)	.4739084 (.0189588)
Total Party	.7223396 (.0094214)	9.237705 (.46066)	-.0025326 (.0647725)	.4780619 (.0107112)

Mean comparison test: † significant at  $p < 0.10$  | \* significant at  $p < 0.05$  | \*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$   
Standard error in parentheses

---

Tea Party Express targeted contested districts.<sup>18</sup>

The Tea Party Caucus may vote more conservatively than the rest of the party, but how much of this is because they also come from some of the most conservative districts? If we look at the DD scores, however, we can see that Caucus voting is more conservative than we would expect over and above their high average PVI. In other words, Caucus members seem to be voting more conservatively than an average Republican coming from similar levels of district conservatism. However, the case for attitudinal ideology is not yet complete. Notice also that Caucus members tend to come from districts with more Tea Party organizing. Perhaps they are not acting attitudinally ideological, but are instead using extra-conservative voting behavior to strategically respond to activist interests. We will account for this possibility with a more comprehensive regression later in this section.

We also see higher average DD scores for FreedomWorks endorsees and freshmen. They, however, may require a slightly different interpretation since these groups appear to vote no more conservatively than the rest of the party. It might be the case that this pattern can be chalked up to Tea Party ideology, but part of their high mean DD may stem from the fact that these two groups tend to come from the least conservative districts held by Republicans. Unlike the Tea Party Caucus, there is a possible incentive-based explanation that applies uniquely to the freshman cohort: we cannot reject the possibility that many of the newly elected are voting to blend with their rank and file, only incidentally voting more conservatively than their districts.

Qualitative interview-based research offers possible support for this interpretation. Richard Fenno, Jr. follows two New York freshman Representatives from the 89<sup>th</sup> Congress: Democrat Barber B. Conable, Jr. and Republican James S. Scheuer. He argues that for both parties, "...no matter how imposing their achievements or their reputation in the outside world, [freshmen] must begin all over again in the House of Representatives. The committee assignments he receives, the friendships he acquires, the groups he joins, the impressions he makes on others... can spur or impede his rise to influence." He describes the "pervasiveness of seniority rules," and how freshmen differ "in experience and information." He also relates his interviewees' experiences with an orientation seminar conducted by experienced Congressmen and the American Political Science Association. The prevailing theme: "If you want to get along, go along... the Member who follows these canons of behavior stands the best chance of being judged favorably. And with favorable judgment comes the most enduring basis for influence in the House—that is, the 'confidence,' 'respect' and 'trust' of one's fellow Members" (Polsby, 1971). Nicholas Masters makes a similar argument, spelling out how party leadership uses "assignments to major committees to bargain with the leaders of party groups or factions" (Polsby, 1971).

Although Fenno's research may be dated, there have not been any systemic overhauls that would alter the incentives he discusses. So given the pressures faced by new legislators, it would make sense to reject or seriously limit the hypothesis that Tea Party-related attitudinal ideology explains the high average DD scores among freshmen. The data are equally compatible with the likelier interpretation

---

<sup>18</sup> This might cast doubt on the endorsement substantively representing Congressmen qua true Tea Partiers, but we would still be able to try teasing out any influence a Tea Party Express endorsement might have on voting behavior.

---

that party conformity pushes the freshmen beyond what their district characteristics predict by virtue of coming from contested swing districts.

In a study of 100 key votes, POLITICO confirms this finding.<sup>19</sup> “Republican freshmen rarely stand out, bucking the party line at almost the same rate as all other House Republicans—12.5 percent of the time for freshmen and 12.34 percent for veterans.”<sup>20</sup> POLITICO concludes that the freshmen might have dragged the conversation to the right, but as a group, do not exemplify the kind of uncooperative barnburner behavior often attributed to the movement.

Comparing means, however, has its limits. In order to test more robustly which measures explain the variability in Congressional roll call voting behavior for the 112<sup>th</sup> House, I estimate two linear models of the NOMINATE scores reported below in Table 4.2, but this time including our Tea Party variables and a few other controls (gender is coded 1 for female, 0 for male). These should tell us which predictors help to explain voting patterns over 864 votes in the 112<sup>th</sup> House.

Specification (a) includes the FreedomWorks dummy, but excludes the Tea Party freshman dummy; specification (b) does the opposite. Since FreedomWorks endorsed only one incumbent (Tom Graves from Georgia’s 9<sup>th</sup> district) and 69 of the total 81 Tea Party freshmen, the two are highly correlated ( $r = .8805$ ). Even if there were some effect of a FreedomWorks endorsement, it might be masked when holding the group of Tea Party freshmen constant and vice versa. Although including correlated independent variables technically would not bias the model, it inflates standard error and affects the determination of significance. With a relatively small sample size, the extra twelve non-FreedomWorks freshmen could be meaningful. So instead of potentially missing out on fine-grain differences between the two by choosing one over the other, I instead opt to use two specifications.

The regressions appear to confirm much of the analysis based on the mean comparison tests. Caucus membership is strongly significant, predicting a higher NOMINATE score over and above the influence of the other variables including district PVI and Tea Party activism. If self-interest emerging from Tea Party lobbying activities fully explained the Caucus members’ conservatism, we would not expect to see the Caucus dummy variable at a significant p value. As hypothesized, it appears that Caucus members tend to vote more conservatively even when we control for their districts’ baseline conservatism and their magnitude of grassroots activism—together constructing a fairly plausible case for both higher locational and attitudinal ideology in the Tea Party Caucus.

That said, however, the standardized beta coefficients reveal that a change in PVI accounts for more than Caucus membership. Changing PVI by one standard deviation while holding the rest constant would move the NOMINATE score by around 0.4 standard deviations—the largest standardized coefficient. This suggests that ideological proxies like Caucus membership explain a lot about a Member’s voting patterns, but not as much as important information about that member’s district.

The FreedomWorks variable is significant with a positive coefficient. Even though the mean NOMINATE score for the group is no higher than the rest of the party, when we account for other variables it appears that a FreedomWorks endorsement is associated with more conservative voting after all.

---

<sup>19</sup> POLITICO data available here: [http://www.politico.com/static/PPM169\\_110914\\_freshman\\_vote\\_data\\_v2.html](http://www.politico.com/static/PPM169_110914_freshman_vote_data_v2.html)

<sup>20</sup> Allen, J., & Titus, E. (2011, 9/14/11). The myth of freshman power. *POLITICO*.



TABLE 4.2  
LINEAR REGRESSION ON W-NOMINATE SCORES

DV: W- NOMINATE Scores	(a) Coefficient	(a) Standardized β Coefficient	(b) Coefficient	(b) Standardized β Coefficient
Activism (1000s)	.123016* (2.16)	.1403074	.1160828* (2.02)	.1323998
Tea Party Caucus	.0771261** (4.07)	.229406	.0747039** (3.93)	.2222015
FreedomWorks	.038725* (1.99)	.1196555		
Tea Party Express	-.0190393 (-0.89)	-.0619522	-.0200375 (-0.93)	-.0652005
Tea Party Freshman			.0390085† (1.95)	.1254664
Gender	.0084759 (0.33)	.0172538	.0087317 (0.34)	.0177744
PVI	.0080713** (5.59)	.3959115	.0083848** (5.60)	.4112932
Age	-.0022686** (-2.83)	-.1624989	-.002178* (-2.67)	-.1560149
South	.0398241 (1.10)	.1347495	.0410901 (1.14)	.1390333
Midwest	.0991334** (3.54)	.2979237	.1008095** (3.59)	.3029608
West	.0799433* (2.19)	.2081614	.0831598* (2.27)	.2165367
Unemployment	.0101463* (2.46)	.1515327	.0102838* (2.49)	.1535861
Percent black	.001759 (1.39)	.0987435	.0019156 (1.51)	.1075353
Percent Hispanic	.0010077 (1.35)	.0901384	.0009584 (1.29)	.0857366
Median household income (100,000s)	.115878 (1.49)	.1007834	.1259837 (1.58)	.1095728
Constant	.4475676** (5.19)		.4332408** (4.85)	
N	243		243	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.3313		0.3308	

† significant at p < 0.10 | \* significant at p < 0.05 | \*\* significant at p < 0.01  
t-statistic in parentheses

---

However, in the other model the Tea Party freshman dummy fails to cross the conventional  $\alpha$  threshold of  $p < .05$ , but comes close to doing so. Once we account for those extra freshmen with Tea Party associations who did not receive a FreedomWorks endorsement, it becomes unclear whether we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that being a Tea Party freshman increases a Republican's probability of exhibiting more conservative voting behavior. Perhaps the freshmen are indeed subject to amplified conformity pressures, but considering FreedomWorks endorsements helps to explain a trend in who defects within the freshman class. It is worth noting, however, that if the "age" variable were excluded from the model it *would* ping significant. This suggests that whatever effects there might be for Tea Party freshmen—who tend to be younger on average<sup>21</sup>—are mostly absorbed by a larger trend in the House where young Members tend to be more conservative. So while it may seem that Tea Party freshmen vote more conservatively, controlling for age reveals that the trend may have less to do with being either a freshman or a Tea Partier.

It is also worth noticing that high levels of Tea Party activism within a district predict higher NOMINATE scores. So given two districts with identical demographic characteristics, we would expect to see a representative with a higher NOMINATE score in the district with more Tea Party organizing. This is a potentially big insight into the power of the Tea Party movement, and perhaps the potential for grassroots organizing more generally.

In our first model of district-based variables used to generate residuals, being from the South appeared to predict more conservative voting. But once we introduce our Tea Party variables, this effect vanishes (unlike those of the other geography dummies). Some commentators like *Slate's* Michael Lind have suggested that the Tea Party movement is uniquely Southern—even neo-Confederate by nature.<sup>22</sup> Even though Lind is correct to point out that Caucus membership is largely Southern, based on this analysis their conservatism appears to stem from their Tea Party affiliation *simpliciter*, not necessarily their Southern location.

Bailey et al. conduct a similar analysis, but there are some key differences to point out. For example, they control for being a GOP freshman in the same model as the FreedomWorks group variable, which may lead to a distortive interpretation of the predictors' significances as discussed. They also calculate a separate specification to control for NOMINATE scores in the 110<sup>th</sup> House, finding that the effects of the Tea Party variables vanish. This is problematic for three reasons.

First, Poole and Rosenthal make it clear that W-NOMINATE scores "...are not directly comparable between Congresses."<sup>23</sup> As such, we do not know that the 110<sup>th</sup> scores are actually controlling for pre-Tea Party ideology relative to the 112<sup>th</sup> scores. After the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress concludes and a new batch of DW-NOMINATE scores are available, perhaps then one can begin cracking this problem.

Even so, however, using the 110<sup>th</sup> scores as a control both reduces and biases the sample. Not only do we miss out on every new Member from the 111<sup>th</sup> and 112<sup>th</sup> Houses, but also we look exclusively at some of the most electorally secure districts.

---

<sup>21</sup>  $t(242) = 6.09, p < .001$

<sup>22</sup> Lind, M. (2011, Tuesday, Aug 2, 2011). The tea party, the debt ceiling, and white southern extremism. *Salon*.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on the different NOMINATE procedures: <http://voteview.com/page2a.htm>

---

And third, even if these difficulties were overcome, their findings only tell us that some of the representatives who are already the most conservative joined the Caucus. Joining may not move members *further* to the right than they were in 2007-2009, but our static view still gives us important information about who is voting how, and does not change the meaningful fact that Caucus members vote more conservatively than their Republican peers in the 112<sup>th</sup> House.

One might object by arguing that Tea Party affiliation is not doing the work: since Caucus members have always been extremely conservative, the Tea Party is not exercising any effect on their behavior. While this is a possibility, its implications are fairly limited. Since NOMINATE scores measure political ideology relative to the rest of the body, it is rather trivial to say that the most conservative members were not made more conservative. It is also still a point of interest that members who opted to self-identify with the movement turn out to be more conservative than those who do not. And lastly, it could equally be the case that these Representatives had always been the sort of staunch ideologues admired by the Tea Party, and only recently came to fall under that label. So even if Bailey et al. are correct that Caucus membership does not make members *more* conservative than they had been before, this would be compatible with the possibility that Caucus members had always been “Tea Partiers” in action before they were in name.

Since NOMINATE scores are not rooted in actual policy, looking at them alone might conceal an overall shift to the right, which may be the result of Tea Party activity (Bailey et al, 2011). Another remaining puzzle concerns how we interpret the effects of being a Tea Party freshman. While the mean NOMINATE score of the group is not different from the rest of the party, we have inconclusive evidence that being a Tea Party freshman promotes conservatism once we account for other variables. To take a closer look at these phenomena, we now turn our attention to several individual roll calls. Careful qualitative assessment of these votes should also begin to provide insights as to why Representatives vote the way they do—bearing more directly on attitudinal ideology.

## 5 The Debt Ceiling

### 5.1 Background

Since World War I, the United States Congress has restricted the amount of money the government could borrow with a debt ceiling. Since the budgeting process works separately, raising the debt ceiling to accommodate new spending has generally been a routine, if politicized, formality. According to the Government Accountability Office, the debt ceiling has been raised twelve times since 1995 to the level of \$14.294 trillion at the time of the controversy. Their report argues, “The debt limit does not control or limit the ability of the federal government to run deficits or incur obligations. Rather, it is a limit on the ability to pay obligations already incurred.”<sup>24</sup>

And yet, in 2011 the debt ceiling became the centerpiece of Tea Party activism. The Tea Party Express issued a statement declaring that Boehner’s proposals “lack sufficient progress in getting

---

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2011). *Delays create debt management challenges and increase uncertainty in the treasury market*. (No. GAO-11-203).

---

America's economic future on a better footing.”<sup>25</sup> Chairwoman Amy Kremer said, “For this reason we are calling on Speaker Boehner to say 'Hell No!' to the cacophony from the left that demands we quietly raise the debt ceiling.”<sup>26</sup> My interview with coordinator Christie Shirey from Delaware shed some light on the sort of reasoning that motivates this position: “Well I didn't study economics in a university, but I know if I am maxed out on my credit card, and I go out to get another credit card to pay for my other credit card, I'm going to lose my home. And I can't see how spending when you're so far in debt is going to help us. I can't fathom a way to understand how that works.”

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner argued that failing to raise the debt ceiling would result in the United States defaulting on its debt. He said, “Even a very short-term or limited default would have catastrophic economic consequences that would last for decades.”<sup>27</sup> Others, however, attempted to refute the premise that failing to raise the debt ceiling would incur default. According to CNBC, the Congressional Research Service briefed members of Congress on the consequences of hitting the debt limit, suggesting that default on sovereign debt is not inevitable since the Treasury can choose what to fund with what is available, prioritizing payments to bondholders.<sup>28</sup> Senator Jim DeMint capitalized on this argument in a letter to Secretary Geithner cosigned by sixteen other Republican Senators: “As you know, capping the federal debt at \$14.29 trillion would not, in and of itself, lead to default. The Treasury takes in more than enough money from taxpayers to cover interest payments on the national debt.... Cutting spending programs, reducing the federal workforce, and prioritizing payments to vendors and contractors is not the same thing as sovereign default.”<sup>29</sup>

In a response letter, Geithner argued that “prioritizing” would require cutting around 40 percent of all government payments, which would risk reviving the recession. “At its core, your letter is based on an untested and unacceptably risky assumption: that if the United State were to continue to pay interest on its debt—yet failed to pay legally required obligations to its citizens, servicemen and women, and businesses—there would be no adverse market reaction and no damage to the full faith and credit of the United States.” Further, he argues, even if bondholders are paid, there is no guarantee that investors will continue to invest in U.S. treasuries if the government is defaulting on many of its other obligations.<sup>30</sup>

Tea Party activism came from two basic directions.<sup>31</sup> First, some Tea Partiers believed that no debt-ceiling raise would be acceptable. The grassroots platform Tea Party Patriots began the “no debt increase” pledge, urging members of Congress to “...oppose an increase in the debt ceiling.

---

<sup>25</sup> *Tea party express statement on raising the debt ceiling*. (2011). Retrieved, 2012, from <http://www.teapartyexpress.org/2483/tea-party-express-statement-on-raising-the-debt-ceiling>

<sup>26</sup> D'Aprile, S. (2011, 04/28/11). Tea party groups increase pressure on debt limit. *The Hill*,

<sup>27</sup> Gudmundson, E. (2011, 1/6/2011). Secretary Geithner sends debt limit letter to congress. Message posted to <http://www.treasury.gov/connect/blog/Pages/letter.aspx>

<sup>28</sup> LaRocco, L. A. (2011, Wednesday, 25 May 2011). Private Congressional briefings reveal government will not 'shut down' August 2. *CNBC*

<sup>29</sup> Senate GOP to Geithner: Default is your choice. (2011, May 26, 2011). Message posted to [http://www.demint.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?ContentRecord\\_id=7371d3a9-9435-4277-87ef-330fcf689087&p=PressReleases](http://www.demint.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?ContentRecord_id=7371d3a9-9435-4277-87ef-330fcf689087&p=PressReleases)

<sup>30</sup> Geithner, T. (2011, June 29, 2011). Full text: Geithner letter responding to Republicans on debt limit. Message posted to <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2011/06/29/full-text-geithner-letter-responding-to-republicans-on-debt-limit/>

<sup>31</sup> Wasson, E. (2011, 07/04/11). Tea partiers split over debt strategy. *The Hill*

---

Period.”<sup>32</sup> According to their internal polling (however reliable this may or may not be), most of their members oppose raising the debt ceiling.<sup>33</sup> Their figures may not be too far off, since Gallup polling suggests that as of July 2011, 60% of Republicans (not just Tea Partiers) opposed raising the limit.

Other Tea Party groups have argued that the debt ceiling should only be raised if it is accompanied by the “cut, cap, and balance” of the budget. Matt Kibbe, president of FreedomWorks, had this to say: “A small handful of Tea Partiers and a few members of Congress have argued against raising the debt ceiling, period. Most realize, however, that the black hole of President Obama’s \$1.5 trillion deficit is simply too deep to plausibly eliminate overnight and we will, regrettably, need to raise the debt ceiling to accommodate it.”<sup>34</sup> This did not stop Kibbe from strongly urging votes against Boehner’s debt ceiling plan,<sup>35</sup> which passed in the House without a single vote of Democrat support only to be blocked in the Senate.<sup>36</sup>

The “Cut, Cap, and Balance Act,” the fruit of Tea Party influence, would have required large spending cuts, spending caps, and a vote on a balanced budget amendment as a condition of raising the debt ceiling. It was introduced by the Republican Study Committee, and passed with the support of 229 Republicans and five Blue Dog Democrats, with only nine Republicans dissenting. However, the bill died in the Senate with a strong veto threat from President Obama and with Reid calling it the single worst piece of legislation ever to hit the Senate floor.<sup>37</sup>

The Tea Party coordinators I spoke to fell into both camps. One said, “Some of our local board thought we should not compromise whatsoever, and some of us felt that we don’t have the numbers, let’s get the best deal that we can and live to fight another day.” His board split 5-4 in favor of a compromise solution akin to Boehner’s last proposal. Another agreed: “I think there was a sizable minority of [members] who did not want to raise the debt ceiling at all. And my point I kept making to them was you can’t just slam on the brakes.” On the other hand, some like Wildman, national coordinator from California, thought the Republican Study Committee was imagining Tea Party support on its conditional offer to support a debt-ceiling raise: “...you look around and say ‘who are they talking about?’ ...We’ve taken 10 polls amongst our membership about the debt ceiling, it always comes back between 86 to 98 percent that say don’t raise the debt ceiling.”

The Tea Party positions became controversial even within the Republican Party. Senator John McCain (R-AZ), for example, even called the Tea Party demands “bizarro” and “worse than foolish.”<sup>38</sup>

The final compromise bill cut \$2.1 trillion over ten years, raises the debt ceiling to avoid default, and tasks a special joint committee with coming up with part of those cuts. If the committee cannot

---

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.nodedbtincrease.com/>

<sup>33</sup> NPR Staff. (2011, July 29, 2011). Tea Party Patriots: Don't raise debt ceiling. *NPR*.

<sup>34</sup> Kibbe, M. (2011, 07/28/2011). Tea partiers are the adults in debt ceiling debate. *The Daily Caller*

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.FreedomWorks.org/files/BoehnersDebtCeilingPlan.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Silverleib, A., & Cohen, T. (2011, July 29, 2011). Senate Democrats block Boehner debt ceiling plan after House approval. *CNN*.

<sup>37</sup> Senate votes to set aside 'cut, cap and balance' plan proposed by house GOP. (2011, July 22, 2011). *Fox News*.

<sup>38</sup> Condon, S. (2011, July 27, 2011). McCain blasts "bizarro" Tea Party debt limit demands. *CBS News*.

---

reach an agreement, automatic cuts are invoked. Members of both parties expressed disappointment with the deal, but for different reasons. Democratic Senator Robert Menendez described the bill as a “capitulation to a radical fringe of the Republican Party,” whereas Republican Representative Steve Southerland argued, “This agreement falls short of addressing our historic economic challenges and does not alleviate the threat of a crippling downgrade in America’s credit rating.”<sup>39</sup>

Other Republicans released statements explaining their reasons for voting against the bill. Representative Geoff Davis from Kentucky, for example, took issue with the fact that the bill “decouples the passage of a Balanced Budget Amendment with the second portion of the debt limit increase.”<sup>40</sup> Steve Southerland, freshman from Florida, said, “I just know for me, in my heart and for those I represent, they’re struggling and hurting under the weight of this debt. I don’t feel that this piece of legislation goes far enough.”<sup>41</sup>

Speaker Boehner was quoted as saying that he “got 98%” of what he wanted,<sup>42</sup> but for 66 Republicans this was not enough.

## 5.2 Analysis

The final result of the vote was 269-161 in favor, with three (all Democrats) not voting. Both parties were divided, with Democrats split evenly 95 for and against. 174 Republicans voted for the bill, and 66 voted against. With the number of Republicans voting for the bill, they needed the support of at least 42 Democrats, which they exceeded by a victory margin of 53 votes.

Given the context of the discussion leading up to the vote and the explicit statements made by both Republican and Democrat Congressmen, I code Nay votes as votes against the party compromise position. From Nay votes we can reasonably infer legislative uncooperativeness and unwillingness to compromise, since the major complaint from the far right was that the bill did not go far enough reigning in spending.

Even if Nay votes are evidence of uncompromising behavior, however it is less clear that votes for the bill represent compromise. There is broad agreement in the press, in my interviews, and in statements by Members of Congress that the Tea Party brought the discussion to the right with hardline negotiation tactics. Representative Todd Young from Indiana puts it like this: “The real power behind the freshman class has been the influence that we exercise before things ever hit the floor, early on in the process,” suggesting that the freshmen are willing to cooperate once the bill moves in a direction amenable to their preferences.<sup>43</sup> Democrat Eliot Engel from New York said, “But the bottom line is, when Republicans started this debate, they said under no circumstances would they vote for any kind of compromise that had tax increases. And that’s just what they got... if you had told me that this would be the package a month ago, I would have asked you what you had been smoking.”

---

<sup>39</sup> Hulse, C. (2011, August 1, 2011). Long battle on debt ending as Senate set for final vote. *The New York Times*.

<sup>40</sup> Davis, G. (2011, Aug 1, 2011). Congressman Davis votes against debt ceiling increase. Message posted to <http://www.geoffdavis.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=254756>

<sup>41</sup> Cogan, M. (2011, 8/1/11). Why GOP frosh said yes to debt deal. *POLITICO*.

<sup>42</sup> Pelley, S. (2011, August 1, 2011). Boehner: I got 98 percent of what I wanted. *CBS News*.

<sup>43</sup> Allen, J., & Titus, E. (2011, 9/14/11). The myth of freshman power. *POLITICO*.

TABLE 5.1  
DEBT CEILING VOTE DESCRIPTION

Group	For	Against	Group Percent Against	Rest of Party Percent Against
Tea Party Caucus	32	30	48.39%	20.22%
FreedomWorks	46	24	34.29%	24.71%
Tea Party Express	66	18	21.42%	30.77%
Tea Party Freshmen	52	28	35.00%	23.75%
No TP Affiliation	62	13	17.33%	24.85%
Republican Party Total	174	66	27.50%	

That said, however, some of the justifications offered for Yea votes were explicitly conciliatory and compromising. Arkansas freshman Tim Griffin said, “If we had a conservative Senate and a conservative president, we wouldn’t be happy with this, but this is a first step and it’s going to take a lot of steps. There isn’t going to be one bill that will fix our deficit and our debt. It’s going to take a series of steps and this is a good start.”<sup>44</sup> North Carolina freshman Renee Ellmers added that, “The speaker has given the freshmen class everything we’ve asked for.”<sup>45</sup>

So in the final roll call, we cannot interpret every vote for the bill as fully cooperative with the party establishment—especially given the protracted and controversial nature of the debate. We can only infer that Yay voters are perhaps marginally more cooperative than Nay voters, with the understanding that many votes for the bill were explicitly conciliatory and cooperative.

As we can see in Table 5.1, a majority of each Tea Party identity voted for the bill, but some groups more strongly than others. The largest proportion of dissent comes far and away from the Tea Party Caucus, with the Tea Party freshmen finishing second. Interestingly, a smaller proportion of Tea Party Express endorsees voted Nay than the rest of the party. To assess whether these groups robustly predict voting behavior on the debt ceiling, I estimate a probit model of the vote, with 1 representing a vote for the compromise. As such, we should expect to see negative coefficients for variables that decrease the likelihood of cooperating on the bill.

The first column of each specification indicates the result of the probit regression, or the effect of a variable on the latent proclivity towards voting for the bill. The most that we can infer from these coefficients, however, is the general direction. For example, we can see that higher NOMINATE scores predict a greater likelihood of voting against the compromise bill—i.e. members with more conservative roll call histories are more likely to vote against the bill than those with less conservative voting patterns. The big surprise, however, is that Tea Party Express endorsement is associated with voting *for* the bill.

However, these coefficients cannot answer the question: how much likelier? The second column reports the average marginal effects taken from the partial derivative of the regression. These values

<sup>44</sup> Cogan, M. (2011, 8/1/11). Why GOP frosh said yes to debt deal. *POLITICO*.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

TABLE 5.2  
PROBIT ESTIMATES FOR THE DEBT CEILING COMPROMISE

DV: Debt Ceiling vote	(a) Coefficient	(a) Average marginal effect	(b) Coefficient	(b) Average marginal effect
Activism (1000s)	-1.314066† (.723)	-.3332713†	-1.151808 (.728)	-.2876876
Tea Party Caucus	-.5714987* (.231)	-.1582122*	-.5563612* (.231)	-.1511627*
FreedomWorks	-.3492372 (.256)	-.0913529		
Tea Party Express	.7397592* (.318)	.1785236**	.8182573* (.326)	.1879212**
Tea Party Freshman			-.6038644* (.267)	-.156796*
NOMINATE	-2.933449** (.865)	-.7439768**	-2.881686** (.861)	-.7197598**
PVI	-.0226317 (.019)	-.0057398	-.0335464 (.020)	-.0083789†
Gender	.550368 (.368)	.1744571†	.5510244 (.371)	.1239202†
Age	.0059935 (.010)	.0015201	.0021223 (.011)	.0005301
South	.6277612 (.558)	.1592118	.6484229 (.562)	.1619568
Midwest	-.2503627 (.472)	-.0634966	-.264001 (.474)	-.0659396
West	-.9062183 (.593)	-.2298337	-1.015463† (.599)	-.2536326†
Unemployment	.0247049 (.054)	.0062656	.0224089 (.054)	.0055971
Percent black	-.0313329* (.015)	-.0079466*	-.0337886* (.016)	-.0084394*
Percent Hispanic	.0139502 (.012)	.003538	.0148258 (.012)	.003703
Median household income (100,000s)	1.081191 (1.136)	.2742099	.7154176 (1.145)	.1786901
Constant	2.632723* (1.247)		3.148716* (1.277)	
N	239		239	
Correctly classifies (prob ≥ 0.5):	80.33%		80.75%	

† significant at p < 0.10 | \* significant at p < 0.05 | \*\* significant at p < 0.01  
Standard error in parentheses



---

indicate the average percent change in the probability of voting for the bill given a one-unit change in that variable—holding all others constant. This is especially easy to interpret for dummy variables, where the marginal effect applies to a discrete change from 0 to 1. So, for example, being a member of the Tea Party Caucus makes a typical House Republican about 15% less likely to vote for the bill.

FreedomWorks endorsement does not have a significant effect in the first model, but being a Tea Party freshman in the second model does. This difference is so pronounced that the freshman variable comes out significant even if both are included in the same model. Even though a strong majority of Tea Party freshmen approved of the bill (52 for to 28 against), the regression reveals that being a Tea Party freshman appears to induce a greater likelihood of voting against the compromise bill.

When we looked at whether Tea Party identifiers predict overall patterns of voting, we found only inconclusive evidence that being a Tea Party freshman matters—hypothesizing that the freshmen are possibly attempting to incorporate into the party structure. Here, however, we see a clear effect on a specific Tea Party issue that is comparable to the effects of Caucus membership. So even if the freshmen are subject to amplified conformity pressures, they appear more willing to break rank on this especially poignant fiscal issue.

Controlling for NOMINATE scores is also sharpens the inferences we can draw from our Tea Party dummy variables: even when we account for the conservatism of a Representative’s voting record, a Tea Party Caucus member or a Tea Party freshman will *still* be more likely to vote against the bill on this Tea Party issue—more so than an average GOP Representative with an identically conservative voting record on other issues.

In the first specification, Tea Party activism is borderline significant. This might suggest that Representatives were responsive to Tea Party supporters before the overall mood of their districts. However, when we use the broader Tea Party freshman variable instead of FreedomWorks, this possible effect is nowhere to be seen. The FreedomWorks variable seems to do slightly worse than the freshman variable at predicting the debt ceiling vote, but district activism seems to help pick up the slack. However, activism does not appear to predict the vote outcome over and above the influence of the broader freshman variable. However, Bailey et al. *do* detect a significant effect for the activism variable in their models, and I do not see any theoretical reason why any of the variables unique to my version should account completely for these effects (the inclusion of percent Hispanic oddly makes the difference here). It could be a specification error in either paper, but a mild one as we are mostly otherwise in agreement. I did not want to retroactively “tune” which variables to include in order maximizing significances—a practice that may produce false positives. Either way, I urge caution in interpreting the effects of the activism variable, especially because its significance on this vote is apparently so fragile to specification.

The significant positive coefficient for Tea Party Express endorsees is mysterious. I proffered one possible explanation in Section 4. Since the Tea Party Express group has a lower average PVI than the rest of the party but are largely incumbents, it could be the case that Tea Party Express targeted some of the most contested districts, disposing endorsees towards voting with the party. Yet, PVI did not appear to indicate this effect overall so it seems odd to assume that such an effect would instantiate exclusively for endorsees. Perhaps this association has more to do with coincidence of

---

whom the Tea Party Express happened to endorse rather than the endorsement *causing* more cooperative voting. Either way, however, we can safely conclude that the Tea Party Express endorsements failed to skew Congressional voting behavior in a direction desired by activists.

Our assessment of the debt-ceiling vote is a promising start. Many of the predictors that explain variability in overall voting patterns are not significant when we look at this specific issue, and we see a clear influence of being a Tea Party freshman. This issue represents the pinnacle of Tea Party activity, so it comes as no surprise that Tea Party identities are important predictors of the result. There are, however, some anomalous findings. It is difficult to interpret the positive effect of Tea Party Express endorsements, and there are still questions that need to be answered about the predictive power of our Tea Party activism variable. The next few case studies will continue to flesh out the relationship between the Tea Party and legislative outcomes.

### 5.3 The aftermath

The debt-ceiling vote left many Tea Party groups in a quandary: what to do about those endorsees that voted *for* the compromise bill? When I asked my interviewees, their responses were fairly consistent. I found no indication that local Tea Party groups are scrambling to line up new primary challenges based on the debt-ceiling vote. Even those coordinators who preferred the compromise solution expressed respect and support for Representatives who voted against the bill, and couched their disapproval of those who voted Yay. One coordinator I spoke to from Montana expressed a tone of realism: “They didn’t have the numbers, live to fight another day, regroup. I don’t consider them betrayers to the cause. We’re not gonna throw them overboard, I wouldn’t throw them out of the boat. They’re still part of who we are. We’re still counting on the 80-to-90 percent of what we agree on. There’s no 100 percent litmus test.”

Michigan is an interesting case, because Representatives Walberg and Benishek voted for the debt ceiling while Amash—one of the most conservative Republicans—voted against. When I asked one of Michigan’s Tea Party coordinators about this, he did not hear about any blowback against Representatives voting for the bill. For Amash, “People there are happy with him, think he’s great.” My interviewee from Montana was happy about Representative Rehberg voting against the bill. “Oh absolutely, we applauded him for that. Even though we lost it, it meant that he heard us. I was on the phone with his chief of staff a number of times urging him to vote no. And he stuck with it, and we thought that was fine. At the end of the day, when it came down to it, we simply didn’t have the numbers.” So it seemed like people were happy with their Representatives who voted against the bill, but at least some Tea Party members were forgiving of votes for raising the debt ceiling. The Michigan coordinator said, “...a year from now when people are at the poll lever again, I don’t think they’ll be thinking about this. It’ll be way back in everyone’s minds. There are a few hotheads that get really excited.”

Whether we see a new spate of Tea Party primary challenges in the next election remains to be seen. If we do see this, however, it would appear unlikely to be purely to the outcome of the debt-ceiling vote.

My firebrand interviewee from Kentucky extolled the virtues of Senator Rand Paul’s opposition to the bill. “It was a terrible bill, I’m very much against it. And like I said, you have to be a moron to

---

think that was a good bill, because it's obvious that it's a terrible bill." But when I asked him about Kentucky Republican and Appropriations Committee chairman Harold Rogers who voted Yay, he said, "Yeah that was a mistake. Someone's got to talk to that guy, and explain to him that you cannot balance your budget by spending more and more money. They haven't figured that out yet. Someone's got to explain that to him." Unlike some of the others, he could see his local Tea Party withdrawing support of any candidate who supported the debt-ceiling compromise.

In the wake of the bill's passage, Standard and Poor downgraded the U.S. credit rating from AAA to AA+. According to the company's statement, "The downgrade reflects our view that the effectiveness, stability, and predictability of American policymaking and political institutions have weakened at a time of ongoing fiscal and economic challenge."<sup>46</sup> Markets plunged in reaction, with all three major indexes falling between 5 and 7 percent.<sup>47</sup>

A New York Times/CBS News poll reveal that the debt ceiling debacle provoked a record-high disapproval rating for Congress at 82 percent. It also found that more people believe that Republicans are to blame for the impasse, with 72 percent disapproving of how Republicans handled the negotiations (compared to 66 percent disapproving of the Democrats). Most relevantly to our purposes, however, Tea Party favorability ratings dropped substantially following the debt-ceiling debate. "The Tea Party is now viewed unfavorably by 40 percent of the public and favorably by just 20 percent, according to the poll. In mid-April 29 percent of those polled viewed the movement unfavorably, while 26 percent viewed it favorably."<sup>48</sup>

This change in fortunes for the Tea Party may come out legislatively. If, on the other hand, a downtick in Tea Party favorability does not weaken Tea Party effects, this may be more evidence of ideology at play. In the next section we will look at the pre-debt deal budget bills, and then turn our attention to similar bills post-debt deal to see if any of our Tea Party variables go silent as the movement's favorability declines. We will come back to this question in section 7 when we look at the post-debt-ceiling budget negotiations for fiscal year 2012.

Conservative commentator George Will observed that much of the backlash against Obama might owe itself to the perception that the President overreached—on healthcare, TARP, and spending in general. He argues that the Tea Party already won at the point where Harry Reid proposed all cuts and no new revenue. Pushing too hard, Will argued, might run the risk of the Tea Party similarly overreaching.<sup>49</sup> It seems like the public agreed.

---

<sup>46</sup> Applebaum, B., & Dash, E. (2011, August 5, 2011). S.& P. downgrades debt rating of U.S. for the first time. *The New York Times*.

<sup>47</sup> Sweet, K. (2011, August 8, 2011). Dow plunges after S&P downgrade. *CNN*.

<sup>48</sup> Cooper, M., & Thee-Brenan, M. (2011, August 4, 2011). Disapproval rate for Congress at record 82% after debt talks. *The New York Times*.

<sup>49</sup> Poor, J. (2011, 07/28/2011). George Will on debt ceiling battle: 'Pocket these gains and prepare for the next fight'. *The Daily Caller*.

---

## 6 Stopgap and Budget Votes

### 6.1 Stopgap Background

Since budget negotiations were so contested, Congress passed seven stopgap spending bills to keep funding the federal government until the point where broader consensus could be reached on the budget for the rest of the fiscal year through September 30. I chose to look at House vote 179 on March 15, 2011, which provoked a significant amount of dissent from the Republican rank. The bill funded the government for an additional three weeks after March 15, 2011, while introducing \$6 billion in spending cuts.

The final result of the vote was 271-158 in favor, with four not voting. Both parties were divided, with Democrats voting mostly against (85-104). 186 Republicans voted for the bill, and 54 dissented. With the amount of Republican support, they needed at least 29 Democrats, which they exceeded by a victory margin of 56 votes.

Some, like votes 154 and 247 passed without notable controversy within in the Republican ranks. Vote 253 was controversial but did not incite as much dissent as the vote we will be looking at. Republicans claimed that 253 got tied up over spending disagreements, but Democrats claimed that Republicans were refusing to give up restrictions on Planned Parenthood funding.<sup>50</sup> Planned Parenthood was also bone of contention for 179.

Each individual stopgap measure did not receive as much mainstream attention as the debt ceiling, but they do represent interesting test cases for teasing out compromise since the stakes of a government shutdown are so high. Some of the stopgaps were passed at the eleventh hour, creating pressure-cooker situations that may bring out extra Yay votes from the ranks of some who might otherwise have defected to make a statement. Republicans with a long institutional memory may recall the federal government shutdown of 1995 and 1996, where Republicans—especially those in the House under Speaker Gingrich—suffered most of the blame. Representatives especially keen on avoiding a repeat of the Clinton-era debacle may be more likely to vote for the stopgap bills.

At the same time, however, the stopgap measures presented an opportunity to cast strategic votes to signal intentions on a final budget deal. Voting against would send the message that earning their support is contingent on receiving a very conservative budget proposal—potentially shifting the terms of negotiation to the right. The New York Times reports, “The defections suggest that the House leadership could have difficulty selling a final budget compromise to its membership if the plan dips very far below the \$61 billion in cuts approved by the House and does not contain policy restrictions on abortion, the new health care law and environmental rules that many House Republicans favor.”<sup>51</sup>

The New York Times further reports the stated motivations of some Members for voting against the bill. Representative Trey Gowdy from South Carolina said that he thinks his constituents “...want a quicker pace.” Representative Mike Pence from Indiana, a strong advocate of defunding Planned

---

<sup>50</sup> Hulse, C. (2011, April 8, 2011). Budget deal to cut \$38 billion averts shutdown. *The New York Times*.

<sup>51</sup> Hulse, C. (2011, March 15, 2011). House passes spending bill, but not happily. *The New York Times*.

---

Parenthood, said, “Things don’t change in Washington, D.C. until they have to... It will not be possible to put our fiscal house in order without a fight. By giving liberals in the Senate another three weeks of negotiations, we will only delay a confrontation that must come. I say, ‘Let it come now. It’s time to take a stand.’”<sup>52</sup> Additionally, an anti-abortion group called the Susan B. Anthony List urged members to vote against the bill since it excluded Pence’s amendment defunding Planned Parenthood.<sup>53</sup> Tea Party Nation also came out against the bill.<sup>54</sup>

Speaking on a different stopgap, vote 253, Tea Party Caucus organizer Michele Bachmann (R-MN) defends her vote against the bill by arguing that it should have cut at least \$61 billion. Tim Scott from South Carolina agrees that it did not go far enough: “The question I still have to wrestle with: Is it enough?”<sup>55</sup> These attitudes found company in the Senate as well, where Senator Rubio from Florida declared that he no longer supports short-term spending measures. “...We simply can no longer afford to nickel-and-dime our way out of the dangerous debt America has amassed,” he argued.<sup>56</sup>

The Tea Party implications are slightly less clear, since at least some of the opposition to this spending bill centers around a socially charged policy. Perhaps the vote is really about a social issue masquerading as fiscal conservatism, or perhaps House members really do see this as a fundamentally fiscal concern given salience by its social-policy implications. Democrats tended to paint it as the former, with Republicans preferring the latter interpretation.

As such, there is no clear single way to code votes against the bill, since votes against can be interpreted as uncompromising fiscally *or* socially. If our Tea Party variables predict Nay votes, this may be evidence either of Tea Party leakage into non-fiscal issues, or an incidental correlation between Tea Party membership and social conservatism. Given the findings of Bailey et al. on the PATRIOT act, this is a distinct possibility. Nevertheless, even with the social implications of the vote, we should not lose sight of the fact that this was a stopgap spending bill, and the most prominent features of the debate were fiscal—even within Pence’s own remarks.

There have even been some reports of Tea Party groups like the South Florida Tea Party explicitly thanking the 54 members of Congress who voted against the bill.<sup>57</sup> One of my interviewees told a similar story, likely about vote 253, the stopgap spending bill with twenty-eight Republican dissenters: “Well during the budget debate, after the house had its vote and the 22 members—was it twenty-two? The twenty-two members who voted against it, we went over to the House and, it was a Saturday and right before the senate voted on it, and we went from Congressman to Congressman

---

<sup>52</sup> Sonmez, F. (2011, 03/15/2011). Conservative opposition to stopgap spending measure grows; Pence, Chaffetz latest to announce ‘no’ votes. Message posted to [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/2chambers/post/conservative-opposition-to-stopgap-spending-measure-grows-pence-chaffetz-latest-to-announce-no-votes/2011/03/15/ABwqJ9W\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/2chambers/post/conservative-opposition-to-stopgap-spending-measure-grows-pence-chaffetz-latest-to-announce-no-votes/2011/03/15/ABwqJ9W_blog.html)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Wasson, E. (2011, 03/14/11). Tea party opponents complicate GOP vote on new stopgap funding bill. *The Hill*.

<sup>55</sup> Not all republicans like stopgap funding. (2011, April 9, 2011). *UPI*.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/state/congress-spending-stopgaps-face-no-vote-from-tea-1320876.html>

<sup>57</sup> Tea party thanks 54 GOP congressmen for voting against stopgap spending bill - GOP fails to cut \$100 billion. (2011, March 17th, 2011). Message posted to <http://liberty.com/content/press-release-tea-party-thanks-54-gop-congressmen-voting-against-stopgap-spending-bill-gop-f>

---

who voted No to thank them. These guys had been threatened worse from the Republican Party than anyone else.”

Regardless of a member’s motivations for voting against, Nay votes certainly tell us something about legislative uncooperativeness, and appear to have the closest association with Tea Party priorities.

## 6.2 Final 2011 budget background

In this section I also analyze the final budget deal signed into law by President Obama on April 15, 2011, the day after passing in the House. Since voting on the stopgap is likely related to voting on the final budget, I treat them together quantitatively in a bivariate probit model. This allows us to determine which variables affect the joint probability of voting for or against *both* bills.

The final result of the vote was 260-167, with six not voting. Democrats split 81-108, and Republicans voted 179-59. With the number of Republicans voting for the bill, they needed the support of at least 35 Democrats, which they exceeded by a victory margin of 46 votes.

Like some of the stopgap measures, the budget agreement was reached mere hours before the deadline. It was a bipartisan compromise containing \$38.5 billion in cuts from previous pending in 2010, which some like *Slate*’s David Weigel have called a big win for the Tea Party.<sup>58</sup> Tea Party groups, however, did not always agree. Both the Tea Party Express and FreedomWorks expressed disappointment with the “trivial \$38 billion” on the chopping block.<sup>59</sup> Tea Party Nation founder Judson Phillips argued that Speaker Boehner “doesn’t have stomach for a fight” before calling for a “Tea Party insurrection.” He said, “Reducing spending by \$33 billion in the face of a \$1.65 trillion deficit is not a cut; it is a joke.”<sup>60</sup> Some, like Wasson of *The Hill*, argue that the Tea Party had something to do with the difficulty of wrangling certain Republican votes.<sup>61</sup>

The Tea Party members of Congress were pushing for a number closer to \$61 billion. At a rally outside the capitol organized by Tea Party Patriots, the crowd cheered, “Cut it or shut it,” suggesting their uncompromising approach towards the budget negotiations. Tea Party Patriots co-founder Jenny Beth Martin told the L.A. Times, “They can’t go lower than \$61 billion. They’ve already compromised.”<sup>62</sup>

According to an NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll, 68 percent of Democrats and 76 percent of independents say they want Democratic leaders compromise, whereas 56 percent of Republicans and 68 percent of Tea Party supporters want Republican leaders to remain firm, even at the cost of

---

<sup>58</sup>Weigel, D. (2011, Tuesday, April 12, 2011). The don’t-tread-on-meter: A good deal for the Tea Party. *Slate*.

<sup>59</sup>Steinhauser, P., & Bohn, K. (2011, April 9th, 2011). Budget deal doesn’t thrill some in the Tea Party movement. *CNN*.

<sup>60</sup>Phillips. (2011, 04/01/2011). It’s time for a Tea Party insurrection. Message posted to <http://www.wnd.com/2011/04/281649/>

<sup>61</sup>Wasson, E. (2011, 03/14/11). Tea party opponents complicate GOP vote on new stopgap funding bill. *The Hill*.

<sup>62</sup>Mascaro, L., & Hennessey, K. (2011, March 31, 2011). ‘Tea Party’ protests budget compromise, and John Boehner denies budging. *The Los Angeles Times*.

---

building consensus. But 66 percent of independent swing voters said they want the GOP leaders to compromise.<sup>63</sup>

The budget is a relatively straightforward case for inferring compromise: it was designed to clear the Senate under conditions of divided government, but for many Republicans this was insufficiently conservative to earn their vote. The New York Times' reporting agrees that Republican dissent generally came from the position that the budget did not cut enough—forcing Boehner “to rely on large numbers of Democrats to pass the measure.”<sup>64</sup>

Some Tea Party supporters acknowledged the need to design a budget capable of passing through the Senate, like freshman Representative Vicky Hartzler from Montana who praised Boehner as, “committed to cutting spending and creating jobs, as we all are,” despite the perception of Boehner among Tea Party activists as a sellout.<sup>65</sup>

### 6.3 Analysis

The two vote outcomes look fairly similar, with Republicans voting 186-54 for the stopgap and 179-59 for the final budget compromise. There were, however, some musical chairs between the two votes: twelve opposed the stopgap but supported the final budget, while eighteen flipped in the opposite direction.

As we can see from Table 6.1, the Tea Party Caucus accounts for a significant proportion of the dissent on each bill, with its ranks far more committed to the Nay column than any other group. On the stopgap, the other Tea Party groups each goes strongly for the bill, with a consistent proportion going against. The same can be said of the final budget vote, but the Tea Party Express endorsees appear to lean Yea slightly more than the other groups. On both bills, all of the Tea Party groups appear to lean against the bills more than those with no stated or assumed Tea Party affiliation.

Table 6.2 reports the bivariate probit estimates. Since there was no appreciable difference between these results and the model that includes the FreedomWorks variable, I opt to report only the version that includes the Tea Party freshmen.

The overall level of conservativeness of each Representative, given by the NOMINATE score, is significant for final budget and borderline significant on the stopgap. But even when we control for that overall voting pattern, we still see significant effects on negative coefficients for our Tea Party Caucus variable, suggesting that Caucus membership is indeed associated with voting against the bills. Also, we see that Representatives coming from districts with more Tea Party activists are more likely to vote against the stopgap and final budget. One might argue that this has more to do with the fact that more conservative districts are more likely to have larger Tea Party movements, but remember that we attempt to control for general district conservatism by including the PVI scores. Even when we account for district conservatism, Tea Party activism *still* has an effect.

---

<sup>63</sup> Murray, M. (2011, 4/6/2011). Poll: Democrats want compromise, Republicans prefer resolve. *MSNBC*.

<sup>64</sup> Steinhauer, J. (2011, April 14, 2011). Congress passes budget bill, but some in G.O.P. balk. *The New York Times*.

<sup>65</sup> Lightman, D., & Douglas, W. (2011, Thursday, March 31, 2011). Tea Party's influence wanes as lawmakers compromise. *McClatchy*.

TABLE 6.1  
STOPGAP AND FINAL BUDGETS VOTE DESCRIPTION

Group	Stopgap				Final Budget			
	Stopgap For	Stopgap Against	Group Percent Against	Rest of Party Percent Against	Budget For	Budget Against	Group Percent Against	Rest of Party Percent Against
Tea Party Caucus	36	26	41.94%	15.73%	36	25	40.98%	19.21%
FreedomWorks	52	18	25.71%	21.18%	48	22	31.42%	22.02%
Tea Party Express	65	20	23.53%	21.94%	63	21	25.00%	24.68%
Tea Party Freshmen	61	20	24.69%	21.38%	56	25	30.86%	21.66%
No Tea Party Affiliation	64	10	13.51%	26.51%	61	13	17.57%	28.05%
Republican Party Total	186	54	22.5%		179	59	24.79%	



TABLE 6.2  
BIVARIATE PROBIT ESTIMATES FOR THE STOPGAP AND FINAL BUDGETS

	Stopgap	Final Budget	Average marginal effect: (0, 0)	Average marginal effect: (1, 1)	Average marginal effect: (1, 0)	Average marginal effect: (0, 1)
Activism (1000s)	-2.132821** (.7801648)	-1.907784** (.7276783)	.4176271**	-.5743272**	.0655206	.0911796
Tea Party Caucus	-.6204501** (.2325784)	-.4348938† (.2300427)	.1223228*	-.1618131*	-.0042695	.0437598
Tea Party Express	-.3178539 (.2960054)	.0043519 (.2936074)	.0347353	-.0415766	-.0358371	.0426783
Tea Party Freshman	-.3200402 (.2681828)	-.0899566 (.2565087)	.0444837	-.057104	-.0214576	.0340778
NOMINATE	-1.680468† (.8678384)	-2.836683** (.8750219)	.4501681**	-.6691172**	.2682241*	-.049275
PVI	-.0371465† (.0217277)	.0011732 (.0206895)	.0041493	-.0044153	-.0044464	.0047124*
Gender	.9735796* (.436599)	.1433041** (.3350166)	-.1189274**	.0890682	.0837202	-.053861**
Age	-.0107756 (.0107119)	.0116898 (.010642)	.0001728	.0005627	-.0031333*	.0023978*
South	.7492122 (.5389692)	-.1630266 (.6229278)	-.0612069	.0652271	.1026763	-.1066965
Midwest	-.4129674 (.4377408)	-.7608274 (.5548173)	.1184634	-.1840472	.0808751	-.0152914
West	.4539254 (.5253669)	-.6743321 (.6293234)	-.0219798	-.1094116	.2069274	-.075536*
Unemployment	-.0545356 (.0530369)	-.0197027 (.051571)	.0080375	-.0099622	-.0030478	.0049725
Percent black	-.0344243* (.016854)	-.0219597 (.0159001)	.0059384*	-.0078352†	-.0003771	.0022739
Percent Hispanic	.0091298 (.0133014)	.0095337 (.0119695)	-.0019119	.0026806	-.0005025	-.0002661
Median household income (100,000s)	-1.24243 (1.098502)	.5574684 (1.134819)	.0917119	-.0635034	-.2328912	.2046827†
Constant	5.481993** (1.349895)	3.688897** (1.359576)				
N	237	237				

† significant at  $p < 0.10$  | \* significant at  $p < 0.05$  | \*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$   
Standard error in parentheses

---

Along these lines, Cook PVI comes very close to crossing the  $p < .05$  threshold—perhaps suggesting that Representatives from more conservative districts were more likely to vote against the stopgap spending bill. But on the final budget, much like with the debt ceiling, PVI does not appear to have an effect over and above our other variables. It appears that whatever effect district conservatism might hold is better explained by the other variables being considered. Again, most of our ideology indicators turn up significant, but the control variables representing more conventional theories of voting behavior do not.

The next four columns are the average marginal effects on the joint probability of voting every which way on the two bills. The first is likely of most interest, because it relates the marginal likelihood of voting against both bills (0, 0). So, for example, being a member of the Tea Party Caucus makes one about 12% likelier to vote No-No holding all else equal. The continuous variables are harder to interpret, but as NOMINATE and Tea Party activism go up, so does the probability of a House Republican voting against both bills. If we look over to the next column, we see the marginal effects of voting *for* each bill (1, 1). The next two columns allow us to identify any trends among those members of Congress who switched their vote between the two bills. The first represents voting for the stopgap but against the final budget (1, 0), and the last is for the probability of just voting for the final budget (0, 1).

A few interesting miscellaneous findings: Representatives from the continental West appear less likely to disapprove of the stopgap while approving of the final budget. Also, Michele Bachmann, it turns out, does not appear to be the standard-bearer for Republican females, who tend to vote for each bill. Looking at the marginal effects, women appear less likely to vote for both outcomes that include opposing the stopgap. Perhaps this suggests that they are less willing to engage in brinksmanship risking a government shutdown than their male colleagues.

Unlike the debt ceiling, being a Tea Party freshman or receiving a Tea Party Express endorsement do not appear to predict voting behavior on either bill. Clearly the budget debate was ripe for Tea Party influence like the debt ceiling, so what could possibly have changed the freshmen behavior when the debt-ceiling debacle came around? It could simply be that the Tea Party got more of what it wanted on the budget than the debt ceiling. Even so, however, they still demonstrated a willingness to forego the \$61 billion demand in favor of passing a Senate-viable budget and a willingness to continue funding the federal government in the absence of palatably large cuts for the Tea Party movement. Perhaps the difference comes from the immense press and attention around the debt-ceiling debate. Although there were Tea Party rallies about the budget, they tended to be smaller than those about the debt ceiling.

Brad Coker, director of Mason-Dixon Polling & Research, offered this explanation: "It's just a little different when you're in the midst of a campaign and other issues like health care. Budget debates, they don't fire the same passions of last year."<sup>66</sup> Given the national spotlight on the debt-ceiling debate, that particular vote seemed to have become the acid test for Tea Party conservatism, adding additional pressure to conform to the Tea Party position on the debt ceiling that did not exist on the budget and stopgap votes. This interpretation would be consistent with what we have discovered of the Tea Party freshmen so far. Perhaps as freshmen they face greater conformity pressures, but

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

---

overcame this pressure on the radically publicized debt ceiling. Their Tea Party colors came out for that one poignant issue, but the freshmen then retreated back into the fold for other significant votes—even those of Tea Party interest.

## 7 Budgeting Scuffles, Round Two

### 7.1 The “Disaster” Spending Bill Background

As the 2011 fiscal year ended in September of that year, Congress resumed passing stopgap continuing resolutions to keep the government funded into 2012. Vote 719 was held on September 21, 2011 to attempt passing H.R.2608, the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012. The “disaster” titling this section is a double entendre: not only did the bill fail, increasing chances of a government shutdown, but the primary disagreement centered around funding disaster relief through FEMA following Hurricane Irene.

In a 230-to-195 vote, Democrats joined several Republican dissenters to reject the bill. 182 Democrats voted against, with only 6 voting for. 189 Republicans voted Yea, with 48 shirking the party line. Nine members of the House did not vote. The bill failed by a fairly close margin of 18 votes.

The bill would finance the federal government through November 18<sup>th</sup>, giving Congress time to hammer out agreement on the twelve spending bills needed for the 2012 fiscal year. However, negotiations became tied up over how to pay for disaster relief aid. Democrats thought the \$3.65 billion allocated to FEMA was insufficient, as the department was running out of money and already began putting off long-term rebuilding projects. But Democrats were perhaps even more dissatisfied with the bill offsetting that spending with a \$1.5 billion cut to the Department of Energy’s Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing Loan Program, which encourages the production of energy-efficient cars.<sup>67</sup> Democrats claim that the program created over 40,000 jobs.<sup>68</sup> While Democrats expressed concern for setting a precedent of finding cuts for disaster aid, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Harold Rogers, argued that cuts have been used to offset the costs in half of the last 30 emergency bills passed over the last 10 years.<sup>69</sup>

Conservative Republicans, on the other hand, wanted to use the bill to make deeper budget cuts. They were dissatisfied with the House leadership setting the spending rate for the year at the \$1.043 trillion mark agreed to by the debt-ceiling deal.<sup>70</sup> Justifying his opposition to the bill, GOP Representative Franks from Arizona said, “There has to be that moment where we say ‘no,’ this is not what is necessary, and we’re going to have to work for something better.”<sup>71</sup> But deeper budget

---

<sup>67</sup> Steinhauer, J. (2011, September 20, 2011). Stop-gap bill tied up over disaster aid feud. *The New York Times*.

<sup>68</sup> Pear, R., & Steinhauer, J. (2011, September 21, 2011). House rebukes G.O.P. leaders over spending. *The New York Times*.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Helderman, R., & Kane, P. (2011, September 21, 2011). Stopgap bill to keep government running fails in House; shutdown looms. *The Washington Post*.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

---

cuts would violate the debt-ceiling agreement, endanger Senate support, and further advance the odds of a government shutdown.<sup>72</sup>

Eventually, FEMA found enough money to continue its operations, permitting Congress to sidestep the controversial provisions and avoid a shutdown. But on this particular bill, Fox News claims that the defeat “came at the hands of Democrats and tea party Republicans.”<sup>73</sup> In the next section we assess whether the data bear out this claim.

## 7.2 The “Disaster” Spending Bill Analysis

Since the number of Republican Nay votes is relatively consistent with what we have seen before, the failure of this bill likely came from insufficient Democrat support. However, looking at this vote still helps tease out Tea Party influence. Since the bill failed, we have a clearer sense of who is willing to shirk House leadership and face a potential government shutdown. Nay votes are more likely to represent uncompromising behavior rather than symbolic stands against a bill generally known to have to votes to pass.

That said, however, the New York Times reports, “As it became clear that the bill was going down, a number of Republicans changed their votes from yes to no.”<sup>74</sup> So it could be that some Nay votes are strategic, and come from members who were willing to compromise if it were not for the political optics brought on by such unified Democrat opposition. Even with this noise in the data, however, voting against the bill might still implicate culpability if the federal government shuts down, and would certainly show uncooperativeness with House leadership.

As such, votes for the bill are coded as usual—votes for the cooperative, compromise position. Votes against represent the putative Tea Party position, but with the caveat that some Nay votes may not evidence uncompromising behavior.

As we have seen before, Table 7.1 reports the probit estimates of the “disaster” CR vote. Again, since there are no substantive differences between the model with and without the FreedomWorks variable, I only report one.

The results we see are very similar to what we saw for the 2011 fiscal year budgetary bills. Higher NOMINATE scores clearly predict a vote against the bill, suggesting that members who exhibited a more conservative voting record in the House are more likely to vote Nay. Also again, we see the levels of Tea Party activism ping significant with a negative coefficient. This suggests that a Representative who comes from a district with more active Tea Party organizing is more likely to vote against the bill. And lastly, members of the Tea Party Caucus are also more likely to dissent by about the same amount as we have seen with the other roll calls.

These results provide two broader insights. First, since mostly the same variables are significant for this failed bill as the bills that actually passed, this suggests that Tea Party opposition is less likely to

---

<sup>72</sup> Pear, R., & Steinhauer, J. (2011, September 21, 2011). House rebukes G.O.P. leaders over spending. *The New York Times*.

<sup>73</sup> Fox News Staff. (2011) House Kills Stopgap Spending Bill Over Disaster Relief Dispute. *Fox News*.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

TABLE 7.1  
 “DISASTER” CONTINUING RESOLUTION PROBIT ESTIMATES

DV: Failed Stopgap with Disaster Relief	Coefficient	Average marginal effect
Activism (1000s)	-1.835145* (.823)	-.3898374*
Tea Party Caucus	-.5711035* (.244)	-.1355962*
Tea Party Express	.1795768 (.335)	.037425
Tea Party Freshman	-.132661 (.297)	-.0285579
NOMINATE	-4.039497** (1.120)	-.8581048**
PVI	-.0074552 (.024)	-.0015837
Gender	.4259809 (.420)	.080929
Age	-.008715 (.012)	-.0018513
South	.9553693 (.668)	.1906601
Midwest	-.2266421 (.536)	-.0494545
West	.0841467 (.638)	.0175775
Unemployment	-.0062224 (.057)	-.0013218
Percent black	-.0321098† (.019)	-.0068211†
Percent Hispanic	-.0149179 (.012)	-.003169
Median household income (100,000s)	1.311449 (1.283)	.2785894
Constant	5.002047** (1.440)	
N	237	
Correctly classifies (prob ≥ 0.5):	83.97%	

† significant at  $p < 0.10$  | \* significant at  $p < 0.05$  | \*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$   
 Standard error in parentheses

---

be symbolic or conditional on knowledge of the bill passing. Caucus members in particular appear just as happy to contribute to a bill's demise as they are to voice dissent on surer bills. Perhaps this lends credibility to the possibility that Caucus opposition comes from uncompromising legislative expectations.

Second, the Caucus and activism variables are still going strong despite a downturn in public opinion of the Tea Party following the debt ceiling debacle. Representatives still appear responsive to their Tea Party activists, and Caucus members are *still* more likely to dissent even when we control for the fact that they are already some of the most conservative members of Congress.

These two possibilities hopefully bolster the argument that some Tea Party opposition is ideological in nature. But the Tea Party freshmen again appear neutral. When it comes to the freshman class, the debt-ceiling vote is turning out to be the exception, not the rule.

### 7.3 An interlude: October Continuing Resolution

Another CR was snared by my case selection criteria: House vote 745. Analysis of this roll call is consistent with what we have discovered so far, but does not offer any unique contribution. The regression table can be found in Appendix A for any interested readers. Again, high NOMINATE and activism scores are associated with voting against the bill, with Republican women more likely to vote Yea and Caucus members less likely. As with the debt ceiling, Tea Party Express endorsement carries a positive coefficient, but this time only at borderline significance. PVI too may exercise some borderline-significant effect, with members from more conservative districts perhaps more likely to vote against the CR.

This consistency is useful for a few reasons. First, it helps to demonstrate that the findings reported so far are not the artifacts of individual cases. There appears to be a picture of dissent emerging that extends across multiple votes and can be partially explained by Tea Party identity. Second, it confirms that some Tea Party effects remain strong despite the downturn in public opinion.

The next vote we look at, however, breaks this trend.

## 8 Payroll Tax Cut Extension

### 8.1 Background

The payroll tax cut was scheduled to expire on January 1, 2012, reverting from 4.2 to 6.2 percent of 160 million workers' paycheck mostly withheld for Social Security. Extending the cut was an item of bipartisan agreement—especially on the eve of an election year. Failing to do so would result in an extra \$1,000 burden on a family making \$50,000.<sup>75</sup> So naturally, it presented an opportunity for both sides to attempt wrangling the other for concessions. The primary dispute was about how to pay for the tax cut, with Republicans in the Senate rejecting a new tax on incomes over \$1 million.

---

<sup>75</sup> Cohen, T. (2011, Wed December 7, 2011). Impasse over payroll tax cut continues. *CNN*.

---

Republicans made a counter-offer that would means test federal programs, extend a pay freeze for government workers, and reduced the federal workforce by 10 percent.<sup>76</sup>

However, this proposal failed to gain sufficient Republican support in the Senate, as many opposed extending the tax holiday at all. Based on the statements issued by Senators, some thought that doing so would endanger Social Security by reducing the revenue allotted to the Trust Fund. Others voted against the extension because they demanded broader and more permanent changes to the tax code.<sup>77</sup> The final compromise bill passed by the Senate extended unemployment benefits, postponed cuts to Medicare reimbursements, and also included a provision favored by House Republicans expediting an executive decision on the Keystone XL pipeline. Instead of by a surtax on millionaires, the cut would be offset by an increase in fees on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.<sup>78</sup>

House Republicans, however, roundly derided the proposal. They argued that a two-month deal would introduce unacceptable economic uncertainty and would give Democrats a political advantage down the line.<sup>79</sup> CNN reports that some opposition to extending the cut comes from Tea Party conservatives,<sup>81</sup> and POLITICO argues that the freshman class was uniquely unwavering.<sup>82</sup> Speaker Boehner was thought to have originally supported the Senate bill, but may have been forced by a “Tea Party revolt” demanding a yearlong measure.<sup>83</sup> As such, the House voted virtually along party lines to conference with the Senate—perhaps a way of avoiding voting “no” on the popular bipartisan bill.<sup>84</sup> Majority Leader Harry Reid said that he would not call the Senate back from recess in order to conference, and the guilt would be on Republican hands should the payroll tax increase.<sup>85</sup>

As members filed out for Christmas recess, an agreement had not been reached. Senate Republicans turned against the House, with Minority Leader Mitch McConnell from Kentucky asking for cooperation. The final bill was virtually identical to the one just rejected by the House, which Boehner passed by unanimous consent.<sup>86</sup> This was widely reported in the press as a great capitulation by the Republican Party, with ABC reporting that “House Republicans Cave on Payroll Tax Cut Extension.”<sup>87</sup> While some House Republicans bemoaned the bill and the unanimous consent measure, objecting would have dragged the whole chamber back from their vacations and would have likely been outvoted anyway.

---

<sup>76</sup> Sonmez, F. (2011, 12/21/2011). How the republicans lost the upper hand in payroll tax debate. *The Washington Post*.

<sup>77</sup> Sonmez, F. (2011, 12/02/2011). Payroll tax debate no longer a matter of ‘pay-fors’. *The Washington Post*.

<sup>78</sup> Sonmez, F., & Helderman, R. (2011, 12/17/2011). House Republicans not sold on payroll tax cut package. *The Washington Post*.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sonmez, F. (2011, 12/18/2011). Boehner: House Republicans oppose Senate payroll tax deal. *The Washington Post*.

<sup>81</sup> Cohen, T. (2011, Wed December 7, 2011). Impasse over payroll tax cut continues. *CNN*.

<sup>82</sup> Cogan, M. (2011, 12/21/11). Payroll tax cut: GOP frosh dig in hard. *POLITICO*.

<sup>83</sup> Silverleib, A., & Cohen, T. (2011, December 23, 2011). Obama signs payroll tax cut extension. *CNN*.

<sup>84</sup> Madison, L. (2011, December 20, 2011). House rejects payroll tax cut compromise. *CBS News*.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Helderman, R. (2011, December 22, 2011). House GOP agrees to 2-month extension of payroll tax cut. *The Washington Post*.

<sup>87</sup> Karl, J. (2011, Dec. 22, 2011). House republicans cave on payroll tax cut extension. *ABC News*.

---

In the wake of this debate, Harry Reid appeared on *Meet the Press*, and argued that the Tea Party movement was losing steam as the economy gradually improved, which Senator Jim DeMint fiercely contested on CNN.<sup>88</sup>

In February 2012, the payroll tax cut extension came back on the table in an equally contentious dispute. As before, talks about the extension were stalled on the question of how—if at all—the tax cut should be offset. Both CNN and the Washington Post described the revived discussion as “déjà vu.”

In conference committee, Republicans again proposed a package of spending cuts as offsets, a pay freeze extension for federal workers, and higher Medicare premiums for upper-income seniors. But since the GOP proposal would affect unemployment benefits and environmental regulations, Democrats argued that it could never pass the Senate, and that seniors and federal workers should not be asked to further sacrifice. Democrats again countered with the surtax for earners of over \$1 million annually. Republicans rebuked that this proposal is not viable in the Senate either, as versions of this same tax have failed to break Senate filibuster five times.<sup>89</sup> McConnell accused Democrats of stalling negotiations to blame Republicans, and Reid accused Republicans of failing to aid the economy so that they would have something to talk about in the next election.<sup>90</sup>

Reports in the press seem to indicate that it was Democrats biding their time. For example, the New York Times argues, “After a protracted fight over the jobless benefits divided Republicans and hurt them in the court of public opinion, Democrats seem to have concluded that they have everything to gain by resisting Republican proposals.”<sup>91</sup>

Much like before, the dispute ended with Republican leadership backing down, and supporting a measure that would not be paid for with other reductions. To the dismay of many conservatives, the Republican Party found itself endorsing a bill that would add \$126 billion to the budget deficit over the next five years.<sup>92</sup> This was again seen by many in the press and the GOP rank-and-file as capitulation.<sup>93 94 95</sup>

As this was going on, the Huffington Post reports Republican leaders reaching out to Tea Party members to convince them to be less extreme. Boehner’s top aide Barry Jackson held a meeting of senior staffers, urging them to convince their bosses to cooperate with the party. One staffer reports

---

<sup>88</sup> Feldman, J. (2012, January 22nd, 2012). Sen. DeMint: Tea Party ‘Had nothing to do’ with obstruction in payroll tax cut extension fight. Message posted to <http://www.mediaite.com/tv/sen-jim-demint-tea-party-had-nothing-to-do-with-obstruction-in-payroll-tax-cut-extension-fight/>

<sup>89</sup> Helderman, R. (2012, February 7, 2012). It’s déjà vu as congress tackles payroll tax cut extension again. *The Washington Post*.

<sup>90</sup> Barrett, T., & Bolduan, K. (2012, February 07, 2012). Both sides claim politics as payroll tax cut extension stalls again. *CNN*.

<sup>91</sup> Steinhauer, J. (2012, February 7, 2012). Talks stall on how to pay for extending payroll tax cut. *The New York Times*.

<sup>92</sup> Pear, R., & Steinhauer, J. (2012, February 17, 2012). Tax cut extension passes; everyone claims a win. *The New York Times*.

<sup>93</sup> Steinhauer, J. (2012, February 13, 2012). House Republicans yield on extending payroll tax cut. *The New York Times*.

<sup>94</sup> Raju, M., & Sherman, J. (2012, 2/13/12). House GOP reverses on payroll tax cut. *POLITICO*.

<sup>95</sup> Kane, P. (2012, February 13, 2012). House Republican leaders agree to payroll tax holiday extension without offsets. *The Washington Post*.



TABLE 8.1  
PAYROLL TAX CUT EXTENSION VOTE DESCRIPTION

Group	For	Against	Group Percent Against	Rest of Party Percent Against
Tea Party Caucus	26	35	57.38	31.82%
FreedomWorks	43	26	37.68%	38.69%
Tea Party Express	56	26	31.71%	41.94%
Tea Party Freshmen	50	29	36.71%	39.24%
No TP Affiliation	47	28	37.33%	38.89%
Republican Party Total	146	91	38.40%	

that Jackson told them, “Don’t change your view or compromise your principles, but always give a thought as to how your position might help or hurt others on the team.”<sup>96</sup>

The final bill extended the payroll tax cut, was unpaid for, added unemployment benefits, and protected doctors from Medicare reimbursement cuts. Unemployment insurance went beyond what the Republicans desired, and reforms to the program desired by the GOP were not included. While Democrats had most of the policy victories, the Republicans did get to include a reform for some federal pensions.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, multiple press outlets and Democrats described the bill as a blow to Tea Party conservatism and a triumph for compromise in politics.<sup>98 99</sup>

## 8.2 Analysis

Votes for the bill could be seen in any number of ways. Members may be trying to curry favor with their leadership, distance themselves from extreme and uncompromising conservatism, or may simply have been willing to compromise due to the high costs of jeopardizing middle class tax relief during an election year. Votes against, on the other hand, are more difficult to interpret. With so many victories for Democrats in the bill, Republicans could count on broad assent from the names in blue, significantly lightening the support Boehner would need to corral. As such, some Nay votes may not represent uncompromising behavior if the bill is assumed to pass. Some may protest against the party leadership and its capitulation, for example. Of course, we would still expect all of the GOP’s uncompromising members to find their ways to the Nay column.

Since we have seen that the Tea Party became implicated with opposition to the bill, I code Yay votes as being against the Tea Party position, and for legislative compromise. If a group tends to vote Nay, this would be only tentative evidence for uncompromising behavior: we would know they are not eager to cooperate, but we are not guaranteed any inferences about being strictly uncompromising. If our Tea Party identity variables turn out to be significant, this would likely be

<sup>96</sup> McAuliff, M. (2012, 02/14/2012). Payroll tax has republican leaders urging Tea Party members to be less extreme, more politically savvy. *The Huffington Post*.

<sup>97</sup> Pear, R., & Steinhauer, J. (2012, February 17, 2012). Tax cut extension passes; everyone claims a win. *The New York Times*.

<sup>98</sup> Lee, M. (2012, 12/23/11). Payroll tax cut is a victory against Tea Party, Steve Israel says. *POLITICO*.

<sup>99</sup> Cowan, R., & Ferraro, T. (2012, Fri Jan 13, 2012). Tea Party may get rebuffed in tax cut showdown. *Reuters*.

TABLE 8.2  
PAYROLL TAX CUT EXTENSION VOTE DESCRIPTION

DV: Payroll Tax Cut	Coefficient	Average marginal effect
Activism (1000s)	-.3741843 (.6930088)	-.1142641
Tea Party Caucus	-.1556711 (.2135166)	-.048511
Tea Party Express	-.089921 (.2691194)	-.0274052
Tea Party Freshman	-.1474502 (.2438324)	-.0450789
NOMINATE	-2.961567** (.8488917)	-.9043696**
PVI	-.016413 (.0186684)	-.005012
Gender	-.3695388 (.3081805)	-.1151698
Age	-.0159058† (.009649)	-.0048571†
South	-.8554226 (.5250039)	-.2672075†
Midwest	-.7066075 (.4656019)	-.2029258†
West	-.8845753 (.5514516)	-.260915†
Unemployment	.0918223† (.0485674)	.0280396†
Percent black	-.016473 (.0144024)	-.0050303
Percent Hispanic	.0073834 (.0092514)	.0022547
Median household income (100,000s)	.4602582 (.9930751)	.1405484
Constant	3.575578** (1.187264)	
N	237	
Correctly classifies (prob ≥ 0.5):	72.15%	

† significant at p < 0.10 | \* significant at p < 0.05 | \*\* significant at p < 0.01  
Standard error in parentheses

---

evidence of uncompromising behavior in the context of our other findings.

The other votes we have looked at so far have been largely Republican-leaning policies with certain concessions to the left—as we might expect coming from a GOP-controlled House under divided government. This bill, however, appears to be Democrat-leaning. As such, we should expect to see opposition from those who thought the previous bills were “not conservative enough,” in addition to more moderate Republicans whose demands were met before, but might still be willing to shirk the party.

The final roll call vindicates this prediction. A total of 91 Republicans voted against the payroll tax cut extension—a greater magnitude of opposition than we had seen in any of the other cases. And yet, 147 Democrats and 146 Republicans combined to pass the bill by a wide victory margin of 80 votes.

As we can see from Table 8.1, the Tea Party Caucus went heavily against the bill—but so too did the other groups. With the previous votes the percentage of group members voting Nay would hover around 20-30 percent, but here each hangs above 30 percent. It appears that our Tea Party groups came out against the bill more strongly than they did on previous votes, but the rest of the party did as well. By preliminarily looking at these numbers, we should not expect to see our affiliation variables suggesting any amplified likelihood of voting one way or another.

Unlike the other roll calls we have looked at, NOMINATE appears to be the only significant variable of interest. Older House Republicans may be less likely to have voted for this bill, and Representatives coming from districts with higher unemployment rates may be more likely to do so. We also see some possible marginal effects for our geography variables.

On this vote, more conservative members of Congress were more likely to oppose the measure, but the Tea Party variables had nothing to say on top of that. Even though the Tea Party Caucus opposed the payroll tax extension more strongly than the other groups, this effect is absorbed by NOMINATE scores. In other words, the fact that certain Caucus members voted Nay is fully explained by the fact that they tend to be more conservative, not the fact that they are a member of the Tea Party Caucus. On previous votes, Caucus membership mattered even when we accounted for baseline conservatism—but not here. This roll call appears to be a relatively straightforward test case for overall locational ideology. Of course there is a likely a non-coincidental relationship between Caucus membership and high conservatism, so it would still be reasonable to point out that Caucus members tended to vote Nay. However, Caucus members appear no more likely to oppose the bill than similarly conservative non-Caucus Representatives.

It might be tempting to conclude from these sparse significances that Tea Party influence is dead—especially on an issue prime for the movement to exert some influence. Tea Party identity does not appear to uniquely influence a Representative’s vote on this bill. Perhaps Harry Reid was right when he said that public opinion and economic recovery had finally caught up to the Tea Party.

However, this inference would be premature. Based on the percentages, we can see that in absolute terms the Tea Party groups tended to oppose this bill to a comparable degree—if not slightly *more*—than the previous few we have assessed. The biggest difference with the payroll vote is not the behavior of the Tea Party groups, but that of the rest of the party. For example, on the stopgap bill a

---

mere 13.51 percent of members with no Tea Party affiliation voted Nay, whereas here that number is up to 37.33 percent—a figure comparable to the performance of the FreedomWorks endorsees on both votes! So while our Tea Party affiliates may not have voted more conservatively than the party, this has more to do with additional Republicans joining relatively consistent Tea Partiers in the Nay column.

But it would be equally premature to infer that this suggests the advancement and spread of Tea Party ideology: the extra opposition to this bill likely stems not just from policy concerns, but also disappointment at what Republicans perceived to be the raw deal their leadership had accepted.

Additionally, we cannot reject the null hypothesis for the activism variable. As such, we cannot conclude that higher levels of Tea Party activism influence Representatives to oppose the bill. Perhaps like the Tea Party identity variables, the effects became washed out by a new wave of low-activism Representatives joining the Nay column. This may also be related to general grassroots atrophy. Many of my interviewees discussed membership attrition and waning enthusiasm within their ranks. However, this hypothesis requires further testing in a task I leave for future studies. Because the second Congressional session is still unfolding, we do not yet have enough evidence to draw conclusions about current trends. Maybe a large- $n$  analysis of votes in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress could detect if the robustness of the activism variable degrades over time.

Even though the quantitative analysis of the payroll tax cut extension breaks with the pattern we have seen emerging from budget votes, the reason likely has little to do with waning Tea Party influence. Because the bill was overall more objectionable to Republicans at large, the Tea Party in its many forms continued to vote against it at similar rates, only now matched by the rest of the GOP.

## 11 Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to make the argument for ideology in two senses. First, for “locational” ideology, do Tea Party affiliates vote in a pattern that places them further to the right on the ideological spectrum than the rest of their GOP peers on average? Based on NOMINATE scores for the 112<sup>th</sup> House, we discovered not only that members of the Tea Party Caucus vote more conservatively than the rest of the party, but also more conservatively than we would predict based on their districts. The Tea Party Caucus may seem at odds with the grassroots spirit of the movement, but it appears to be uniquely facilitative of the Tea Party agenda. FreedomWorks endorsees also appear more likely to exercise conservative voting behavior, though in a less pronounced way than Caucus members who explicitly self-identify with the movement. Members of Congress that come from districts with a high magnitude of Tea Party activism are more likely to vote conservatively than those who are not. Perhaps the Tea Party organizes most vociferously in deep-red districts, but activism still has an effect when we control for a district’s baseline conservatism.

Second, for “attitudinal” ideology, I attempt to assess whether these groups vote in a way that suggests a refusal to compromise on principle. I attempt to tease out the role of compromise through qualitative assessment of individual votes, and quantitatively control for conventional indicators that may influence a Representative’s voting decision. Ideological voting is even more plausible at the

---

point where we were unable to find evidence of waning Tea Party influence amidst diminishing Tea Party favorability in public opinion polling. A fairly consistent pattern emerges: members of the Tea Party Caucus and those from districts with high Tea Party activism are more likely to shirk the establishment position on Tea Party issues, even as we account for the general conservatism of these members. The greater likelihood of voting against these bills demonstrates a level of uncooperativeness that has been nettlesome for Speaker Boehner's legislative agenda. While there appears to be strong evidence that Tea Party Caucus members vote more ideologically, the same cannot be as easily said of the other Tea Party groups. While they may have had a role in pulling the negotiations to the right, Tea Party endorsees—on the average—appeared just as likely to play along with the party and take incremental steps with the exception of the freshman class on the debt ceiling.

These findings suggest that the Tea Party is indeed an important political phenomenon. Not only do Tea Party identities help to explain patterns in overall voting behavior and on specific votes, but also district-level activism appears to successfully affect Congressional behavior.

On the payroll tax cut extension, however, Tea Party voting did not stand in relief to the rest of the party. A close look at the data suggests that our Tea Partiers have remained fairly consistent, and the rest of the party moved to meet them in opposition to a Democrat-leaning policy. As such, the vote falls short of demonstrating a weakening Tea Party movement. Further studies will be required as the legislative session unfolds in order to test whether the Tea Party is losing prominence, or whether its ideological purity makes it less vulnerable to variations in public opinion—as appears to be the case for the few votes assessed in this paper.

These findings may not have any bearing on the sort of voting theory that underpins NOMINATE calculations, but does begin to cast doubt on models that privilege consensus or other traditional predictors over ideology and factional loyalties. Several Republicans in the 112<sup>th</sup> House appear to rebelliously challenge consensus at every turn. They do so predictably, and in a manner that is consistent with specific factional interests above all else. If Kingdon is correct that theories of Congressional voting behavior live and die by their descriptive plausibility, future efforts must accommodate these findings by building in considerations for the interests of both ideological factions and selective responsiveness to vocal constituent groups. While predictors like unemployment rates and geographic location account for considerable variation in overall voting trends, the effects of these variables are usually non-existent when we zero-in on specific Tea Party issues. Instead, our ideology indicators like NOMINATE scores and Caucus membership carry the day.

But we still must ask: do these findings comport with the conventional narrative told about the Tea Party? This requires a qualified answer.

Much of the ire levied against the Tea Party movement keys in on the contribution of Congress' new crop of freshmen. Their voting behavior, however, does not appear to radically depart from that of their establishment cohorts. While we found evidence that the Tea Party freshmen deviate from their districts more than the rest of the Republican Party, it is unlikely that this is due to rigid attitudinal ideology. We have explored the possibility that freshmen are faced with uniquely high conformity pressures that bring them simultaneously into alignment with the party and to the right of their

---

centrist districts. Although the overall analysis found possible evidence that Tea Party freshmen and FreedomWorks endorsees (who are almost all freshmen) vote with extra conservatism, no such effect could be found within the individual votes with the sole exception of the debt-ceiling controversy. Although the freshmen proved more willing to shirk the establishment than an average Republican on that particular issue, the broader picture reveals that to be the exception, not the rule. Perhaps the media whirlwind transformed the debt-ceiling vote into the definitive moment for the Tea Party, which provoked more of the freshmen to come out against the compromise than on other votes.

The main drawback of using the roll call record is that the final vote may conceal strategic decisions should the bill generally be “known” to pass ahead of time. Additionally, roll call analysis further omits early negotiations, which complicates the inferences we can appropriately draw. As such it would be a mistake to naively assume that a Tea Party freshman voting with the party is a vote eager to compromise. Throughout this paper, however, I have attempted to account for any such distortions through qualitative evidence and case selection.

For example, there is also considerable support for the notion that the Tea Party freshmen are largely responsible for pulling the conversation to the right, giving wind to the sails of Republican negotiators. The popularity of the Tea Party movement likely lent credibility to threats that no new revenues would be viable in the House during budget haggling. Not only were Democrats running scared over the impossibility of compromising with Tea Party self-identifiers, but it also appeared that Tea Party mania had infected mainstream conservatism. So while the Tea Party freshmen tend to conform to the party line, the party line is likely further to the right than it would have been without the movement. This might help to reconcile the conventional tale of uncompromising freshmen with the lack of visible difference in the roll call between freshmen and the rest of the party.

However, it is also important that we not overstate this possibility. Tea Party furor is possibly as much a symptom of a rightward anti-Obama shift as it is a cause. We have looked at several votes that have both succeeded and failed, many of which were explicitly designed to pass in a Democrat-controlled Senate and White House. Many of these issues had an identifiable “Tea Party position” further to the right than the deal worked out by House leadership. If the whole Republican Party had really shifted into Tea Party territory, it would be hard to explain the disapproval from Tea Party leaders in my interviews and the persistent counter-establishment essence of Tea Party advocacy. Even if those deals are reflective of hardline negotiation, the final roll call will often still distinguish between those who are willing to play along and take gradual steps towards their goals, and those who will refuse to support an insufficiently conservative bill. As a group, the Tea Party freshmen and the national group endorsees appear to fall mostly in the former category, with many Caucus members occupying the latter.

There are, however, several usual suspects who consistently vote against the party—and they all have some kind of Tea Party affinity: Flake, Franks, Lamborn, Gingrey, Graves, Johnson, King, Fleming, Amash, Bachmann, Pearce, Jordan, Duncan, Gowdy, Mulvaney, Wilson, Gohmert, and Poe—to name a few. Graves sums up his legislative attitude by saying that, “I make decisions as if I’m not coming back. I’m casting votes in the purest form I can with no assumptions of gaming out the political future...”<sup>100</sup> Despite their consistency, this group is dispersed through several Tea Party

---

<sup>100</sup> Bresnahan, J., & Cogan, M. (2011, 10/17/11). Tom Graves: A rising House star or a big headache? *POLITICO*.

---

identities, and no single banner encompasses this and only this resolute faction. Our natural, pre-theoretic ways of defining these groups are too diffuse to capture such persistent dissent.

National Tea Party groups cast a wide net with their endorsements. It is possible that some Representatives (especially those from contested districts) were happy to accept Tea Party support during their election and ride the movement's popularity and press to office—whether or not their views perfectly conform to activist principles. This might help explain why the national endorsement variables were not very predictive of voting behavior.

It would paint with too broad a brush to suppose that all—or even most—of Tea Party affiliates are unwilling to govern, are numb to electoral pressures, or are otherwise unwavering. Representative Hayworth, freshman from New York, said, “I think increasingly we feel a part of a body.... You don't know what you don't know until you arrive here in the Capitol.” As such, perhaps the conventional narrative needs some revision. Even with the Tea Party in power, legislators successfully fended off government shutdown and wrangled support around important legislative compromises. Perhaps then the Tea Party's success is subtler than the kind of barnburner absolutism assumed by many commentators. Although it has not accomplished all of its goals, the movement has altered the conversation in Washington, captured the attention of the press, and brought many of the House's most conservative members to consistently oppose even the Republican establishment.

In addition, the robustness of the activism variable speaks not only to the success of the Tea Party movement, but also to the interaction between Congress and grassroots organizing. Representatives appeared responsive to levels of Tea Party activism over and above the general conservatism of their constituents. This might be a source of both optimism and pessimism: perhaps vocal minority factions receive extra attention, but perhaps also there is hope for those rallying to effect political change.

---

## Bibliography

- Abramowitz, A. (2011). Partisan polarization and the rise of the tea party movement. *APSA 2011 Annual Meeting Paper*.
- Allen, J. (2011, 9/14/11). Tea party caucus short on frosh. *POLITICO*.
- Allen, J., & Titus, E. (2011, 9/14/11). The myth of freshman power. *POLITICO*.
- Amos, C. (2010, June 09, 2010). Republicans united around Hurt to face Perriello. *GoDanRiver.Com*.
- Ansolabehere, S., & Snyder Jr., J. (2011, March/April 2011). Weak tea. *Boston Review*.
- Applebaum, B., & Dash, E. (2011, August 5, 2011). S.& P. downgrades debt rating of U.S. for the first time. *The New York Times*.
- Arnold, D. (1992). *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Bailey, M., Mummolo, J., & Noel, H. (2011). Tea party influence: A story of activists and elites. *Working Paper*.
- Barrett, T., & Bolduan, K. (2012, February 07, 2012). Both sides claim politics as payroll tax cut extension stalls again. *CNN*.
- Bennett, G. (2011, Monday, March 14, 2011). Congress spending stopgaps face no-vote from tea party-affiliated Florida lawmakers. *The Palm Beach Post*.
- Berry, J. (2002). Validity and reliability issues in elite interviewing. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 35(4), 679.
- Berry, J., & Sobieraj, S. Chapter 6. In *The Outrage Industry* (Forthcoming).
- Blumenthal, M. (2010, April 6, 2010). A teacup 80% (or more) full. *Pollster.Com*.
- Bond, J., Fleisher, R., & Ilderton, N. (2011). Was the tea party responsible for the Republican victory in the 2010 House elections? *2011 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*.
- Bresnahan, J., & Cogan, M. (2011, 10/17/11). Tom Graves: A rising House star or a big headache? *POLITICO*.
- Burghart, D. (2010, Tuesday, 02 November 2010). Tea Party Nation founder declares himself a birther. *Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights*.



- 
- Burghart, Devin and Leonard Zeskind. (2010). Tea Party Nationalism: A Critical Examination of the Tea Party Movement and the Size, Scope, and Focus of Its National Factions. Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights.
- <http://www.teapartynationalism.com/the-databri-report-data- and-visualizations/tea-party-membership-map>.
- Campoli, L., & Heberlig, E. (Eds.). (1999). *Classics in Congressional politics* Longman.
- Carson, R., & Oppenheimer, J. (1984). A method of estimating the personal ideology of political representatives. *The American Political Science Review*, 78(1), 163.
- Clark, L. (2011, Sunday, January 23, 2011). Rubio, a Tea Party favorite, may not join its Senate caucus. *McClatchy*.
- Clinton, J. (2006). Representation in Congress: Constituents and roll calls in the 106th House. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(2), 397.
- Clinton, J. (2007). Lawmaking and roll calls. *Journal of Politics*, 69(2), 457. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2508.2007.00543.x
- Cogan, M. (2011, 12/21/11). Payroll tax cut: GOP frosh dig in hard. *POLITICO*.
- Cogan, M. (2011, 8/1/11). Why GOP frosh said yes to debt deal. *POLITICO*.
- Cohen, T. (2011, Wed December 7, 2011). Impasse over payroll tax cut continues. *CNN*.
- Condon, S. (2011, July 27, 2011). McCain blasts "bizarro" tea party debt limit demands. *CBS News*.
- Cooper, M., & Thee-Brenan, M. (2011, August 4, 2011). Disapproval rate for Congress at record 82% after debt talks. *The New York Times*.
- Cowan, R., & Ferraro, T. (2012, Fri Jan 13, 2012). Tea party may get rebuffed in tax cut showdown. *Reuters*.
- Crespin, M., Gold, S., & Rohde, D. (2006). Ideology, electoral incentives, and congressional politics: The Republican House class of 1994. *American Politics Research*, 34(2), 135. doi:10.1177/1532673X05284413
- D'Aprile, S. (2011, 04/28/11). Tea party groups increase pressure on debt limit. *The Hill*.
- Davis, G. (2011, Aug 1, 2011). Congressman Davis votes against debt ceiling increase. Message posted to <http://www.geoffdavis.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=254756>

- 
- Dowd, M. (2011, July 30, 2011). Tempest in a tea party. *The New York Times*.
- Feldman, J. (2012, January 22nd, 2012). Sen. DeMint: Tea Party 'Had nothing to do' with obstruction in payroll tax cut extension fight. Message posted to <http://www.mediaite.com/tv/sen-jim-demint-tea-party-had-nothing-to-do-with-obstruction-in-payroll-tax-cut-extension-fight/>
- Formisano, R. (2012). *The Tea Party: A brief history*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Fox News Staff. (2011) House Kills Stopgap Spending Bill Over Disaster Relief Dispute. *Fox News*.
- Geithner, T. (2011, June 29, 2011). Full text: Geithner letter responding to Republicans on debt limit. Message posted to <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2011/06/29/full-text-geithner-letter-responding-to-republicans-on-debt-limit/>
- Gerber, E. (2004). Beyond the median: Voter preferences, district heterogeneity, and political representation. *Journal of Political Economy*, 112(6), 1364.
- Gervais, B., & Morris, I. (2012). Reading tea leaves: Understanding Tea Party Caucus membership in the US House of Representatives. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 45(2), 245. doi:10.1017/S1049096511002058
- Gudmundson, E. (2011, 1/6/2011). Secretary Geithner sends debt limit letter to Congress. Message posted to <http://www.treasury.gov/connect/blog/Pages/letter.aspx>
- Helderman, R. (2011, December 22, 2011). House GOP agrees to 2-month extension of payroll tax cut. *The Washington Post*.
- Helderman, R. (2012, February 7, 2012). It's deja vu as congress tackles payroll tax cut extension again. *The Washington Post*.
- Helderman, R., & Kane, P. (2011, September 21, 2011). Stopgap bill to keep government running fails in house; shutdown looms. *The Washington Post*.
- Hulse, C. (2011, April 8, 2011). Budget deal to cut \$38 billion averts shutdown. *The New York Times*.
- Hulse, C. (2011, March 15, 2011). House passes spending bill, but not happily. *The New York Times*.
- Hulse, C. (2011, August 1, 2011). Long battle on debt ending as senate set for final vote. *The New York Times*.

- 
- Jackson, J., & Kingdon, J. (1992). Ideology, interest group scores, and legislative votes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 36(3), 805.
- Jacobson, G. (2011). The president, the tea party, and voting behavior in 2010: Insights from the cooperative congressional election study. *APSA 2011 Annual Meeting Paper*.
- Kalt, J., & Zupan, M. (1990). The apparent ideological behavior of legislators: Testing for principal-agent slack in political institutions. *Journal of Law and Economics*, 33(1), 103.
- Kane, P. (2012, February 13, 2012). House republican leaders agree to payroll tax holiday extension without offsets. *The Washington Post*.
- Karl, J. (2011, Dec. 22, 2011). House republicans cave on payroll tax cut extension. *ABC News*.
- Karpowitz, C., Monson, J. Q., & Patterson, K. (2011). Tea time in America? The impact of the Tea Party movement on the 2010 midterm elections. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44(2), 303. doi:10.1017/S1049096511000138
- Kau, J., & Rubin, (1979). Self-interest, ideology, and logrolling in Congressional voting. *Journal of Law and Economics*, 22(2), 365.
- Kibbe, M. (2011, 07/28/2011). Tea partiers are the adults in debt ceiling debate. *The Daily Caller*.
- Kingdon, J. (1989). *Congressmen's voting decisions*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Kingdon, J. (1977). Models of legislative voting. *The Journal of Politics*, 39(3), 563.
- Krehbiel, K. (1993). Constituency characteristics and legislative preferences. *Public Choice*, 76(1/2), 21.
- LaRocco, L. A. (2011, Wednesday, 25 May 2011). Private congressional briefings reveal government will not 'shut down' August 2. *CNBC*.
- Lee, M. (2012, 12/23/11). Payroll tax cut is a victory against tea party, Steve Israel says. *POLITICO*.
- Lightman, D., & Douglas, W. (2011, Thursday, March 31, 2011). Tea party's influence wanes as lawmakers compromise. *McClatchy*.

- 
- Lind, M. (2011, Tuesday, Aug 2, 2011). The Tea Party, the debt ceiling, and white Southern extremism. *Salon*.
- Madison, L. (2011, December 20, 2011). House rejects payroll tax cut compromise. *CBS News*.
- Mascaro, L., & Hennessey, K. (2011, March 31, 2011). 'Tea Party' protests budget compromise, and John Boehner denies budging. *The Los Angeles Times*.
- McAuliff, M. (2012, 02/14/2012). Payroll tax has republican leaders urging tea party members to be less extreme, more politically savvy. *The Huffington Post*.
- Murray, M. (2011, 4/6/2011). Poll: Democrats want compromise, Republicans prefer resolve. *MSNBC*.
- NAACP delegates vote to repudiate racist elements within tea party. (2010). *NAACP*.
- Not all republicans like stopgap funding. (2011, April 9, 2011). *UPI*.
- NPR Staff. (2011, July 29, 2011). Tea Party Patriots: Don't raise debt ceiling. *NPR*.
- Pear, R., & Steinhauer, J. (2011, September 21, 2011). House rebukes G.O.P. leaders over spending. *The New York Times*.
- Pear, R., & Steinhauer, J. (2012, February 17, 2012). Tax cut extension passes; everyone claims a win. *The New York Times*.
- Pelley, S. (2011, August 1, 2011). Boehner: I got 98 percent of what I wanted. *CBS News*.
- Phillips. (2011, 04/01/2011). It's time for a tea party insurrection. Message posted to <http://www.wnd.com/2011/04/281649/>
- Polsby, N. (Ed.). (1971). *Congressional behavior* Random House.
- Poole, K., & Rosenthal, H. (1985). A spatial model for legislative roll call analysis. *American Journal of Political Science*, 29(2), 357.
- Poole, K., & Rosenthal, H. (2007). *Ideology and Congress* Transaction Publishers.
- Poor, J. (2011, 07/28/2011). George will on debt ceiling battle: 'Pocket these gains and prepare for the next fight'. *The Daily Caller*.
- Rae, N. (2011). The return of conservative populism: The rise of the Tea Party and its impact on American politics. *APSA 2011 Annual Meeting Paper*,

- 
- Rau, A. (2011). Tea Party: Give Arizona 'birther bill' some credit. *AZCentral*
- Raju, M., & Sherman, J. (2012, 2/13/12). House GOP reverses on payroll tax cut. *POLITICO*.
- Rasmussen, S., & Schoen, D. (2010). *Mad as hell: How the tea party movement is fundamentally remaking our two-party system* Harper.
- Roberts, J. (2011). The statistical analysis of roll-call data: A cautionary tale. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 32(3), 341.  
doi:10.3162/036298007781699636
- Schonhardt-Bailey, C. (2006). *From corn laws to free trade: Interests, ideas, and institutions in historical perspective*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Senate GOP to Geithner: Default is your choice. (2011, May 26, 2011). Message posted to  
[http://www.demint.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?ContentRecord\\_id=7371d3a9-9435-4277-87ef-330fcf689087&p=PressReleases](http://www.demint.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?ContentRecord_id=7371d3a9-9435-4277-87ef-330fcf689087&p=PressReleases)
- Senate votes to set aside 'cut, cap and balance' plan proposed by house GOP. (2011, July 22, 2011). *Fox News*,
- Silverleib, A., & Cohen, T. (2011, December 23, 2011). Obama signs payroll tax cut extension. *CNN*.
- Silverleib, A., & Cohen, T. (2011, July 29, 2011). Senate democrats block Boehner debt ceiling plan after House approval. *CNN*.
- Sonmez, F. (2011, 12/18/2011). Boehner: House republicans oppose senate payroll tax deal. *The Washington Post*.
- Sonmez, F. (2011, 03/15/2011). Conservative opposition to stopgap spending measure grows; pence, chaffetz latest to announce 'no' votes. *The Washington Post*.
- Sonmez, F. (2011, 12/21/2011). How the republicans lost the upper hand in payroll tax debate. *The Washington Post*.
- Sonmez, F. (2011, 12/02/2011). Payroll tax debate no longer a matter of 'pay-fors'. *The Washington Post*.
- Sonmez, F., & Helderman, R. (2011, 12/17/2011). House republicans not sold on payroll tax cut package. *The Washington Post*.
- Soule, S., & Olzak, S. (2004). When do movements matter? The politics of contingency and the Equal Rights Amendment. *American Sociological Review*, 69(4), 473. doi:10.1177/000312240406900401

- 
- Steinhauer, J. (2011, April 14, 2011). Congress passes budget bill, but some in G.O.P. balk. *The New York Times*.
- Steinhauer, J. (2011, September 20, 2011). Stop-gap bill tied up over disaster aid feud. *The New York Times*.
- Steinhauer, J. (2012, February 13, 2012). House Republicans yield on extending payroll tax cut. *The New York Times*.
- Steinhauer, J. (2012, February 7, 2012). Talks stall on how to pay for extending payroll tax cut. *The New York Times*.
- Steinhauser, P., & Bohn, K. (2011, April 9th, 2011). Budget deal doesn't thrill some in the tea party movement. *CNN*.
- Sweet, K. (2011, August 8, 2011). Dow plunges after S&P downgrade. *CNN*.
- Tea party endorsement overlap. (2010). *The Washington Post*.
- Tea party express statement on raising the debt ceiling*. (2011). Retrieved, 2012, from <http://www.teapartyexpress.org/2483/tea-party-express-statement-on-raising-the-debt-ceiling>
- Tea party thanks 54 GOP congressmen for voting against stopgap spending bill - GOP fails to cut \$100 billion. (2011, March 17th, 2011). Message posted to <http://liberty.com/content/press-release-tea-party-thanks-54-gop-congressmen-voting-against-stopgap-spending-bill-gop-f>
- U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2011). *Delays create debt management challenges and increase uncertainty in the treasury market*. (No. GAO-11-203).
- Uslaner, E. (1997). If you can't please everyone, must you only please yourself?: Personal or party ideologies and Senate roll call voting. *Public Choice*, 92(3/4), 243.
- Vogel, K. (2010, 8/2/10). Tea party vs. tea party caucus. *POLITICO*.
- Wasson, E. (2011, 07/04/11). Tea partiers split over debt strategy. *The Hill*.
- Wasson, E. (2011, 03/14/11). Tea party opponents complicate GOP vote on new stopgap funding bill. *The Hill*.
- Weigel, D. (2011, Tuesday, April 12, 2011). The don't-tread-on-meter: A good deal for the tea party. *Slate*.

---

Where Tea Party candidates are running. (2010, October 14, 2010). *The New York Times*.

Williamson, V., Skocpol, T., & Coggin, J. (2011). The Tea Party and the remaking of Republican conservatism. *Perspectives on Politics*, 9(1), 25. doi:10.1017/S153759271000407X

## Appendix

### A. Remaining Regression Tables and Descriptive Statistics

OCTOBER CONTINUING RESOLUTION PROBIT ESTIMATES

DV: Continuing Resolution	Coefficient	Average marginal effect
Activism (1000s)	-2.646701** (.8305511)	-.5665111**
Tea Party Caucus	-.71496** (.2505694)	-.1705777**
Tea Party Express	.587433† (.3546326)	.1182068†
Tea Party Freshman	-.3583152 (.2793517)	-.0790495
NOMINATE	-2.023424* (.9328474)	-.4331024*
PVI	-.0420154† (.0222165)	-.0089932†
Gender	1.522139* (.6319029)	.2088642**
Age	.0148948 (.0118847)	.0031882
South	1.004163 (.6778021)	.1966926†
Midwest	-.415431 (.5540682)	-.0917982
West	-.2574513 (.6811278)	-.0572807
Unemployment	.0021284 (.0582559)	.0004556
Percent black	-.0408999* (.0184158)	-.0087544*
Percent Hispanic	-.0052205 (.0127685)	-.0011174
Median household income (100,000s)	1.404017 (1.293693)	.3005218
Constant	2.756796* (1.35478)	
N	235	
Correctly classifies (prob ≥ 0.5):	84.26%	

† significant at  $p < 0.10$  | \* significant at  $p < 0.05$  | \*\* significant at  $p < 0.01$   
Standard error in parentheses



DV CORRELATION MATRIX

	Stopgap	Budget	Debt Ceiling	Disaster Relief	Continuing Resolution	Payroll
Stopgap	1.0000					
Budget	0.6569	1.0000				
Debt Ceiling	0.5044	0.5484	1.0000			
Disaster Relief	0.4177	0.4294	0.4874	1.0000		
Continuing Resolution	0.4955	0.5750	0.6165	0.6051	1.0000	
Payroll	0.3048	0.3393	0.3132	0.3155	0.3169	1.0000

TABLE OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
112 <sup>th</sup> NOMINATE	243	.7223396	.1468658	.2091453	.9633746
PVI	244	9.237705	7.195739	-6	29
District Deviation	244	-.003124	.1423431	-.7622512	.2870127
Activism (1000s)	244	.4780619	.1673146	.041	1.148006
Tea Party Caucus	243	.255144	.4368419	0	1
FreedomWorks	244	.2868852	.4532372	0	1
Tea Party Express	244	.3483607	.4774303	0	1
Tea Party Freshmen	244	.3319672	.4718873	0	1
Gender	244	.0983607	.2984138	0	1
South	244	.4344262	.4967003	0	1
Midwest	244	.2663934	.442981	0	1
West	244	.1762295	.3817985	0	1
Unemployment	244	9.430738	2.194174	3.8	15.1
Percent Black	244	8.635369	8.229536	.31	35.39
Percent Hispanic	244	11.6968	13.12352	.84	76.24

---

Age	244	54.72951	10.50889	30	88
Median Household Income (100,000s)	244	.5205462	.1274851	.27179	.9773
Stopgap Vote	240	.775	.418455	0	1
Final Budget Vote	238	.7521008	.432703	0	1
Debt Ceiling Vote	240	.725	.4474474	0	1
Disaster Relief Vote	237	.7974684	.4027368	0	1
October CR Vote	235	.7744681	.4188242	0	1
Payroll Tax Cut Extension Vote	237	.6160338	.4873792	0	1

## B. Interview Procedure & Questions

Interviews were conducted over the phone in the format of a guided conversation. I did not keep rigidly to the questions, but made sure each was asked by the end of the discussion. I electronically recorded the audio of each, and produced a written transcript from the recording. I generally followed the recommendations outlined by Berry (2002) for elite interviewing. Every interviewee was offered anonymity.

### Opening Pitch:

I'm part of a research team at the Department of Political Science at Tufts University that is studying the changing political landscape. The Tea Party has had such a great impact over such a relatively short lifespan that academics are struggling to keep pace. We're hoping to gain a bit of insight from you for use in a scholarly book. We saw your name in \_\_\_\_\_ and thought you'd be a good person to talk with. This is nonpartisan research we won't share your interview with anyone else. You're welcome to speak off the record if you're more comfortable with that.

I promise not to take up too much of your time—a half hour maximum. And I can do it at any time that is convenient for you, day or night. I'll work around your schedule.

### Actual Interview:

Thanks so much for taking the time to speak with me. I greatly appreciate it! We're trying to get a handle on the Tea Party as things have moved so fast its been difficult for academics to study the movement and its impact. But let me begin by asking just a bit about yourself. How did you come to be active in your local Tea Party?

The Tea Party has had a lot of success in the past year. Has that changed your organization? Has your local Tea Party evolved or changed in the past year?

---

One thing that's impressed us about the Tea Party is how grassroots and volunteer oriented it is. Instead of party politicians, it's local folks getting active. But it's also hard for organizations to keep people volunteering and coming to meetings. Has there been a drop-off in the number of events you sponsor or in the number of people participating say, compared to a year ago?

What kind of lobbying do you do with your own members of the House and the Senate? Do you meet with them?

As far as we can tell the Tea Party remains very much a variety of different local organizations and not one national organization. Freedom Works in Washington and others have tried to build the Tea Party into one national organization but so far have failed. Would it be better for the Tea Party to become one national organization that could speak for the entire movement, or is it better that it remain a collection of small local organizations?

Should all the local Tea Parties figure out some way to get together to endorse a single Republican candidate for the GOP nomination?

There's been a lot of activity at the state level in passage of legislation aimed at illegal immigrants. Arizona's law created a lot of controversy but a number of states have followed suit or are close to doing so. But Republicans in Congress seem hesitant to pass national legislation as some in the Party fear that the Republicans are in the process of driving Hispanics away from the party and into the Democratic camp. Given the growing proportion of Americans who are of Hispanic origin, isn't this a legitimate concern? Aren't such bills ultimately going to help the Democrats?

I recently saw some census figures for the past decade. Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43 percent and the white population by 1 percent. At the same time polls show that there is virtually no involvement by Hispanics in the Tea Party. Why aren't Hispanics attracted to the Tea Party in the way that so many other Americans are?

There's been a lot of discussion lately about how nasty American politics has gotten. The language used by both liberal groups and conservative groups is often insulting or abrasive in tone. Does the Tea Party share some of the blame here?

Does your own local/state Tea Party ever use words in its statements or emails to members that are deliberately provocative?

[If he/she acknowledges yes, they do, ask for an example if he/she doesn't specify voluntarily]

This has been really helpful. Thanks so much. Before I get off, let me ask if there's something I should have asked you? Is there something important that I didn't cover?