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Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins
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Setting the Agenda

Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives

Scholars of the U.S. House of Representatives disagree over the importance of political parties in organizing the legislative process. On the one hand, nonpartisan theories stress how congressional organization serves members' nonpartisan goals. On the other hand, partisan theories argue that the House is organized to serve the collective interests of the majority party. This book advances our partisan theory and presents a series of empirical tests of that theory's predictions (pitted against others). It considers why procedural cartels form, arguing that agenda power is naturally subject to cartelization in busy legislatures. It argues that the majority party has cartelized agenda power in the U.S. House since the adoption of Reed's rules in 1890. The evidence demonstrates that the majority party seizes agenda control at nearly every stage of the legislative process in order to prevent bills that the party dislikes from reaching the floor. Given our empirical evidence, we question the validity of theories that do not take into account the substantial influence of political parties.

Gary W. Cox is a professor of political science at the University of California, San Diego. In addition to numerous articles in the areas of legislative and electoral politics, he is author of *The Efficient Secret* (winner of the Samuel H. Beer dissertation prize in 1983), coauthor of *Legislative Leviathan* (winner of the Richard F. Fenno Prize in 1994), and author of *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems* (1997), which received the American Political Science Association's awards for the best book in political science (Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award), the best book in comparative politics (Gregory Luebbert Prize), and the best book in political economy. His latest book, *Elbridge Gerry's Salamander,* analyzes the political consequences of the reapportionment revolution in the United States. Cox is a former Guggenheim Fellow and was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1996 and to the National Academy of Sciences in 2005.

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To Karen Cox and Sue McCubbins

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Setting the Agenda is the product of our interest in the role the majority party plays in the U.S. House of Representatives. Throughout the book, we analyze how the majority party seizes agenda control at nearly every stage of the legislative process, in the process arguing that a version of responsible party government can and does exist in our polity. The results, arguments, and conclusions contained within represent countless hours of analyzing data, crafting arguments, and drafting chapters, but, fortunately for us, we were not alone in this process.

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