Legislative Voting and Accountability

Legislatures are the core representative institutions in modern democracies. Citizens want legislatures to be decisive, and they want accountability, but they are frequently disillusioned with the representation legislators deliver. Political parties can provide decisiveness in legislatures, and they may provide collective accountability, but citizens and political reformers frequently demand another type of accountability from legislators – at the individual level. Can legislatures provide collective and individual accountability? This book considers what both kinds of accountability require and offers the most extensive cross-national analysis of legislative voting undertaken to date. It illustrates the balance between individualistic and collective representation in democracies and how party unity in legislative voting shapes that balance. In addition to quantitative analysis of voting patterns, the book draws on field and archival research to provide an extensive assessment of legislative transparency throughout the Americas.

John M. Carey is the John Wentworth Professor in the Social Sciences at Dartmouth College. He has taught at the Universidad Católica de Chile, the University of Rochester, Washington University in St. Louis, Harvard University, and at the Fundación Juan March in Madrid, Spain. Carey’s most recent books are *Term Limits in the State Legislatures* (2000, with Richard Niemi and Lynda Powell), *Executive Decree Authority* (1998, with Matthew Shugart), and *Term Limits and Legislative Representation* (1996). He has also published articles in numerous scholarly journals as well as chapters in more than a dozen edited volumes.
Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics

General Editor
Margaret Levi University of Washington, Seattle

Assistant General Editor
Stephen Hanson University of Washington, Seattle

Associate Editors
Robert H. Bates Harvard University
Torben Iversen Harvard University
Stathis Kalyvas Yale University
Peter Lange Duke University
Helen Milner Princeton University
Frances Rosenbluth Yale University
Susan Stokes Yale University
Sidney Tarrow Cornell University
Kathleen Thelen Northwestern University
Erik Wibbels Duke University

Other Books in the Series
David Austen-Smith, Jeffry A. Frieden, Miriam A. Golden, Karl Ove Moene, and Adam Przeworski, eds., Selected Works of Michael Wallerstein: The Political Economy of Inequality, Unions, and Social Democracy
Lisa Baldez, Why Women Protest: Women’s Movements in Chile
Robert Bates, When Things Fall Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa
Mark Beissinger, Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State
Nancy Bermeo, ed., Unemployment in the New Europe
Carles Boix, Democracy and Redistribution
Carles Boix, Political Parties, Growth, and Equality: Conservative and Social Democratic Economic Strategies in the World Economy
Catherine Boone, Merchant Capital and the Roots of State Power in Senegal, 1930–1985

Continued after the Index
Legislative Voting and Accountability

JOHN M. CAREY
Dartmouth College
Contents

Preface page ix

1 TO WHOM ARE LEGISLATORS ACCOUNTABLE? 1
1.1. Introduction 1
1.2. Decisiveness Problems 4
1.3. Collective versus Individual Accountability 7
1.4. Legislators, Principals, and the Structure of Accountability 14
1.5. Plan of the Book 20

2 COLLECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY AND ITS DISCONTENTS 23
2.1. The Strong-Party Ideal 23
2.2. Legislative Parties and Discipline in Latin America 25
2.3. Trouble in Paradise: Partisan Representation Falling Short 29
2.4. The View from the Chamber 36
2.5. The Shift toward Individual Accountability 40

3 THE SUPPLY OF VISIBLE VOTES 43
3.1. Visible Votes and Accountability 43
3.2. Who Can Monitor Votes? 49
3.3. The U.S. Experience 51
3.4. The Supply of Recorded Votes in Latin America 55
3.5. Conclusion 65
Chapter 3 Appendix 66
Preface

Shortly after the 2006 election, in which the Democrats recaptured control of the U.S. Congress, the spoof newspaper *The Onion* ran a story in which Nancy Pelosi, the new Speaker of the House, reprimanded her partisan colleagues for supporting her legislative agenda without necessarily meaning it. Referring to a fictitious bill, *The Onion* had Pelosi admonishing Democrats not to “just pass it because I want it, but because you want it, too,” and went on to describe Pelosi’s “concern that her relationship to the House was based completely on voting” (*The Onion*, 42 [49], December 4, 2006).

Legislative decisions are about votes, and voting behavior is organized by parties. If we want to understand legislatures and the representation they provide, it makes sense to look at partisan voting. To *The Onion*, the joke was that Pelosi might care about anything beyond that bottom line.

It never got big laughs, but I had a similar idea in mind around a decade ago, when I started the project that became this book. At the time, the study of voting in the U.S. Congress was a bustling cottage industry, but there was almost no information about legislative voting outside the United States. The reason, it seemed to me, had to be the lack of available data on votes. So, to begin, I set out to collect data on votes in a number of legislatures, mostly in Latin America where I had some experience, but also in other assemblies where I could establish research connections. My first surprise was that, in most countries, it was exceedingly unusual to record how each legislator voted on a given proposal. What *The Onion* took to be the bedrock of legislative representation could not be taken for granted in many democracies.

As I explored the issue across more and more assemblies, it became clear that a prior question – before how legislators vote – is whether assemblies make it possible to know how legislators vote. So the research agenda...
evolved and expanded, and I spent as much time talking with politicians, journalists, and activists about whether they favored voting transparency, and why, as I did collecting and analyzing voting data.

As it turns out, I spent a lot of time on each, which accounts for the ten years that passed between starting the project and publishing this book. Those years have seen progress in the study of legislative voting beyond the halls of the U.S. Congress. This book takes a step toward mapping, and explaining, the world of partisan voting in legislatures. Data availability remains an obstacle in most assemblies. Many still record few or no votes, and those that do record often do not make vote records easy for outsiders like scholars, or citizens, to examine. The problem is more than academic. Lack of voting transparency is also an obstacle to accountability.

There is much more on this topic in the book itself. Here, I want to recognize and thank the organizations and the people who made my research possible. The book offers the broadest cross-national analysis of recorded voting to date, and all the data collected for the project are available online for other researchers to use. Doing field research in ten countries, and collecting the data from fifteen others, required resources, expertise, and effort beyond what I could muster on my own. Early financial support was provided by National Science Foundation Grant SES-9986219 and also by the Weidenbaum Center on the Economy, Government, and Public Policy at Washington University in St. Louis.

I received outstanding research assistance at Washington University from Christopher Kam, Connor Raso, Meg Rincker, John Bunyan, Sarit Smila, Alba Ponce de León, Erica Townsend Bell, Gina Reinhardt Yannitell, Adam Bookman, Rachel Kaul, Cheryl Boudreau, Juan Gabriel Gómez Abellardo, Amy Nunn, and (now Senator) Jeff Smith. Jeff Staton’s contributions are better described as collaboration than as research assistance, and I continue to learn from Jeff. Rebecca Cantú provided solid assistance during my brief visit at Harvard. At Dartmouth, assistance from Anne Bellows, Justin Brownstone, Xavier Engle, and Seth Goldberg helped bring the project across the finish line.

In the course of conducting field research and in collecting data from assemblies far and wide, I drew on the expertise, and often on the hospitality, of dozens of generous souls. Eduardo Alemán, Mark Jones, Valeria Palanza, Roberto Sabá, and Mariano Tommasi shared data and provided insights into Argentine politics. In Bolivia, thanks go to Diego Ayó, Carlos Cordero, William Culver, René Mayorga, José Rivera Eterovic, and Eduardo Rodríguez. On Brazil, I am grateful to Barry Ames, Octavio Amorim Neto, Scott

x
Preface

Desposato, Argelina Figuereido, Wendy Hunter, Eduardo Leoni, Fernando Limongi, Scott Mainwaring, Carlos Pereira, Timothy Power, David Samuels, and Kurt Weyland. On Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, Christopher Kam was, and is, the man. On Colombia, thanks to Luis Fajardo, Ana Julia Ramos, and Elisabeth Ungar. In Costa Rica, Jorge Vargas Cullel and Aixa Ansoarena, Rafael Villegas Antillón, and Leo Nuñez Arias competed for the title of most gracious hosts, and most insightful political experts. In the Czech Republic, thanks to Elena Mielcova and to Daniel Munich for sharing data. Felipe Cisneros and Andrés Mejía helped lead me through Ecuador’s dense political thicket. In El Salvador, David Holiday was another dual provider of safe haven and deep political knowledge. Eric Voeten graciously shared voting data on France. On Guatemala, Harry Brown Araúz, Javier Fortín, and Reginald Todd all offered key insights. On Israel, the politics of which is pretty much self-explanatory to begin with, Itai Sened and Doron Navot offered yet further clarity. Thanks to William Heller for insights on the Italian parliament. In Mexico, Jeffrey Weldon, Joy Langston, Cecilia Martínez-Gallardo, and Alejandro Poiré all walked me through the politics of a democratizing legislature. In Nicaragua, Guillermo García showed me the ins and outs of the Assembly and provided critical contacts. In Peru, Cynthia Sanborn made me feel at home and also led me through the shifting post-Fujimori political landscape. I was happy to receive further help on Peru from Catherine Conaghan, Gregory Schmidt, and Rick Walter. Steven Braeger, Sheila Espine-Villaluz, and Carl Landé all shed light on the Philippines. In Poland, Wiesław Dobrowolski and Jacek Mercik shared data, and Meg Rincker provided on-the-ground knowledge. On the Russian Duma, thanks to Moshe Haspel and Thomas Remington. Thanks also to Manuel Alcántara in Salamanca, Spain, for making data available from his Proyecto Elites Latinoamericanas. In Venezuela, Ricardo Comellas explained the politics of Hugo Chavez’s (first) constitutional overhaul, while Brian Crisp, José Molina, Steve Ellner, Janet Kelly, Michael Coppedge, Miriam Kornblith, Berta Peña, and Juan Carlos Rey delivered all-around expert observations.

Drafts of various papers that eventually formed parts of the book benefited from critical feedback from participants in seminars at the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, the University of Chicago, Cornell, Duke, Florida International University, the Fundación Juan March in Madrid, George Washington University, Harvard, the Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Oxford, the Universidad del Pacífico in Lima, Princeton, and the University of Vermont.
Beyond these, a number of scholars provided comments and suggestions on earlier papers or drafts that improved the final result. These include James Alt, Joseph Bafumi, Gary Cox, Brian Crisp, Scott Desposato, Jorge Dominguez, Kent Eaton, John Gerring, Jeanne Giraldo, William Heller, Michael Herron, Simon Hix, John Huber, Jeffrey Jenkins, Mark Jones, Nelson Kasfir, Jana Kunicova, Fabrice Lehoucq, Mona Lyne, Scott Morgenstern, Kathleen O’Neill, Mark Payne, David Samuels, Matthew Shugart, Peter Siavelis, Steven Swindle, Michael Ting, Jeffrey Weldon, and Gerald Wright.

Thank also to Lew Bateman, my editor at Cambridge University Press; Margaret Levi, the Comparative Politics Series editor; and to the anonymous reviewers they recruited. Lew and Margaret balanced consistent support for the manuscript with sound critical judgment and equal measures of patience as I eventually made the necessary revisions.

After acknowledging intellectual debts far and wide, it is customary to close a preface by paying homage closer to home. I turn to this task with some apprehension, recognizing that the stakes are high. My office, after all, is filled with books, and I have read all their prefaces, but I confess to having studied the full contents of a much smaller number. So it stands to reason that, for many readers, any lasting impression from Legislative Voting and Accountability could depend on my eloquence regarding my family. I admit straightaway I cannot do justice to that subject. My wife, Lisa, is the greatest, and my sons, Joe and Sam, are too, for a million reasons that have nothing to do with voting or accountability, although it is worth noting that they indulge my habit of visiting legislatures in any state or country where we travel, whether on vacation or for more important purposes, like soccer tournaments. I really could not ask for anything more.