

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-07995-3 - Is Bipartisanship Dead?: Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting  
in the House of Representatives  
Laurel Harbridge  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Is Bipartisanship Dead?

*Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting in the House  
of Representatives*

*Is Bipartisanship Dead?* looks beyond (and considers the time before) roll call voting to examine the extent to which bipartisan agreement in the House of Representatives has declined since the 1970s. Despite voting coalitions showing a decline in bipartisan agreement between 1973 and 2004, members' bill cosponsorship coalitions show a much more stable level of bipartisanship. The declining bipartisanship over time in roll call voting reflects a shift in how party leaders structure the floor and roll call agendas. Party leaders in the House changed from prioritizing legislation with bipartisan agreement in the 1970s to prioritizing legislation with partisan disagreement by the 1990s. Laurel Harbridge argues that this shift reflects a changing political environment and an effort by leaders to balance members' electoral interests, governance goals, and partisan differentiation. The findings speak to questions of representation and governance. They also shed light on whether partisan conflict is insurmountable, and, ultimately, whether bipartisanship in congressional politics is dead.

Laurel Harbridge is an assistant professor of Political Science at Northwestern University and a faculty Fellow at the Institute for Policy Research. Her teaching and research focus on legislative politics, partisan conflict, and the lack of bipartisan agreement in American politics. She is a former Hoover Institution National Fellow. Her work has been published in the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, and *American Politics Research*.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-07995-3 - Is Bipartisanship Dead?: Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting  
in the House of Representatives  
Laurel Harbridge  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-07995-3 - Is Bipartisanship Dead?: Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting  
in the House of Representatives  
Laurel Harbridge  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# Is Bipartisanship Dead?

*Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting  
in the House of Representatives*

LAUREL HARBRIDGE

*Northwestern University*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-07995-3 - Is Bipartisanship Dead?: Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting  
in the House of Representatives  
Laurel Harbridge  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107439283](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107439283)

© Laurel Harbridge 2015

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

*A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

ISBN 978-1-107-07995-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-107-43928-3 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party Internet Web sites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>List of figures and tables</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
1 Introduction	I
2 A Puzzle of Declining Bipartisanship	18
3 Strategic Partisan Agenda-Setting: A Theoretical Framework	42
4 Agenda-Setting and the Decline of Bipartisan Cooperation	62
5 Variation in Strategic Partisan Agenda-Setting	84
6 Strategic Partisan Agenda-Setting Across Policy Areas	115
7 District Responsiveness and Member-Party Relationships	140
8 The Past, Present, and Future of Bipartisanship	169
<i>Appendix</i>	191
<i>References</i>	235
<i>Index</i>	251

Figures and Tables

FIGURES

2.1	Bipartisanship in House Roll Call Voting	<i>page</i> 28
2.2	Bipartisanship in House Cosponsorship Coalitions	33
2.3(a)	Density of Difference in Party Support Score	38
2.3(b)	Density of Difference in Party Support Score	39
3.1	Illustration of How Member Sorting Contributes to a Partisan Agenda	49
4.1	Bipartisanship by Legislative Stage	66
4.2	Bipartisan Cosponsorship of Significant Bills Receiving Roll Call Votes	68
4.3	Bipartisanship in Policy Outputs	74
4.4	Bipartisanship in Voice Votes	76
4.5	Distribution of Special Rules for Cosponsored Bills (98th–108th Congresses)	81
5.1	Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Receiving a Roll Call Vote	100
5.2	Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Receiving Floor Attention	101
5.3	Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Passage by Voice Vote	103
5.4	Bipartisan Cosponsorship by Legislative Stage and Type of Vote	107
6.1	Bipartisan Cosponsorship by Policy Area	119
6.2	Predicted Difference in Conditional Probability of a Roll Call Vote (Majority-Sponsored Bills)	123
6.3	Predicted Difference in Conditional Probability of Floor Attention (Majority-Sponsored Bills)	124
6.4	Difference in Conditional Probability of a Roll Call Vote (Majority-Sponsored Bills)	126
6.5	Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Receiving a Roll Call Vote by Policy Category	130
6.6	Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Receiving Floor Attention by Policy Category	133

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-107-07995-3 - Is Bipartisanship Dead?: Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting  
 in the House of Representatives  
 Laurel Harbridge  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

<i>List of figures and tables</i>	vii
6.7 Ratio of Agenda Attention to Introduced Bills by Policy Category	136
7.1(a) Predicted Probability of Legislative Behavior	154
7.1(b) Predicted Probability of Legislative Behavior	155
7.2 Member Responsiveness Varies Across the Extent of Partisan Agenda-Setting	156
7.3(a) Differences in Legislative Behavior for Democrats and Republicans	158
7.3(b) Differences in Legislative Behavior for Democrats and Republicans	159
7.4 Electoral Punishment for Partisan Voting	162
7.5 Electoral Benefits for Bipartisan Cosponsorship	165
7.6 Electoral Benefits for Bipartisan Cosponsorship as Risk of Being Out-of-Step in Voting Increases for Members in Competitive Districts	166
8.1 Shifts in Bipartisan Cosponsorship in the 111th and 112th Congresses	177
8.2 Recent Patterns of Bipartisan Agenda-Setting	178
A2.1 Bipartisan Cosponsorship with Alternative Thresholds	193
A2.2 Bipartisanship in House Cosponsorship Coalitions with Majority Sponsors	193
A2.3 Bipartisanship in House Cosponsorship Coalitions with More than the Median Number of Cosponsors	194
A2.4 Ideological Composition of Cosponsorship Coalitions	196
A2.5 Bipartisanship in House Roll Call Voting by Type of Bill	202
A2.6 Distribution of Sponsor Ideology by Congress for Cosponsored and Non-Cosponsored Bills	204
A2.7 Distribution of Policy Categories Across Time	210
A4.1 Bipartisan Agenda-Setting on All Roll Call and Final Passage Roll Call Votes	211
A4.2 Bipartisan Agenda-Setting by Threshold of Bipartisan Cosponsorship	212
A4.3 Difference in Conditional Probability of a Roll Call Vote Given that Bill Was Reported from Committee (Majority-Sponsored Bills)	213
A5.1 Additional Model Specifications of Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Receiving a Roll Call Vote	214
A5.2 Additional Model Specifications of Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Receiving Floor Attention	216
A5.3 Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Legislative Attention Across Forms of Divided Government	217
A5.4 Effect of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Legislative Attention (Excluding Majority Seat Share)	219

TABLES

2.1	Regression of Percentage of Bipartisan Votes on Time (1973–2004)	30
2.2	House Cosponsorship Summary Statistics	32
2.3	Regression of Percentage of Bipartisan Cosponsorship Coalitions on Time (1973–2004)	36
4.1	Conditional Probability of Legislative Attention Given Cosponsorship Coalition (Majority Party Sponsor)	70
4.2	Conditional Probability of Legislative Attention Given Cosponsorship Coalition (Minority Party Sponsor)	71
4.3	Who Requests a Recorded Vote?	78
5.1	Floor Passage Rates for Bills with Roll Call Votes	87
5.2	Summary Statistics for Cosponsored Bills with Majority Sponsors (1973–2004)	93
5.3	Legislative Attention for Cosponsored Bills with Majority Sponsors	96
6.1	Rank Ordering of Most Bipartisan to Least Bipartisan Policy Areas	121
7.1	Summary Statistics of Bipartisan Cosponsorship by Members	146
7.2	Correlations of Legislative Behavior and the Normal Presidential Vote	150
A1.1	Reference Table of Years and Congresses	192
A2.1	Proportion of Bills Receiving a Bipartisan Roll Call Vote	198
A2.2	Average Extremity of Sponsor Ideology and Predicted Probability of Bipartisan Cosponsorship for Non-Cosponsored and Cosponsored Bills	206
A6.1	Major Topic Codes in the Congressional Bills Project	220
A6.2	Difference in Conditional Probability of Legislative Attention	221
A6.3	Legislative Attention for Cosponsored Bills with Majority Sponsors by Policy Category	222
A7.1	Summary Statistics on the Frequency of Cosponsorship by Members	225
A7.2	Models of Voting and Cosponsorship Behavior (1973–2004)	226
A7.3	Member Responsiveness in Voting and Cosponsorship (1973–2004)	228
A7.4	Impact of Legislative Behavior on Members’ Vote Share (1974–2004)	229
A7.5	Impact of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Members’ Vote Share (1974–88)	232
A7.6	Impact of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Members’ Vote Share (1990–2004)	233
A7.7	Impact of Bipartisan Cosponsorship on Members’ Vote Share as Risk of Being Out-of-Step Increases (Competitive Districts Only) (1974–2004)	234



Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-07995-3 - Is Bipartisanship Dead?: Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting  
in the House of Representatives  
Laurel Harbridge  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

## Acknowledgments

The idea for this book developed after began research on what I thought would be a decline in bipartisan cooperation at all stages of policy making as party polarization has risen in Congress over the last 30 years. However, when I began analyzing the data on cosponsorship coalitions, the striking feature was the persistence of bipartisan cooperation rather than its decline. As a result, I altered my focus and turned to looking at why bipartisan agreement would be different in cosponsorship coalitions and in roll call votes. I narrowed my focus to changes in the composition of the legislative agenda to understand this puzzle. As this book comes to completion, I am thankful to all of those who have helped along the way.

This project began as my dissertation at Stanford University, where I could not have done without the advice and guidance of my chair, David Brady. He struck the perfect balance of allowing me the freedom to take my research ideas where I wanted, while nonetheless reminding me to keep the questions broad and relevant. His help in framing the research proved invaluable. I am also indebted to my other committee members – Morris Fiorina and Paul Sniderman – who helped me in the early stages by offering mentorship and advice on framing the research.

At Northwestern University, I found a wide group of colleagues who offered support and feedback throughout the process of completing the book. Colleagues in both the Political Science Department and the Institute for Policy Research offered suggestions, gave advice, and helped improve this book in many ways. In particular, Daniel Galvin and Anthony Chen were generous with their time, reading drafts and providing feedback; Benjamin Page and Jamie Druckman mentored me throughout the process of bringing this book to fruition; and Jason Seawright and Georgia Kernell offered suggestions on analysis and interpretation. I also found both undergraduate and graduate students who wanted to engage with this research and helped with research tasks, large and small. My thanks go out to Katherine Scovic, Sourav Bhowmick,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-07995-3 - Is Bipartisanship Dead?: Policy Agreement and Agenda-Setting in the House of Representatives

Laurel Harbridge

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Leah Patterson, Nathan Abelman, Hanna Rutkowski, D. J. Flynn, Mara Suttman-Lea, and Vijay Murganoor.

Other colleagues, near and far, also provided feedback and a sounding board throughout this project. Sarah Anderson, Margaret Peters, Alexander Tahk, Gregory Koger, Michael Neblo, and Daniel Diermeier all offered help along the way. I am particularly thankful for E. Scott Adler's guidance. He was my first academic mentor at the University of Colorado, and his guidance (and persistence), combined with the invitation to join him in research, led me to graduate school.

The editors and editorial team at Cambridge University Press have been very helpful. I thank Robert Dreesen and Elizabeth Janetschek in particular. I appreciate the suggestions from the reviewers for Cambridge (as well as anonymous reviewers for Oxford University Press), all of which helped to improve this book.

Opportunities to present portions of this research in seminars and a book manuscript workshop were invaluable. The Northwestern Political Parties Working Group, Institute for Policy Research, Cornell Government and Economics Workshop, Vanderbilt Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, and Texas A&M Conference on Parties and Polarization in American Politics all provided feedback, suggestions, and advice that helped to improve this book. A book manuscript conference, with feedback from Barry Burden, Frances Lee, David Rohde, and Steven Smith, provided a critical angle on the project when I needed it most.

Support for this project came not only from my department and the Institute for Policy Research, but also from the Dirksen Congressional Center and the Carl Albert Center. I was able to spend time as a visiting scholar at Vanderbilt's Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, where I not only presented this work but was able to brainstorm with Alan Wiseman, Joshua Clinton, and others. The final steps of this book could not have been completed without my time as a National Fellow at the Hoover Institution. This opportunity gave me time to finish this manuscript and the chance to engage with more scholars as I fine-tuned my arguments.

The analyses presented throughout the book would not be possible without the generosity of scholars who have shared their data. James Fowler's cosponsorship data, Adler and Wilkerson's Congressional Bills Project, the Policy Agendas Project, Rohde's roll call data, and Gary Jacobson's elections data offered treasure troves of information.

Finally, I am grateful for the support of family members and friends. In particular, I thank my parents, Bill and CD Harbridge, and my sister, Heather Harbridge, without whose support none of this would have been possible. I owe a special debt of gratitude to David Yong, whose support, encouragement, and listening ear helped propel me through the final steps of this book.