

Lending and Reclaiming Power: Majority Leadership in the House Since the 1950s

John H. Aldrich, Duke University
David W. Rohde, Duke University

Abstract

For nearly half a century, the House of Representatives has been characterized by almost constant change in its institutional rules, that is, how it governs itself. In this chapter we will outline the broad contours of those changes, focusing particularly on the shifting balance of power between the majority party leadership and the committee system. In this account we will offer an explanation of the ebb and flow of that balance. Key to this ebb and flow has been the set of elections that have brought sometimes similar, sometimes different kinds of members to serve. Two of the most consequential changes in this regard have been, first, the breakup of the “solid, lily-white” Democratic Party in the South, the existence of which caused considerable strains within the majority Democratic Party from the 1950s into the 1970s. The second (and related) change has been the rise of partisan polarization in the 1980s and beyond, in which the two parties in the House have been increasingly divergent from each other in terms of policy preferences, and, for much of the period, increasingly homogenous internally. The now-majority Republican Party has seen increasing internal strains in the last few congresses, however. We use these developments and the theory we call “conditional party government” to explain the changes in the way the House is structured, and thus how the majority party is (or is not) empowered to achieve its aims.

Lending and Reclaiming Power: Majority Leadership in the House Since the 1950s¹

John H. Aldrich, Duke University

David W. Rohde, Duke University

For decades, from the 1920s through the 1960s, the House was relatively unchanging in terms of its internal rules that defined how its powers would be allocated. The majority party and its leadership had relatively limited powers, while the standing committees and their chairs were relatively more powerful. These committee powers were, in turn, mostly allocated to individual members via seniority. This pattern of House rules began to come under strain in the late 1950s and led to changes that began in the 1970s to give greater powers to the two parties in the House and especially to the majority party leadership. From the 1980s and into the 21st century, partisan polarization increased. That is, the differences in how Republicans voted, compared to Democrats, increased, with fewer and fewer crossing party lines to support policies favored by the other party. These differences have greatly shaped how the Congress has gone about its business, the kinds of controversies in it, and the policies they have – and have not – enacted. The following sections trace these changes from the 1950s to date and offer an explanation as to why these changes have occurred and with what consequences. We move rapidly through the earlier decades, placing closer attention to the events that have shaken the House during the Speakerships of John Boehner and the current Speaker, Paul Ryan, that is, to the House under Republican leadership since the elections of 2010 brought them back to power. We begin with a consideration of the baseline from which change occurred, the House in the mid-1950s.

The Era of Committee Government in the House

The midterm elections for the 84th Congress (1955-57) were both conventional and yet proved to be surprising. In 1952, the Republican Party won the presidency and small majorities in both chambers of Congress, including a scant 4-seat majority in the House. The 1954 midterm elections were typical of most midterms, with the incumbent party losing votes and seats, and with such a close balance of seats, it also lost its majorities.² In the House, the Democrats picked up 19 seats, a genuine but not unusually large victory. Their 14 seat majority must have felt vulnerable, especially in light of what was correctly expected to be a landslide reelection for President Dwight Eisenhower. The Democrats turned out to be able to hold their House majority that year, even picking up 2 seats. The surprise emanating from that election was that they would continue to hold that majority for forty years, from 1955-1995, by far the longest such reign in U.S. history.

The Democratic majority was possible in part because it contained great ideological diversity, pairing mostly liberal northern Democrats with mostly conservative southern Democrats. This coalition of seemingly odd bedfellows was in turn possible in some degree because of the way the House worked in this period.³ From about 1920 until the 1970s, the House operated under a set of rules that allocated power by virtually fixed standards.⁴ Committees had established policy jurisdictions and great control over policy making (or blocking) in those areas. Once a Member of the House received a seat on a committee, s/he held rights to keep that seat as long as desired. Chairs were given potentially dictatorial powers over their committee's operation, and the majority party awarded chairmanships to the most senior

member of the majority party on the committee, simply by virtue of seniority. These features decentralized powers greatly.⁵ The result was that the Speaker of the House (Sam Rayburn, D, TX) worked with the committee chairs to determine how the Democrats would use their majority in the House in 1954 and onward, through the end of his Speakership (1961) and into the reform era we discuss in the next section.

This allocation of powers in the House (making up the so-called “textbook Congress”⁶) had the odd feature of giving these powers predominantly to southern Democrats. That happened because there was no Republican Party in most of the South, and virtually no southern Democrats faced challenges to reelection.⁷ Once they won their seat, it was theirs until they chose to give it up or, very rarely, lost in a primary. Thus, in time, southern Democrats became the most senior members of the Democratic Party and hence held most committee chairs in the House. This would not be a problem on its own but would become so when two other features held. First, southern Democrats in the 1950s were only a minority of the Democrats in the House. Second, what they wanted was different from what their northern partisan peers wanted to achieve, and these policy differences proved to grow larger and deeper over time. The rules allocated power on the basis of fixed standards such as seniority for reasons that went back through decades, and the rules would continue to allocate power to a southern conservative minority unless the House and the majority party changed them, but, as we will see, that took decades to effect.

Perhaps the most important political event in 1954 was issuance of the opinion of the Supreme Court in the case *Brown v. Board*. They ruled that the separate educational facilities at the heart of “Jim Crows” laws in the South were inherently unequal and had to change. The following year, the modern Civil Rights Movement began in Montgomery, Alabama. These

events had, as one of their effects, raising the salience of the division between the two wings of the congressional Democratic Party.

The 1958 midterm elections were even more favorable than those of 1954 to the Democrats, adding a substantial 49 seats to their then current majority. Virtually all of these seats went to northern Democrats. The Democrats thus held a commanding majority in the House (and Senate) and northern Democrats held a majority within their party. Southern Democrats, however, still held power under the rules of the textbook Congress. Southern Democrats therefore could simply block any initiatives they chose, and they chose to block anything related to increasing civil rights for African-Americans, among other issues. The result was conflict within the majority party that extended for nearly two decades, as the party and the House struggled to choose a set of rules – an institutional structure – to reflect these new realities. While the 1958 elections were critical in introducing the struggle, it would not be until the 1970s when significant changes were made.⁸

After the 1958 elections, a set of liberal, northern Democrats formed the Democratic Study Group (DSG) to try to counteract the effects of the conservative, southern Democrats. In 1961, Rayburn and newly elected President John F. Kennedy succeeded in expanding the number of members of the Rules Committee to at least modestly dilute the powerful grip of the southern Democrats and especially its chair, Howard Smith (D, VA).

The elevation of Lyndon Johnson to President in the wake of Kennedy's assassination and the Republicans' nomination of Sen. Barry Goldwater (AZ) to face Johnson in 1964 led to a Democratic landslide. They held 295 seats in the House (just over a two-thirds majority) and 68 in the Senate (enough, if unified, to invoke cloture, ending any Republican attempt at a

filibuster). The resulting “Great Society” Congress was one of the most active ever, passing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, much other liberal legislation under the umbrellas of the Great Society and the War on Poverty, and continued support for the War in Vietnam. Conservative southerners generally held the opposite preferences, except for support for the war, but when public opinion turned increasingly against the war, opposition to it was led by liberal Democrats and resisted most fiercely by southern Democrats. As the Great Society Congress opened, DSG-led Democrats reformed the House rules, two of these reforms further modifying the hold of the Rules Committee.⁹

Perhaps because of such large majorities, pushing for additional reforms might have seemed less important than passing legislation. The following congressional elections of 1966 and 1968 reduced the size of the Democratic majority of the Great Society Congress and saw Republican Richard M. Nixon elected President in 1968. The DSG revitalized its efforts for reform which led to a new era, one that we call “The Reform Era” in the House. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 marked the end of the Jim Crow South and began to reshape fundamentally party and electoral politics in that region. Of course, these changes, which undermined one-party control there, were resisted. The development of the Republican Party into a fully competitive party, was slow and did not really take root in the South until the Reagan administration in the 1980s and did not fully mature until 1994, when Republicans first won a majority of the southern delegation on their way to winning their first congressional majority in 40 years.

The Reform Era in the House

By the 1970s, northern Democrats were finally able to change the party’s rules allocating power to committee chairs. This process began in 1971 with an initial reform of the inviolability

of the seniority selection system, continued in 1972 with the “subcommittee bill of rights,” and culminated in 1975 with the Democrats stripping three southern Democrats of their chairmanships, in violation of seniority.¹⁰ There followed a series of reform efforts in both parties (but especially in the majority Democratic Party) to weaken the old structure of Congress and to place more powers in the hands of the leadership in the majority party. While Thomas P. “Tip” O’Neill (D, MA), Speaker from 1977 to his retirement in 1987, was considered particularly adept at working with President Ronald Reagan “across the aisle,” his successor, James Wright (D, TX) aroused considerably greater partisan conflict in the House.

Southern Democrats not only saw their power in the chamber eroding in the early 1970s, but also saw their electoral safety diminishing. As noted above, most southern Democrats faced little or no reelection challenge in the 1950s. That began to change slowly in the wake of the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and especially of the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, which enabled heretofore excluded African Americans to register and vote in the South.¹¹ In the 1970s, southern Democrats increasingly voted against their northern partisan peers on the floor of Congress, and when they did, the result was a roll-call vote that formed what was known as a “Conservative Coalition.”¹² While this strategy of siding with conservative Republicans emerged as early as 1937, it became increasingly common in the early to mid-1970s, becoming nearly as frequent as a “party vote,”¹³ amounting to close to one-third of roll call votes on occasion.¹⁴

This behavior is at least consistent with southern Democrats trying to forestall the development of a Republican challenger in their districts. Starting in the late 1970s and the 1980s, however, the Republican Party was finally able to get sufficiently organized in the South to mount opposition for a majority of congressional seats. In the 1978 congressional elections

Democrats, who held 90% of the available seats in the South in the 1950s, won “only” 69% of the seats. And, whereas three quarters of Democratic victories were non-competitive in the 1950s, only a third were in 1978.¹⁵ Long time incumbents might survive such challenges, but over time conservative southern Republicans won more and more seats, while southern Democrats in less conservative districts (made more liberal by the ability of African-Americans to vote) became more moderate. Indeed districts with near or actual African-American majorities elected fully as liberal members as their northern counterparts.

Southern Democrats were thus either replaced by conservative Republicans or began to vote as (or were replaced with) more moderate Democrats, depending on the composition of their district. The decline of conservative voting among these southern Democrats contributed heavily to the growing partisan “polarization” of the House.¹⁶ By the time Wright became Speaker in 1987, he presided over a House in which Democrats increasingly voted alike and voted differently from Republicans, who also voted similarly to one another. That is to say, that, at least in terms of roll call voting on the floor of Congress, each party was increasingly homogenous, and even more evidently, the two parties became very different in roll call voting behavior from each other and became so over an increasingly broad array of issues. The emergence of partisan polarization enabled reformers to centralize majority party power more fully into the hands of the leaders of that party. This was starting to take effect in the 1970s, but the increased centralization of power into the party leadership really took off during Wright’s speakership.

Progress toward stronger party leadership slowed as the Wright era ended in 1989. Speaker Tom Foley (D, WA), who served from 1989 until his electoral defeat in 1994, proved to be a relatively weak Speaker. He failed, in particular, to respond effectively to such excesses as

the House post office and banking scandals. Centralization of power began to accelerate again with the 1994 elections in which Republicans won a majority of seats in the South and a majority in the House overall, ending the 40 reign of the Democrats and making Newt Gingrich (R, GA) Speaker. From the Gingrich through the Hastert, Pelosi, Boehner, and now Ryan speakerships, not only has power been centralized in the party leadership far more than during the “textbook Congress” era, but the two parties have also been locked in close competition for winning House majorities in elections. In the following section we outline a way to think about the nature of the reform process since the 1950s to date and, even more, about how these reforms have helped shape House politics and policy-making.

Conditional Party Government

The long period of the “textbook Congress” and its seeming inability to be reformed allowed many scholars and observers to assume this constancy was permanent. As we have seen already, and will in more detail in the rest of this chapter, that permanence was illusory. Change seems a better description. And perhaps that should not be surprising in a House that, except for the sparse provisions in the Constitution, writes and enacts its own rules, by simple majority vote, at the beginning of every Congress.¹⁷ Since about the 1890s, the major question is how much power will be centralized into the hands of the leadership of the majority party and how much will be decentralized, as in the “textbook Congress” days of power distributed among the various committees.¹⁸ The authors have developed an explanation we call “conditional party government” to help us understand power and its allocation. There are three parts of the account. The third step – the ultimate outcome of this process – is to understand how the House and the parties within it allocate their powers, and in particular when will they grant their leaders more rather than less power.

The first step in this explanation is to understand just what it is that the individual legislators are seeking to accomplish. What are their goals? Many find that a great deal can be explained by simply assuming that every member's only goal is ensuring reelection, and it is certainly the case that reelection dominates much congressional activity.¹⁹ Like others, we find that exclusive a focus insufficient to understand all congressional behavior.²⁰ We believe that Members of Congress share, in varying degrees, four goals: reelection; making good public policy; seeking individual power in the chamber; and having their party hold a majority in the chamber. To be sure, reelection is important for achieving all of the other goals, but it is hard to see how we can make sense of all of what legislators do if we do not imagine they also care about policy making and about power, both personal and partisan.

We call the explanation "conditional party government," because we believe that members distribute power as they do only under certain conditions. The second step therefore is to define those conditions. Party members will want to give more power to the party leadership the greater the consensus there is in the party about what to do with those powers, and the more important it is that the leadership have the tools to achieve those goals. This situation occurs when it is the case that the opposition wants something very different. That is, the more homogenous preferences are within each party and the more heterogeneity there is between the two parties, the more power members will give (more accurately, will lend) their leadership. The conditions, when applied to policy, are almost exactly the definition of partisan polarization. Thus, the growth in partisan polarization, from a low point in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s to increasingly highly partisan congresses in the last thirty years is an indication that the condition for conditional party government has become more fully realized. We therefore should expect changes in House and party rules that centralize power in leadership hands.

The growing degree of partisan polarization in the 1980s fits smoothly with increased centralization of power in the hands of the majority party and its leadership. The transition in leadership from O'Neill to Wright gave opportunity for acting on that centralization. As Wright did so, he attracted the ire of the minority party, and especially of its more junior – and increasingly often southern – Republican members, such as Newt Gingrich (R, GA).

Of course, even if there is a great divide between the two parties, there are still may be and generally are tensions within one or both parties.²¹ When this erupts, as it appears to have done in recent congresses and especially in the Republican Party, we would expect that party's Representatives to pull power back away from its leadership, at least in terms and on issues that shape the internal party divide. Conditional party government, thus, provides a simple basis for understanding changes that have come about in the House, especially since WWII, the period covered in this chapter..

From Speaker Wright to Speaker Gingrich: The End of Continuous Democratic Rule

From 1987 to 1994, the Democrats continued their long run in power, with very little change in the number of seats they controlled. Indeed, the 1992 congressional elections returned them to the same point as in 1987. Thus, the big change in the House was the continual increase in partisan polarization on the floor and, of course, the election of the new Speaker, one who had long been more sharp-edged in his partisanship than O'Neill.²² As noted earlier, Wright used the Speaker's newly acquired powers more fully than his predecessor. In part this was to achieve policy victories. Upon his election as Speaker, Wright announced a program of 10 bills he wanted to see pass the House, and all did, with 9 of 10 became law (including one over a presidential veto). Of course these particular bills were announced as goals of the new Speaker

only after the election and with an eye toward what was possible to achieve. As the theory leads us to expect, they reflected the use of special rules, in particular ones that restricted the ability of the minority party to offer amendments.²³ While his program mostly passed into law, the House quickly became mired in less policy-relevant controversies for the next several congresses.

While we noted that the Democrats held a fairly consistent majority in this period (varying over the 100th through 103rd congresses from 58% to 62% and back to 58%), there was an erosion of their electoral appeal, even if it did not reveal itself in seat losses. Thus, for example, the percentage of the two-party vote received by the Democrats declined from 1986 to 1992 from 54% to 53% to 52% to 50%, even though the percentage of seats those votes won for the Democrats changed little.²⁴ Perhaps illustrative of the reasons for a general loss of support was a scandal discovered in 1991 involving misuse of funds in the congressional post office, leading to a guilty plea to charges of mail fraud by one of the most powerful figures in Washington, Dan Rostenkowski (D, IL), chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, and damaging the reputations of numerous others..

Earlier and more importantly Speaker Wright was forced to resign. He came under investigation by the House Ethics Committee in 1988 for misuse of funds received as royalties and speaking fees for a book he had written. The charges were filed by Gingrich and undermined Wright's effectiveness. These events lead him to resign in 1989, once his successor was selected.

Gingrich, as a key leader of younger Republican members, differed in his orientation toward his party's minority status. Many long-time Republicans had become used to perpetual minority status (even in the face of landslide victories for their presidential candidates) and

developed ways of eking out small victories from the majority party. Gingrich sought to win a majority for the Republicans, and to that end he and others were active in helping recruit and support potentially winning candidates. In the wake of these scandals that occurred under the Democratic watch, Gingrich embarked on an ambitious such campaign for 1994, hoping (he asserted) to make real inroads into the Democratic majority. To that end, he and other Republican leaders formulated a ten-point program dubbed the “Contract with America.”²⁵ The Contract was created in advance of the 1994 campaign and was designed for creating a national “platform” for incumbents and challengers alike in the party. Republican candidates gathered with incumbents in Washington in September for a “signing” ceremony/photo opportunity, but were left free to run on the platform as a whole or any portion of it as fit their needs best. This legislative campaign document was combined with recruitment and support programs in an unusually large number of districts. Even the day before the election, Gingrich admitted to expecting to be in the minority in the 104th Congress. However, the Republicans ended up winning a massive 54 seat majority, with 52% of the vote, a gain of nearly 7% over 1992.

The 1994 elections brought a dramatic change in the makeup of the Republican Party in the House.²⁶ In 1993, at the opening of the 103rd Congress, the Republicans had advanced to holding about 31% of the southern seats in the House. In 1995, this percentage swelled to 53%, and thus the Republicans, for the first time since the end of Reconstruction, were the majority party in the South. Leadership in Congress generally changed dramatically as a result of 1994 (Speaker Foley was defeated for reelection, for example), often changing the generation of the leaders. The House Republican leadership change was particularly dramatic as Gingrich assumed the leadership of the House Republicans and thus the Speakership, Dick Armey (R, TX) was chosen majority party leader, and Tom DeLay (R, TX) became majority whip. Thus, the top

party leadership were entirely southern, another first, with Bob Livingston (R, LA) chairing Appropriations and Bill Archer (R, TX) chairing Ways and Means, adding to the new found southern accent at the center of the Republican House delegation and its leadership.

Speaker Gingrich announced leadership selection of three major committee chairs in violation of seniority, Livingston, Thomas Biley (R., VA) as chair of Energy, and Henry Hyde (R, IL) as chair of Judiciary.²⁷ Substantial other changes were in store, such as a general weakening of the independent powers of committee chairs, increasing party leadership oversight of committees, changing the committee assignment process, and adopting term limits (six years for committee chairs, eight for the Speaker). A number of newly elected Republicans received unusually plum committee appointments. The leadership in practice also employed control over the Rules Committee. Giving leadership more control over Rules had been a major step in centralizing power in the Democratic majority. By following suit when they were the majority party, Republicans were also able to use influence over Rules to help achieve their goals. At one point that included more open rules for amendments, but (see below) that proved unworkable, and they used restrictive rules increasingly commonly. The party leadership also sought to shape the content of bills, such as by by-passing committees entirely on occasion, and using party leadership influence in Appropriations to include substantive legislation rather than sending it to the authorizing committee with appropriate jurisdiction.²⁸

This substantial centralization of power in the party leadership was meant in large part to facilitate the ability of the new Republican majority to act on its more nearly consensual policy preferences, a consequence of the combination of overall partisan polarization, of the special features of 1994, including the use of the Contract with America, and simply of being 40 years out of power. Given the size and unexpected nature of their victory, Gingrich also felt that he

owed a significant part of majority status and thus his Speakership to the newly elected representatives, and they in turn could reasonably conclude that they owed their victories in part to the efforts of Gingrich and other party leaders and, perhaps, to the Contract as well. Gingrich made passage of the Contract a first order of business, seeking (successfully) to resolve all ten programs within the first 100 days of the 104th Congress. Once passed in the House, many were changed substantially in the Senate (also with a new Republican majority) and few became law. Along the way to initial House passage of the bill concerning unfunded mandates, the amending rule was open, and the Democrats offered 37 amendments that led to roll call votes (including in this number two of them proposed by an independent member of Congress, Bernie Sanders, I. VT). None passed but the delay reduced Republican enthusiasm for the return to permitting the opposition wide access to the floor for amending.

Gingrich and the Republicans ruled the House and even national politics for some time. At one point in 1995, President Clinton felt compelled to say in a press conference, "I am relevant. The Constitution gives me relevance. A president, especially an activist president has relevance."²⁹ Even so and as they found with the Contract, the House Republicans had more difficulties fulfilling their ambitions when other branches of government were involved. The two most important examples are the showdowns with the President over the budget for 1996, which led to (partial) government shutdowns in 1995 and again in 1996, and impeachment of the president, tried in the Senate. With respect to the budget impasse and shut downs and contrary to at least some expectations among Republicans in the House leadership, 46% of the public blamed Republicans while 27% blamed the Clinton administration.³⁰

The 1998 congressional elections were held just before impeachment reached the House floor. In every midterm election of the century except 1934, when the Democratic New Deal

majority was still emerging, the party of the incumbent president lost seats. In 1998, the Democrats reversed that and actually won 4 seats, yielding a narrow 5-vote majority for the Republicans. Recriminations were loud, including concern that Gingrich and the Republicans had failed to make the campaign sufficiently nationalized over policy.³¹ Livingston announced on Friday, November 6, that he would challenge Gingrich as Speaker. Gingrich, however, announced later that day that he would resign as Speaker and as a member of Congress.³²

House Republicans voted articles of impeachment against President Clinton on December 19, 1998 over his handling of the Monica Lewinsky affair, by close but also nearly perfect party-line votes for perjury (228-206) and obstruction of justice (221-212). The Senate voted against conviction in both cases, and, as before, Clinton's poll standings increased. During the House debate, Livingston announced he would not run for speaker but would resign his seat over a recently disclosed extra-marital affair. Thus, only four years into their majority, two of the key Republican leaders felt compelled to leave their posts, and the Gingrich era ended, but not the Republican majority.

Speaker Hastert, 1999-2007

Dennis Hastert (R, IL) became the new speaker in 1999. Never as acerbically partisan as some, his acceptance speech called for a tamping down of partisanship. He also called for a return to "regular order," meaning that he would seek to return to the rules and practices of earlier years. As it happened, he did not. First, the 2000 election was a virtual tie in many ways. George W. Bush won the presidency with a half million fewer votes than Al Gore. The Democrats won just enough seats to create an exact 50-50 tie in the Senate, making the Democrats the majority party until the end of the Clinton-Gore term, and then making the

Republicans the majority party, when the new vice president, Dick Cheney, would cast the tie-breaking vote, rather than Gore. That changed again when Jim Jeffords (R, VT) declare himself an independent in June, caucusing with the Democrats and thus giving them a 51-49 edge. In Hastert's House, the national vote divided 47.6% to 47.1% for the Republicans, but they lost two seats and thus held only a seven-seat majority.

Any thought of returning to regular order ended when the Republicans' term limits of six years for committee chairs came due in 2000. In an atmosphere in which pressures were pushing in both directions, he decided to enforce the new rules and require chairs to step down at the end of six years. In addition, the new chair of Ways and Means, Bill Thomas (R, CA) was chosen in violation of seniority, and chosen because of his partisan approach.³³

Hastert also lent his name to the so-called "Hastert Rule," in which the party would not allow legislation to reach the floor without the support of at least a majority in the majority party. While this may sound tepid in today's climate, it was a dramatic extension of majority-party power. It was not a "rule" in the sense of being adopted formally into the Republican Conference rules.³⁴ It did, however, set an informal expectation that the party would seek (and often achieve) an at least majority-level consensus before acting. As we will see, the events leading up to Speaker Boehner's resignation in 2015 flowed in part from failure to meet this level of aspiration on legislation important to Republicans.

The Appropriations Committee also continued to be a place where Republicans would focus on legislating. In 2000, Hastert and the GOP selected C.W. Bill Young (R, Fla.) as chair. Young, despite his initial promises to work in the spirit of "bipartisanship, collegiality, and consensus-building,"³⁵ demonstrated from the start that he was a committed conservative who

would work with the Speaker and the leadership on appropriations legislation. Under Hastert, GOP appointments to Appropriations continued to increase the ideological polarization within the committee, which extended the reversal of the committee's special role in bipartisanship in the "textbook Congress" era.³⁶ One result was that, in all of the years in which Hastert was Speaker, appropriations were made only under continuing resolutions. "Regular order" passage of appropriations by ordinary legislation proved impossible, even though there were some years (2003-07, plus the part of 2001-03 that Republicans ruled the Senate), in which Hastert was Speaker during unified Republican control of the government. Of course, unlike Gingrich, Hastert served under a Republican President, a President who served during 9/11 and the wars that followed. No matter who would have been Speaker, he would have been less a national leader than circumstances gave Gingrich the opportunity to be.

The Democrats Return to the Majority with the First Female Speaker,

Nancy Pelosi, 2007-2011

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq reduced support for President Bush and Republicans generally. These concerns, Bush's handling of Hurricane Katrina (which hit the U.S. in August, 2005), and an economic slowdown (setting the stage for the bursting of the "housing bubble" and then the "Great Recession" that began the next year and exploded during the 2008 campaign) hit home in the 2006 midterm congressional elections. The Democrats gained 5% more votes nationally than two years earlier and won 31 new House seats, giving them a 15-seat majority. When then Democratic Party leader Richard Gephardt (D, MO) retired at the end of the 108th Congress (ending in 2005), Democrats selected Nancy Pelosi (D, CA) as party leader. This was the first time in U.S. history that a congressional party was led by a female. Thus, her leading

the party to majority status in 2006 meant that she became the first female Speaker of the House in 2007.

The return to majority status and selection of a new Speaker provided another opportunity for the House or the Democratic majority party to reduce the centralization of power in the party leadership and seek a more bipartisan approach. This path was plausible given a very narrow Senate majority and, of course, a Republican president. Pelosi did oversee reducing some degree of centralization of powers. For example, when they took over, the Democrats reverted to their previous selection system for committee chairs, presuming that the most senior member got the first shot, but requiring a secret-ballot vote to confirm each one. They also kept some of the rules that the Republicans had added, including term limits on chairs, at least temporarily.³⁷ By this point, the committee chairs (who had been ranking minority members before the new congress) were, in many cases, part and parcel of Pelosi's leadership team, perhaps especially David Obey (D, WI) on Appropriations.

There was one prominent exception. John Dingell (D, MI), who had been originally elected to the House in 1955, was known as a moderately liberal to progressive politician, and had served as the senior Democrat on the Energy and Commerce committee for many, many years.³⁸ He was, however, a thorn in Pelosi's side and very public hard feelings – and disruption of legislation – erupted. After the 2008 elections, Henry Waxman (D, CA) challenged Dingell for committee chair and, with Pelosi's support, defeated him.

The majority party's efforts to control the agenda, and the divisive partisan conflict over those efforts persisted during the two Democratic congresses from 2007-2011. From the time she took the top post, Speaker Pelosi was willing to continue, even extend, the use of special rules to

that end.³⁹ The return to majority status gave the Democrats the chance to appoint five new members to the Rules Committee. During the textbook Congress days, this was a particularly important committee and assignment to it went to more senior members. By the 110th Congress, it had become an arm of the leadership, rather than an autonomous source of power. One way to see that was that four of the five assignments went to newly elected Democrats.

In 2008, the huge economic crisis now known as the “Great Recession” happened during the electoral campaign itself. This fact cemented Barack Obama’s hold on the presidential race and improved the chances of Democrats throughout the nation. He thus became president with a solid House majority, with Democrats gaining 21 seats to reach a 39-seat majority in the House, and they held (for a short time) a bare filibuster-proof majority of 60 in the Senate. With unified control and an economic crisis to deal with, the 111th Congress was the most productive of major legislation since the Great Society Congress of 1965-67, with major legislation directed toward the Great Recession and many other issues, including Obama’s signature health care bill, the Affordable Care Act (popularly called “Obamacare”).

This run of legislation would wane with the end, first, of the filibuster-proof Senate. A Republican, Scott Brown (R, MA), replaced the long-time liberal leader of the party, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D, MA), in a surprise showing in a special election called upon Kennedy’s death. Even more importantly, the economic recovery legislation and others contributed to increased deficits, at least in the short term, if not the long term, which was more debatable. The Affordable Care Act became a symbol to some of the alleged ever growing powers of the federal government. Out of questioning the size of government and of the national debt and deficit grew a firestorm of protest that began to solidify in what became known as the “Tea Party.”⁴⁰

John Boehner and the Challenges of Leadership

The 112th Congress (2011-2013)

In November of 2010--in the wake of a slow economic recovery, an unhappy electorate, and the focusing of responsibility on the Democrats due to unified control of government—the Republicans achieved a major triumph in the midterm elections. They gained 63 House seats, regaining control and achieving their largest majority since the 1946 elections, and they gained six Senate sets (although they fell short of a majority in that chamber). Many of the new GOP representatives were identified with the Tea Party movement and held strongly conservative policy positions.

This result exacerbated the partisan polarization of the House. A measure of candidate ideology developed by Adam Bonica shows that while Republican members who returned to the House after the election were very conservative, the newly elected representatives were even more so. “An amazing 77% of the newly arriving Republicans, including dozens of Tea Party-backed Republicans, are to the right of the typical Republican in the previous Congress—and many are to the right of *almost all* continuing Republicans.”⁴¹ This was a continuation and acceleration of a trend for the GOP. Analysis by Edward G. Carmines (using a different ideology measure than Bonica’s) shows that in each of the five Congresses before the 2010 elections newly elected Republicans were more conservative on average than those Republicans who returned from the previous Congress. This was the opposite of the pattern for Democrats. In that party, in every Congress newly elected members were more moderate on average than those Democrats who were reelected.⁴² As we will see, these developments had significant implications for the Republicans’ party leadership.

In January of 2011, in the heady days after their landslide victory, John Boehner was elected Speaker by a unanimous vote of the Republican majority. This apparent consensus did not, however, indicate universal satisfaction among Republicans with their new leader. During the 2010 campaign there had been plenty of negative opinions expressed about Boehner and much of the rest of the party leadership, especially among candidates and activists identified with the Tea-Party movement. But those elements of the party were not inclined to begin Republican majority control with a sure-to-fail challenge to Boehner.

The new Speaker had often complained about the way the Democrats ran the chamber, especially their centralization of control over the agenda at the top and their restriction of the amendment process on the House floor. And he had promised that when his party took control they would “run a more open House, governed by ‘regular order,’” and with a greater reliance on committees.⁴³ Of course, as we noted earlier, previous speakers had promised a return to regular order and enhanced committee responsibility, so many observers were skeptical about the prospects for change. Early in the new Congress, when initially considering the continuing appropriation bill to provide government funding for the rest of the fiscal year, the GOP leadership permitted more than 100 amendments to be voted on, many of them offered by conservatives from their own party. This experience pleased Republican members and enabled Boehner to hold together virtually his entire coalition. On Feb. 19, only 3 GOP members voted against the passage of the resolution, along with every House Democrat. But, not surprisingly, the Democratic Senate refused to accept the GOP proposal, beginning a series of fiscal conflicts that would dominate the next two years. The negotiations on the appropriations continued for the next two and a half months.

Shortly before time ran out in early April, Boehner concluded an agreement with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid that provided for \$39 billion in cuts. President Obama praised the compromise, but not all House Republicans were pleased. On final passage of the bill, 59 of the most conservative Republican representatives defected and voted “nay” along with a majority of Democrats. This outcome contained the seeds of problems to come, as budget and spending issues were to remain central for the rest of the 112th Congress and beyond.

The day after the adoption of the continuing appropriations resolution, the House took up the fiscal 2012 budget resolution. Authored by Budget Committee chair Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, the ten-year plan called for massive spending cuts, the repeal of most of “Obamacare,” and the replacement of Medicare as it was originally structured.⁴⁴ This plan was appealing to conservatives, and it was adopted with the parties nearly unanimously opposed to one another. The next major fiscal issue was an administration request for Congress to raise the debt ceiling by August to avoid a default on the nation’s debts. Negotiations between the president and Boehner ensued, with the Republican leader pressing for major spending cuts commensurate with the increase in the debt ceiling. Twice during the summer the two leaders were on the verge of a large agreement that included significant changes to both entitlements and discretionary spending and alterations in the tax code. However, because of pressure from conservatives opposed to tax increases, Boehner refused to agree.

Instead of concluding a “grand bargain,” the principal actors agreed to a debt ceiling increase and the creation of a “supercommittee” drawn from both chambers that was charged with ways to cut the deficit by at least \$1.2 trillion via spending cuts or revenue increases. November 23 was set as the deadline. If they failed, substantial automatic cuts would be imposed on both defense and domestic spending. On the day before that date, the committee indicated that

it could not come to an agreement. Republicans would not entertain any tax increases and Democrats refused to agree to a plan that involved only spending cuts. As a result, the automatic cuts (called “sequestration”) took effect. The session ended with little accomplished and intensified bad feelings between the parties in Congress and in the public toward Congress.

The 2012 session began with a positive result: a bipartisan vote in the House on February 17 to extend a temporary reduction in the Social Security payroll tax. But the seeds of future discontent were apparent when 38 percent of House Republicans voted against the deal because the costs of the extension were not offset by reductions in spending. The rest of the year’s congressional activity mainly revolved around efforts to deal with a “fiscal cliff,” which involved the scheduled expiration of the 2001 and 2003 George W. Bush tax cuts at the end of the year coupled with the imposition of the sequestration spending cuts. Many observers feared that the combination would push the country back into recession, undermining the economic recovery.

The conflict over what to do ran right up to the brink, as had become commonplace. Many conservative Republicans were shocked by their party’s unsuccessful effort to win the presidency, and there were widespread sentiments that it was due to their failure to field a “real conservative” as an opponent for Obama. Boehner, however, recognized the reality of continued Democratic control of both the presidency and the Senate, and he sought to negotiate the best deal he could. Shortly after the election he offered \$800 billion in additional tax revenue as part of a package to avoid the fiscal cliff. And in mid-December he went further in private negotiations, proposing the inclusion of higher tax rates on those with high incomes. However the proposal leaked and Boehner backed off.⁴⁵ Instead he sought to bring up a bill to extend the tax rates on incomes under \$1 million. But the Democrats would not agree, and Boehner couldn’t

round up enough votes from his own party to pass the plan. As a result he withdrew from negotiations, indicating that a solution was up to the Senate and the White House.

The further negotiations, mainly between Vice President Joe Biden and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, yielded an even worse result for the Republicans. It included permitting taxes to increase on those with incomes over \$400 thousand, and no compensating spending cuts. Rather than seek to block the plan (and go off the fiscal cliff, damaging his party's reputation), Boehner permitted a House vote. The bill passed on January 1 due to heavy support for Democrats, but almost two-thirds of Republicans voted against, including Minority Leader Eric Cantor of Virginia and Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy of California.⁴⁶ The cliff was avoided, but many conservatives were angry at the Speaker for failing to achieve the policy outcomes they wanted.

The 113th Congress (2013-2015)

The conservative anger was given concrete manifestation just two days after the fiscal cliff bill passed, when the House voted on the election of the speaker for the new Congress. In addition to objections about the resolution of that dispute, they resented Boehner's efforts in December to strengthen his control over the GOP Steering Committee (which makes committee assignments and chooses their chairmen) and to punish four rebellious conservatives by removing them from the choice committees they served on.⁴⁷ Allies of the targeted members organized an attempted coup against Boehner. Since election of the Speaker requires an absolute majority of the members voting, and since all of the Democratic members would normally vote for their own candidate, the conservatives reasoned that if enough of their group would withhold their votes from Boehner, he could be blocked from election on the first ballot. If that occurred, a more conservative alternative might emerge. Sources indicate that the rebels agreed that they

would go ahead if 25 members committed to vote for someone other than Boehner, and that the threshold was reached, but then one member changed his or her mind.⁴⁸ On the actual vote, ten GOP members voted present or for an alternative candidate.

The dissidents made clear that their ire was directed at their leaders falling short of expectations. Tim Huelskamp of Kansas called the debt ceiling deal a “massive disaster,” and said the passage of the continuing appropriations resolution “[c]onfirmed Republicans were unwilling to cut spending.”⁴⁹ Boehner’s opponents hoped that their actions would pressure him to change his strategy. One of them, Paul Broun of Georgia, indicated that “Mr. Boehner has promised us as a Republican Conference that he was going to act in a different way toward the president....”⁵⁰ But such conservative hopes were quickly dashed.

At the end of 2012, House leaders had refused to take up a Senate-passed bill providing disaster aid to victims of “superstorm” Sandy, which had ravaged the east coast in the fall. GOP leaders brought up legislation to deal with the issue, but conservatives attempted to require that the money allocated to aid be offset by across-the-board cuts in other discretionary spending. When this effort failed, the bill passed with only one negative vote from Democrats, but Republicans opposed it 49 to 179. The result violated the “Hastert Rule” that we described earlier. That had also been true of the fiscal cliff bill, and that was one feature that had angered its opponents.

Then six weeks later the House considered the “Violence Against Women Act,” that reauthorized a law from 1994 designed to fight domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. While there was widespread bipartisan support for renewal of the original provisions, partisan conflict resulted when Senate Democrats (with the support of 23 Republican senators) added provisions designed to aid domestic-violence victims who were gay or lesbian, illegal

immigrants, or American Indians. The public pressure from Senate passage induced the House leadership to bring the bill to the floor. After the Republicans failed to secure adoption of a narrower alternative bill, the House passed the Senate version with unanimous Democratic support but only 39 percent of GOP members. This was another violation of the Hastert rule.

The most intense intraparty conflict for the majority in 2013 again revolved around government funding. An omnibus appropriations bill passed in March had extended funding through the end of the fiscal year (September 30). But as that deadline approached, appropriations for the new fiscal year had not been completed. Moreover, the nation's borrowing had again reached the debt ceiling, so that matter also needed to be addressed. Yet the central sticking point regarding these issues turned out not to be either spending or debt levels, but Obamacare. The House GOP had engineered dozens of floor votes on the repeal of the medical plan over the previous three years, without avail due to Democratic control of the Senate. Now a group of the most conservative members argued that their party could compel the President and the Senate to accept repeal by withholding appropriations and an increase in the debt ceiling, threatening a government shutdown and debt default. Part of their reasons for pushing the matter then was the fear that public acceptance of the program would grow with the passage of time, so that it would be harder to secure repeal later.

Conservative member in both chambers rallied their colleagues to sign letters to the party leaders demanding the no continuing appropriations bill be adopted that did not include a complete defunding of Obamacare. Outside the Congress, conservative advocacy groups ran negative ads against Republican members who were opposed to or reluctant about the strategy.⁵¹ Supporters of the strategy were unconcerned about opposition from business leaders and about poll data that indicated that the most in the public would blame the GOP for a shutdown.⁵² Their

plan was to take the issue to the people and persuade them. One of them, Rep. Thomas Graves of Georgia, said: “There’s going to be a strong argument from the American people saying, ‘This is the path forward,’ putting pressure on the Senate to adopt it as we passed it in the House.”⁵³

Then on September 20, ten days before appropriations expired, the House passed a continuing resolution blocking funding for the implementation of the health law and extending appropriations until December 15. That bill and subsequent efforts to achieve the same result were blocked by the Senate. Time ran out and parts of the government shut down. On October 10, Boehner and other GOP leaders met with the president, but without agreement. The Speaker then sought to secure agreement from members of his party for two different alternative bills, but there was not sufficient support for either of them.

At that point, bargaining shifted to the Senate. The respective party leaders came to an agreement on a continuing resolution without provisions to repeal or delay Obamacare, which passed with the support of 60 percent of GOP senators. With the debt ceiling deadline only hours away, Boehner capitulated and permitted a vote on the Senate bill that extended appropriations until January and suspended the debt ceiling until February. Democrats voted for it unanimously, but Republicans were against 87 to 144. Yet another major bill passed over the objections of a majority of Republican representatives.

In the wake of the shutdown, Republicans in and out of Congress believed that their party has lost badly in the confrontation. A CNN/ORC poll after the government reopened indicated that over 80 percent of respondents thought the shutdown was a bad idea. Half of those polled said the Republicans were mainly responsible, compared to one-third who blamed the president. Moreover, 75 percent of those surveyed said that most Republican members of Congress did not deserve reelection, versus 54 percent who said that about congressional Democrats.⁵⁴ With little

inclination to face another confrontation, Republicans and Democrats produced a compromise budget agreement for the rest of fiscal 2014 and for fiscal 2015, negotiated by Paul Ryan and his Senate counterpart, Budget Committee chair Patty Murray of Washington. While both sides made compromises and passage was bipartisan, the agreement was more accepted by Democrats than the GOP. More than a fourth of Republican representatives voted no.⁵⁵

The compromise and follow up actions settled some matters for the time being, but it left the debt ceiling to be dealt with again by February 2014. Under pressure from conservatives, Boehner and Senator McConnell argued that any debt ceiling increase must be matched with spending cuts of at least an equal amount. Conservative interest groups like Heritage Action and the Club for Growth also demanded a plan to balance the budget within ten years.⁵⁶ Democrats, however, contended this was inappropriate because the increase would cover government commitments from the past, not the future. Boehner also sought alternative conditions that could be imposed, but he was unable to marshal enough GOP votes to adopt them. He told reporters, “When you don’t have 218 votes, you have nothing.”⁵⁷ In the face of another threat of a government default, Boehner permitted a vote on an extension of the debt ceiling until March 15, 2015, without any conditions (a so-called “clean” bill”). It passed with the support of only 28 Republicans (including the top three leaders), versus 199 who voted against. One of those nay votes was from Budget chairman Ryan.

The actions on appropriations and the debt ceiling largely took care of intraparty conflict on those matters for most of the rest of the year. However continued discontent within the GOP’s base in the electorate was visible, especially in June of 2014 when the party’s Majority Leader, Eric Cantor of Virginia, was shockingly defeated in his primary by an unknown college professor who was identified with the Tea Party and the Club for Growth. The winner, David

Brat, had promised to fight for “real, conservative, free-market change,” and had campaigned against the House leadership’s decisions, particularly the budget deal passed in December.⁵⁸ Establishment Republicans saw this as a clear message. Former Virginia GOP Representative Thomas Davis said: “when Eric Cantor, a conservative and member of the leadership, is too moderate, it sends a chilling effect to other Republicans and makes it that much harder to cross over and work together.”⁵⁹

Cantor announced that he would resign from the House, and the Republican Conference moved quickly to promote the Majority Whip, Kevin McCarthy, to the Majority Leader post. The vote for McCarthy was overwhelming, but the seeds of future problems were visible despite his promises to take a more open and conservative approach to running the chamber. Members of the core group of very conservative representatives who were central to the government shutdown backed an alternative to McCarthy and expressed dissatisfaction with his election, as did voices of conservative activists outside Congress.⁶⁰

After this, legislative time was short before the House recessed for the upcoming elections. Unwilling to risk a major confrontation at that point, the Congress adopted a continuing appropriations bill to carry them through until a post-election legislative session. Then, due to GOP gains in the elections and the expectation of a stronger strategic position in the new Congress, the House Republicans compromised with the Democrats on an Omnibus appropriations bill to cover most discretionary spending for the rest of the fiscal year, although 67 Republicans voted against the bill.

2015: Another Coup Attempt and the Creation of the Freedom Caucus

The 2014 elections gave the GOP their largest majority in the House since the Great Depression, and strengthened the numbers of the party’s very conservative wing. They also

brought Republican control of the Senate. Not surprisingly, the conservative wing expected that their party's gains should translate into the adoption of the policies they preferred. Many of them, however, continued to believe that the results they wanted would not be achieved under the current leadership. They felt betrayed by Boehner's unwillingness to be responsive to their demands to force another shutdown by using the omnibus appropriations bill the previous month to block funding to enforce the president's executive order offering temporary legal status to illegal immigrants.⁶¹ The distrust of Boehner by conservatives within the House was reinforced by anger against him from outside. For example, more than two dozen conservative activists and pundits signed an open letter that called on House Republicans to "fire" the Speaker, saying that his service in the office had been "nothing short of a disaster."⁶²

The dissatisfied conservative members knew that they commanded far too few votes to elect an alternative candidate against Boehner, but they hoped that if they could deny him a majority on the first ballot he might withdraw or another option might emerge. When the vote was taken, they fell short but 24 GOP members voted for someone other than Boehner, more than twice as many as had opposed him two years earlier. The top opponent was Daniel Webster of Florida with 12 votes; the other dozen were scattered among eight other candidates.

Boehner, in his speech to the House after his reelection, urged his colleagues to set aside their differences and prove that they could get things done.⁶³ However those sentiments didn't prevent him from taking action against those who opposed him, including removing Daniel Webster from his position on the House Rules Committee the same day. This retaliation further angered the rebels and set the stage for their decision to form a new organization within the GOP Conference to pursue their goals. The new group was announced on January 26, and was dubbed the House Freedom Caucus (HFC).⁶⁴

While only three of the nine founding members had defected from Boehner on the vote for Speaker, all were advocates of a confrontational stance against the president and the Democrats. They decided to make membership by invitation only, and to keep the roster secret (although many of the members have been publicly identified). Within a week the group indicated that it had about 30 members.⁶⁵

Public statements from the group indicated that they would take positions on legislation when there was consensus among the membership, and that they hoped to be able to avoid confrontations with the leadership, to avoid (according to one of them, John Fleming of Louisiana) being “destructive.” “Destructive would be taking down bills, voting against rules. We can do that, but that’s not really our goal. Our goal is to say you know, we are 30-40 strong, work with us.” But they made clear that they expected concrete accomplishments. Raul Labrador of Idaho (another founder) said that there were two reasons to force fights with the Democrats in the current Congress. “The first reason is for messaging. But I think we have to do it for more than just messaging. You can actually pass things when you have a Republican House and a Republican Senate.” They also indicated that they would press the leadership for major gains. As Jim Jordan of Ohio, the HFC chairman, said: “We accomplish in proportion to what we attempt.” However the Caucus members were not only concerned about policy, but also process within the House. “More amendments, more participation from the members—that may be where you see the biggest push out of us in the first year,” said Mick Mulvaney of South Carolina.⁶⁶

The first confrontation within the GOP after the Caucus was created occurred over the Homeland Security funding bill. The compromise on appropriations in December funded all of the government for the rest of the fiscal year except that department, which was given appropriations only until February 27. Conservatives demanded that exception because

Homeland Security included funding related to immigration and they wanted to use that bill as a vehicle to reverse the president's executive orders on that subject. The initial bill to fund Homeland Security that passed the House in the new Congress included provisions that would have blocked the executive orders. Obama said that he would veto that bill, and Democrats in the Senate blocked taking up the bill three times, calling for the passage of a "clean bill" without the immigration provisions. Senator McConnell (who had promised at the beginning of the Congress that there would be no more government shutdowns) said that the Senate would not go forward with the House-passed bill and asked that the House offer a different plan. Boehner, however, reflected conservative pressure and told reporters: "It's time for the Senate to do their work."⁶⁷

On the last day of funding for the department, the Senate passed a clean bill for a full year of funding. Worried that his members would not support a year-long appropriation, Boehner brought to the House a proposal for a 20-day extension. However the move failed when 52 GOP conservatives (including almost all of the Freedom Caucus) and every Democrat voted no. Later in the day the leadership brought up a one-week extension of funding. It passed, but sixty members, almost all conservatives, were opposed.⁶⁸ The Freedom Caucus members preferred to let a shutdown occur. The extra week did not alter the situation and on March 3 the Senate and House adopted a bill to fund the department for the rest of the year. Seventy-five Republicans joined the Democrats in support, and 167 GOP members were against. The anger of conservatives at the leadership was intense (although many more mainstream Republican members just voiced relief). Rep. Mick Mulvaney, an HFC founder, termed the outcome "an unmitigated loss for conservatives," and another conservative, Tim Huelskamp of Kansas said Boehner had "just caved in," and that his strategy had failed.⁶⁹

The Fall of Speaker Boehner

Over the next few months, the Freedom Caucus was a source of conflict with the leadership and other mainstream members on a number of issues. They temporarily succeeded in blocking renewal of the Export-Import Bank, and many of the members (but not all) were against trade promotion (or “fast track”) authority for the president. When the special rule to permit floor consideration of a bill granting fast track authority was considered on June 11, 34 Republicans (most of them HFC members) voted no. The rule passed by only five votes. The party leadership viewed opposition on the procedural vote adopting the special rule to be unacceptable, and they took action against the rebels. Three HFC members were removed from the party’s whip team, and Mark Meadows of North Carolina, one of the HFC founders, was stripped of his subcommittee chairmanship on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee by its chairman, Jason Chaffetz of Utah.⁷⁰

Freedom Caucus members were angry about the retaliation. Chairman Jordan said: “what they did to [Meadows] was exactly wrong. ... And there are a number of us who are fed up with it.”⁷¹ Subsequently Boehner said that he “absolutely” supported Chaffetz’s action, and “when it comes to procedural votes in the House, the majority has to stick together.” But Raul Labrador contended that the reason for the retaliations was that the leadership was afraid. “They want to break our backs because they’re afraid that that number is just going to continue to grow.” And just a week after Meadows had lost his position, Chaffetz reversed his decision and reinstated him. In addition, another planned retaliation—the removal of HFC member Ken Buck of Colorado as president of the freshman class—was shelved after opposition was expressed by many freshman members. These actions were seen by many observers as evidence of the strength of the HFC and the weakness of the leadership.⁷²

Mark Meadow's strength was manifested in his July 28 introduction of a resolution on the House floor calling for the removal of Boehner as Speaker. At the time most observers thought the move had no practical consequences. A few voices outside the Congress, like FreedomWorks (a Tea-Party group) endorsed the idea, but most members, including many conservatives, were critical. For example, Tom McClintock of California (an HFC member) called it "about the dumbest idea I've seen here."⁷³ Indeed, the reactions of his colleagues led Meadows to resign from the board of the Freedom Caucus. But in the weeks after the introduction, conservatives pressed the leadership on their priorities (such as blocking the nuclear agreement with Iran, restricting spending, and ending government funding for Planned Parenthood) and they were far from satisfied. As a result, some came to see the resolution in a more positive light, with one HFC member calling it a "sword of Damocles" hanging over Boehner that might induce him to change direction.⁷⁴

In early September, with the end of the fiscal year (and therefore the end of all appropriations) looming at the end of the month, the legislative focus again became the potential for a government shutdown. Given the short time, attention was on a continuing resolution to extend the time for negotiations on a deal to cover the entire next fiscal year. On the resolution, the HFC was adamant. The Caucus took a formal position (that required the agreement of at least 80 percent of its members) that they would not vote for any continuing resolution that did not defund Planned Parenthood.⁷⁵ This left the leadership with a choice between acceding to the HFC and accepting a likely shutdown, or seeking Democratic support to pass the continuing resolution.

On September 10, HFC chairman Jordan admitted that the GOP had been blamed for the 2013 shutdown, but he contended that this time the result did not have to be the same, if the

leadership adopted the right tactics. He said: “We just need to make the case in a compelling repetitive way, over and over again, so the American people clearly understand what is at stake here.”⁷⁶ Recognizing that the Senate was unlikely to adopt defunding and that, in any event, the president would probably veto a bill containing it, the GOP leadership sought an alternative strategy. On September 24, with less than a week to go, they adopted the idea of seeking defunding in a separate action using a procedure called reconciliation, which could not be filibustered by Senate Democrats. They planned to explain their strategy to the members the next morning at a closed meeting of the Republican Conference.⁷⁷

When the Conference meeting convened, however, the appropriations fight was overshadowed by an announcement: Boehner said he would resign as Speaker and from the House the following month. Members of the HFC claimed credit for forcing Boehner out. They argued that if a vote were taken on the resolution to vacate the Speaker’s position, Boehner would not have had sufficient votes to survive without turning to the Democrats for support. Huelskamp of Kansas indicated that Boehner quit because of conservative pressure. “There’s no question in my mind,” he said. “He didn’t have the votes to keep the job.” And the Speaker’s own statements seemed to generally reflect the same view. He cited “this turmoil that’s been churning for a couple of months,” and a concern that the “prolonged leadership turmoil would do irreparable harm to the institution.”⁷⁸

A New Speaker is Chosen...Eventually

The obvious candidate to succeed Boehner was Majority Leader McCarthy. Most observers thought the choice was a foregone conclusion, although a couple of other minor candidates (including Daniel Webster) had also announced. But the Freedom Caucus persisted in their interest in changing party rules and the powers of the leadership. As part of that effort they

sought commitments on rules changes before the Conference vote on their party's candidate and they submitted an extensive questionnaire regarding rules to the candidates. The changes they were seeking included more influence for the HFC and other rank-and-file members on the party's Steering Committee (which selects committee chairs and assigns members to committees), more access to the floor for amendments they favored, and protection from leadership retaliation.⁷⁹

At a forum the conservatives held for Speaker candidates two days before the scheduled vote, McCarthy indicated a favorable attitude toward changing representation on the Steering Committee, and supported a more inclusive process, but that was not sufficient for the HFC. They voted to support Webster for Speaker. Convinced that he would probably not have a sure majority when the full House voted, McCarthy withdrew from the race. This left the situation in chaos, and the Conference postponed the vote on their choice.

Over the next two weeks the action revolved around whether Paul Ryan could now be persuaded to run. He had persistently asserted that he did not want the job, but he was the consensus candidate of virtually all members outside the conservative wing, and the pressure on him to accept was intense. The conservatives, on the other hand were skeptical, and they had conditions for accepting a Ryan speakership similar to those they voiced in discussions about McCarthy's bid. Then on October 20, Ryan publicly indicated that he was willing to serve in principle, but he too had conditions. He wanted indications that all segments of the party were united behind him, that the party would adopt a more positive stance on policy, that House rules would be revised to make members more effective (including revision of the motion to vacate the speaker's position), and that he would be able to spend adequate time with his family.⁸⁰ Members of the HFC initially expressed some skepticism about Ryan's terms, but the following

day the group met with Ryan, and afterwards they announced that more than two-thirds of the members indicated they would support his bid. Ryan had indicated support for revising the Steering Committee, and had pledged not to bring up an immigration bill without the support of a majority of the Conference. Apparently no other commitments were made regarding rules changes from either side.⁸¹ The next day, in a letter to all House Republicans, Ryan announced that he was “ready and eager to be our speaker.” On October 29, the House elected him to the post.

In the last two months of 2015, Ryan and his team grappled with the competing interests that led to the change in party leadership. He demonstrated a commitment to a more open process during the consideration of the highway bill by permitting more than 120 amendments. And the bill passed the House with only 65 negative votes, although all of those came from (mostly conservative) Republicans. Less than two weeks later, on the other hand, House leaders announced that they would bring up a bill to revise the rules of the refugee program for those coming from Iraq and Syria. The bill had received no committee consideration and no amendments would be permitted.⁸²

The Speaker formed a task force to recommend changes to the Steering Committee, and an advisory group that included both HFC members and moderates. On November 18, he announced the plan to reconfigure the Steering Committee until the next Congress. The six major committee chairmen would be removed, and replaced by six temporary “at-large” members elected from the Conference. By the end of the year, those six would be replaced by six additional elected regional representatives, added to the 13 who already served.⁸³ (When the election was held, HFC member Huelskamp was one of the chosen; however two members of the moderate Tuesday Group were also picked.)

Closing out the year, the Congress dealt again with funding the government. On December 15, the Congress and the president reached a compromise agreement on a \$1.1 trillion spending bill. The package contained some wins for the GOP, including making some tax breaks permanent. However, there were also losses in the final bill. These included the addition of more than \$60 billion in spending, and the removal of many policy riders the Republicans wanted. HFC conservatives were unhappy, and most voted against the final bill, but they did not put most of the blame on Ryan.

The Republican Majority and Conditional Party Government

We can now turn to a consideration of what conclusions we can draw from the Boehner speakership and its aftermath regarding the theoretical issues addressed by the theory of conditional party government. In our view, the major implications of the theory are supported. The central prediction of CPG is that a homogeneous majority party that has sharp policy differences with the minority party will be willing to delegate strong powers to its leadership in hopes of advancing the party members' goals. As we outlined above, that prediction is strongly supported by the patterns of behavior of majorities from the 1970s through the Pelosi speakership. If that is true, then we should also expect, in instances where one or both of the theory's conditions are undermined, that the willingness of some significant portion of the members to delegate should also be undermined. That is exactly what we observed during Boehner's years in the top job and in the transition to Speaker Ryan.

The members of the Freedom Caucus and their allies had preferences that were different in important ways from their GOP colleagues. They did not believe that Boehner and his leadership team shared their views on what should be done, and they did not trust those leaders to act as faithful agents for the party in executing their jobs. Thus we would expect them to seek

to reduce the powers of their leaders and restrict their exercise of the powers they retained. That is what the HFC tried to do, and those efforts are persisting in 2016. We would not, however, expect that the members around the median of the Conference would also favor such restrictions, and that too seems to be the case. Indeed, a number of main line and moderate Republican representatives have argued against going too far with reducing leadership power.⁸⁴

But even though the predictions of CPG appear to be supported again in the Boehner era, events in that period have offered new insights about the theory and its application. First, we have observed for the first time significant differences in the patterns of change of the two conditions of CPG. That is, in previous periods, the homogeneity of the parties and the divergence between them both generally increased and did so in tandem. From 2010 through 2015, however, the influx of Tea Party linked Republicans continued to increase inter-party divergence while the majority party became more *heterogeneous*. Furthermore, the heterogeneity increased toward the extreme of the party rather than toward the median of the chamber, which is unusual. In this instance the influence of the increased heterogeneity seems to have trumped the continued divergence in influencing the behavior of the members in the undermining of leadership influence. It does not seem, however, that this is a necessary consequence of the theory, and so which condition has the dominant effect when they are pushing in opposite directions with respect to the allocations of powers may be idiosyncratic.

A second insight is that the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity that influences the behavior of the actors need not be solely a matter of preferences about policy outcomes. It seems that both the HFC and the mainstream GOP members would have preferred that Obamacare be repealed and that Planned Parenthood be defunded. What they disagreed about was the strategies that should be pursued to accomplish those ends, and about what might be called the “state of the

world.” By that term we mean disagreements about what would be the likely outcomes that flowed from the choice of a given strategy. Freedom Caucus Republicans believed that shutdowns or debt defaults could give them leverage over the administration and Senate Democrats, perhaps causing them to capitulate and accept the policies the right wanted. The GOP leadership, on the other hand, believed that those same strategy choices would lead to their party being blamed and its brand being damaged, potentially threatening the party’s majority status. In past congresses, the majority leadership and their members were usually on the same page with regard to strategy and expectations about them.⁸⁵ But, as we have seen, these differences were frequent and consequential from 2011 through 2015.

How will these issues regarding heterogeneity within the Conference play out under Speaker Ryan? Initially his handling of the final negotiations and aftermath on the budget deal with the Democrats gained much praise from many actors in the process.⁸⁶ Shortly thereafter, however, attention focused on the initial steps to draft the budget for the next fiscal year. Immediately after Boehner had announced his decision to quit, analysts wondered if his successor would inevitably face the same problems,⁸⁷ and early in 2016 events indicated that the concerns were valid. Members of the conservative wing openly criticized Ryan’s management of the final 2015 deal. Rep. Paul Gosar of Arizona said, for example, that Ryan had “folded like a cheap suit” by supporting the omnibus appropriations bill.⁸⁸ And regarding the new budget, many of them sought to pressure Ryan to go back on the previous deal’s commitment to increase spending.⁸⁹

Ryan’s biggest challenge will be to persuade conservatives to trust him sufficiently to give him leeway to make strategic decisions for the party. This will be difficult given the past friction with leadership and the low esteem for party leaders among rank-and-file GOP voters.⁹⁰

John Boehner once said: “A leader without followers is just a guy out for a walk.” Paul Ryan is likely to lead. Whether enough members will follow is a different matter.

¹ We want to express our appreciation to Connor Philips of Duke University for his excellent work as our research assistant in pulling together substantial amounts of information about the House Freedom Caucus.

² Since 1900 the president's party has gained seats in only three midterm elections (1934, 1998, and 2002). Senate seat losses are less systematic, they have occurred well over half the time.

³ In parallel fashion, it worked that way in some degree because of the diversity of opinion in both parties.

⁴ The Republicans were the majority party in the country from 1896 until about 1932. They had split in 1912 over the presidency, enabling Woodrow Wilson to win two terms and bring congressional majorities with him. The Republicans reasserted their majority in the post WWI period.

⁵ Decentralization was intended, as this system emerged in the wake of the 1910 "revolt" against the then-centralized powers of the Speaker, "Czar" Joseph Cannon (R. IL). See Joseph Cooper and David W. Brady, "Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn." *American Political Science Review* 75 (June 1981): 411-425.

⁶ Kenneth A. Shepsle, "The Changing Textbook Congress." In John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson, eds., *Can the Government Govern?* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1989), 238-66.

⁷ In 1954, for example, the former states of the Confederacy held 106 seats, divided 98 Democrat, 8 Republican. Democrats were unopposed in 67 and Republicans won less than one vote in five in 18 more, making a full 80% of those seats uncompetitive wins by Democrats.

⁸ See David W. Rohde. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), who place their respective arguments as starting as a result of the 1958 elections. This was in part because, outside of the "Great Society" Congress of 1965-67, northern Democrats were a majority in their party but not on the floor, and they could not convince any others to join their reform efforts. Why would Republicans, say, empower their liberal opponents to be more effective in legislating, especially if they imagined that they would be a minority for the foreseeable future? And why should southern Democrats vote to reduce the powers they currently held?

⁹ See <https://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal65-1259762> for details.

¹⁰ See Rohde, 1991, op cit, and Steven H. Haeberle, "The institutionalization of the subcommittee in the United States House of Representatives." *The Journal of Politics*. 1978 40 (November):1054-65.

¹¹ The Civil Rights Act passed in part in commemoration of the assassinated president John F. Kennedy. The Republican presidential nominee, Sen. Barry Goldwater (AZ), voted against it, with the result that he carried five southern states for the first time since reconstruction by a Republican (and no other state except his home state). That election gave the northern Democrats a large majority in each chamber and enabled passage of the Voting Rights Act, although the congressional Democrats choose to use their huge majorities to pass this and other "Great Society" legislation, but not to change the rules of the House.

¹² A Conservative Coalition vote was one in which a majority of northern Democrats voted one way, a majority of Republicans and of southern Democrats voted the other way.

¹³ A “party vote” is one in which a majority of Democrats vote one way, a majority of Republicans vote the other way.

¹⁴ See John H. Aldrich and John Griffin, *Why Parties Matter: Political Competition and Democracy in the American South, 1832-2012*, forthcoming.

¹⁵ Here we are using the definition of the South employed by *Congressional Quarterly* and used by most scholars of Congress, which adds Kentucky and Oklahoma to the states of the former Confederacy.

¹⁶ There were similar, if less severe changes in the Republican Party as “Rockefeller Republicans” in the northeastern and Great Lakes states, liberal on social issues but conservative on economic issues, began to lose in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and thus make the Republicans also less diverse. We focus here on the Democrats because they held the majority in the House throughout the relevant period.

¹⁷ One of the sparse set of Constitutional provisions is that the House writes its own rules anew every two years. The Senate is very different in this regard as it has standing rules that continue across Congresses, as it considers itself a chamber that is itself in session continuously. The result is that it is very difficult and unusual for the Senate to change its rules, even on seemingly minor matters.

¹⁸ Either way, the majority party in the House will hold power, as has been true since the Speakership of Thomas B. Reed (R, Maine) and adoption of “Reed’s Rules” (adopted in 1890) that made the House a majority institution. The majority party could, in principle give that up, but a majority giving up its powers voluntarily is extremely unlikely.

¹⁹ The classic statement is David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).

²⁰ We draw heavily from Richard F. Fenno, *Congressmen in Committees*. (New York: Little, Brown, 1973), but add valuing having one’s party hold majority status in the chamber – a variable that seemed irrelevant in 1973, as the Democrats seemed in nearly permanent majority.

²¹ That is to say that the two parts of the condition are independent, and one (e.g., internal party agreement), the other (disagreement between the two parties), both, or neither of the two parts may hold at any given time.

²² It is important to note that the Senate, which had a Republican majority since the election of 1980 had returned to Democratic control in 1986, when that class of 1980 stood for reelection. The President, no longer fresh from an historic landslide reelection victory, was just beginning to face the Iran-Contra scandal that helped erode his popular support.

²³ Special rules are resolutions from the Rules Committee that accompany most major bills, and that specify the terms for consideration of that bill such as length of time for debate, what amendments may be considered, and whether exceptions to the standing rules of the House are made during consideration.

²⁴ It is important to point out that the percentage of votes received by the Republicans is not 100 – Dem vote percent. For example, the Republicans received about 45% of the vote in 1992, while the Democrats received 50%, the rest going to various third-party and independent candidates.

²⁵ See, for example, James G. Gimpel *Legislating the Revolution: The Contract with America in its First 100 Days*. (New York: Allyn & Bacon, 1996).

²⁶ The data here is discussed in detail in John H. Aldrich. “Political Parties in a Critical Era.” *American Politics Quarterly* 27 (January, 1999): 9-32.

²⁷ These paragraphs are drawn heavily from John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde. "The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee." *The Journal of Politics* 62 February, (2000): 1-33.

²⁸ Such legislating is done by adding as so-called "riders" with special rules to circumvent the prohibition of Appropriations bills being used for authorizing legislation.

²⁹ Reported in *Time*, April 18, 1995 <http://content.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,3632,00.html>.

³⁰ The figures are from a *Washington Post*/ABC News poll in November, 1995. See comparison at <http://www.people-press.org/2013/09/23/blame-for-both-sides-as-possible-government-shutdown-approaches/>

³¹ This position is thus a reversal from the unusually nationalized "Contract" election of 1994, the last midterm, and in sharp contrast to the favorite aphorism of Tip O'Neill that "all politics is local."

³² See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/govt/leadership/stories/gingrich110798.htm>.

³³ Thomas worked closely with Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) to bring partisan legislation to the floor (often relying on restrictive rules to do so) and frequently denied the minority party time to review legislation, let alone offer alternative proposals. When the Democrats protested their inability to review a pension reform bill in 2003, Thomas even called the Capitol Police, only apologizing for his behavior after being pressured by the Speaker, Dennis Hastert (D-III).³³

³⁴ The organizational name for all Republican members of the House is the Republican "Conference," while Democrats refer to theirs as the Democratic "Caucus."

³⁵ Carl Hulse, "New Panel Chairman, Ways of Old Pragmatist." *New York Times* November 28, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/28/us/in-new-panel-chairman-ways-of-old-pragmatist.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

³⁶ Richard F. Fenno *Congressmen in Committees*. op cit.. This and the preceding paragraphs are developed further in John H. Aldrich, Brittany N. Perry, and David W. Rohde. "Richard Fenno's Theory of Congressional Committees and the Partisan Polarization of the House." In *Congress Reconsidered*, vol. 10, (Los Angeles, CQ Press, 2013), 193-220.

³⁷ Most observers considered this move by Speaker Nancy Pelosi to be a warning to committee chairs that they should be responsive to the party leadership. Two years later, Pelosi permitted the limits to be repealed.

³⁸ He first won a special election to the House to replace his deceased father in 1955 and served until the 2014 elections (that is, served in Congress for 60 years, retiring in 2015). He was succeeded by his wife

³⁹ See John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, "Congressional Committees in a Continuing Partisan Era," In *Congress Reconsidered*, ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Washington: CQ Press, 2009): 236.

⁴⁰ So named for the common use of the Boston Tea Party, symbol of American colonies' protest against the overreaching British crown and government.

⁴¹ Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 170.

⁴² Carmines, Edward G., "Review Symposium: Class Politics, American Style." *Perspectives on Politics* 9(3), 2011, 645-647.

⁴³ Major Garrett and Susan David, "The GOP Blueprint," *National Journal*, November 6, 2010, 22.

-
- ⁴⁴ For more details on the developments described in this and the next few paragraphs, see Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, "The House in a Time of Crisis: Economic Turmoil and Partisan Upheaval," in *Congress Reconsidered*, 10th ed., Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2013), 48-52.
- ⁴⁵ See Jonathan Strong, "Speak Softly or Carry a Big Stick," *CQ Weekly*, January 14, 2013, 63.
- ⁴⁶ Interestingly, one of those voting for the bill was Budget Committee chairman Ryan.
- ⁴⁷ See Strong, 63.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 63-64.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ See Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Mike McIntire, "A Federal Budget Crisis Months in the Planning," *nytimes.com*, October 5, 2013.
- ⁵² See Daniel Newhauser and Emily Ethridge, "Shutdown Showdown," *CQ Weekly*, September 23, 2013, 1550-54.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1552.
- ⁵⁴ Paul Steinhauser, "CNN Poll: 75% say most Republicans in Congress don't deserve reelection," *cnn.com*, October 21, 2013.
- ⁵⁵ In the senate, on the other hand, eighty percent of Republicans were opposed.
- ⁵⁶ See Michael Needham, Tony Perkins, and Chris Chocola, "Why debt limit must be used to force a balanced budget." www.politico.com January 15, 2013.
- ⁵⁷ Quoted in Susan Davis, "House approves 'clean' debt ceiling extension." www.usatoday.com, February 11, 2014.
- ⁵⁸ See Susan Davis and Catalina Camia, "GOP leader Eric Cantor loses in shock Tea Party upset," www.usatoday.com, June 11, 2014.
- ⁵⁹ Quoted in Jonathan Martin, "Eric Cantor Defeated by David Brat, Tea Party Challenger, in G.O.P. Primary Upset." www.nytimes.com, June 10, 2014.
- ⁶⁰ See Paul Kane and Ed O'Keefe, "House Republicans elect Kevin McCarthy as majority leader, Steve Scalise as majority whip." www.washingtonpost.com, June 19, 2014.
- ⁶¹ Jeremy W. Peters, "Boehner Fends Off Dissent as G.O.P. Takes the Reins," *www.nytimes.com*, January 6, 2015.
- ⁶² Quoted in Ashley Parker, "Boehner Facing Dissent and Defections in Vote to Remain Speaker of House." www.nytimes.com, January 5, 2015.
- ⁶³ Peters, *op.cit.*
- ⁶⁴ Lauren French, "9 Republicans launch House Freedom Caucus." www.politico.com, January 26, 2015.
- ⁶⁵ As of October 1, 2015, 41 members were identified, although two of them had resigned by November.
- ⁶⁶ The quotations in this paragraph were taken from Katy O'Donnell, "The Right Recalibrates." , March 2, 2015, at pages 15, 17, 17, and 19 respectively.
- ⁶⁷ Sean Sullivan and Ed O'Keefe, "Top Republicans disagree on how to fund Department of Homeland Security." www.washingtonpost.com, February 11, 2015.
- ⁶⁸ See Ashley Parker, "House Passes One-Week Funding Extension for Homeland Security." www.nytimes.com, February 27, 2015.
- ⁶⁹ Quoted in Ashley Parker, "House Approves Homeland security Budget, Without Strings." www.nytimes.com, March 3, 2015.
- ⁷⁰ The three taken off the whip team were Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming, Trent Franks of Arizona, and Steve Pearce of New Mexico.
- ⁷¹ Quoted in Scott Wong, "Punished GOP lawmaker stirs new talk of Boehner rebellion." *thehill.com*, June 22, 2015.
- ⁷² Scott Wong, "GOP leaders retreat in fight with rebels." *thehill.com*, June 25, 2015.
- ⁷³ Quoted in Sean Wong and Cristina Marcos, "Attempt to oust Speaker goes belly up." *The Hill*, July 30, 2015, 1.
- ⁷⁴ See Mike DeBonis, "Meet the Donald Trump of the House of Representatives." www.washingtonpost.com, September 7, 2015.
- ⁷⁵ The animus against Planned Parenthood resulted from the revelation in July of two videos surreptitiously recorded by anti-abortion activists that purported to show that officials of Planned Parenthood were discussing the sale of fetal tissue for medical research. See Jackie Calmes, "With 2 Videos, Activist Ignites Abortion Issue. New York Times, July 22, 2015, A1.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Bob Cusack, “Conservative lawmaker insists GOP can win shutdown fight.” *Thehill.com* September 10, 2015.

⁷⁷ Rebecca Shabad, Peter Sullivan, and Bernie Becker, “Boehner, GOP, settle on strategy to prevent Oct. 1 shutdown.” *thehill.com*, September 24, 2015.

⁷⁸ These quotations are taken from Matt Fuller, “Conservatives Take Credit for Boehner Resignation.” *Blogs.rollcall.com*, September 25, 2015.

⁷⁹ See Matt Fuller, “HFC Looks for Leverage in Speaker’s Race.” *Blogs.rollcall.com*, October 8 2015.

⁸⁰ See Matt Fuller, “Paul Ryan Sets Conditions for Speaker Bid,” *blogs.rollcall.com*, October 20, 2015; and Scott Wong, “Ryan tells GOP he’ll run for Speaker—with conditions, *thehill.com*, October 20, 2015.

⁸¹ See Matt Fuller and Emma Dumain, “Paul Ryan Clears Biggest Hurdle to Speaker Bid.,” *blogs.rollcall.com*, October 21, 2015

⁸² See Dana Milbank, “Paul Ryan quickly restores the House’s regular order,” www.washingtonpost.com, November 18, 2015.

⁸³ Emma Dumain, “House GOP Steering Proposal Could Deliver Results—Or Not,” *blogs.rollcall.com*, November 18, 2015.

⁸⁴ Indeed, some even argued for further strengthening of leadership power. For example, the moderate Tuesday Group supported the idea of expelling from the Conference GOP members for voted against the party’s Speaker nominee on the floor. See Kate Ackley, Eliza Newlin Carney, and Shawn Zeller, “Trapped in a Bad Marriage,” *CQ Weekly*, October 5, 2015, 20.

⁸⁵ Although in the 1995-96 government shutdowns, the GOP experienced problems similar to those of the Boehner years, which included a division among the Republican leaders over the correct path.

⁸⁶ See Emma Dumain, “Ryan Gets High Marks For First Big Showdown,” *Roll Call*, December 17, 2015, 1.

⁸⁷ See Carl Hulse, “Next Speaker Will Face the Same difficulties With Conservatives,” www.nytimes.com, September 25, 2015.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Jennifer Steinhauer, “Ryan’s Budget Strategy Runs Afoul of Conservative Colleagues’ Hard Line.” *New York Times*, February 11, 2016, A17.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ A Pew Center poll in 2015 showed that only 68 percent of Republican identifiers approved of their own party. This was a decline of 18 percentage points in a year. See Ackley, Carney, and Zeller, *op. cit.*, 19.