

Ideological Sabotage, Party Competition, and the Decline in Legislative Capacity in the US House

Supplemental Information

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Appendix A: MRA Data

MRA data was gathered from year-end Statements of Disbursements of the House compiled by the chief administrative officer of the house and published by the Government Printing Office. These records were digitized using optical character recognition (OCR).

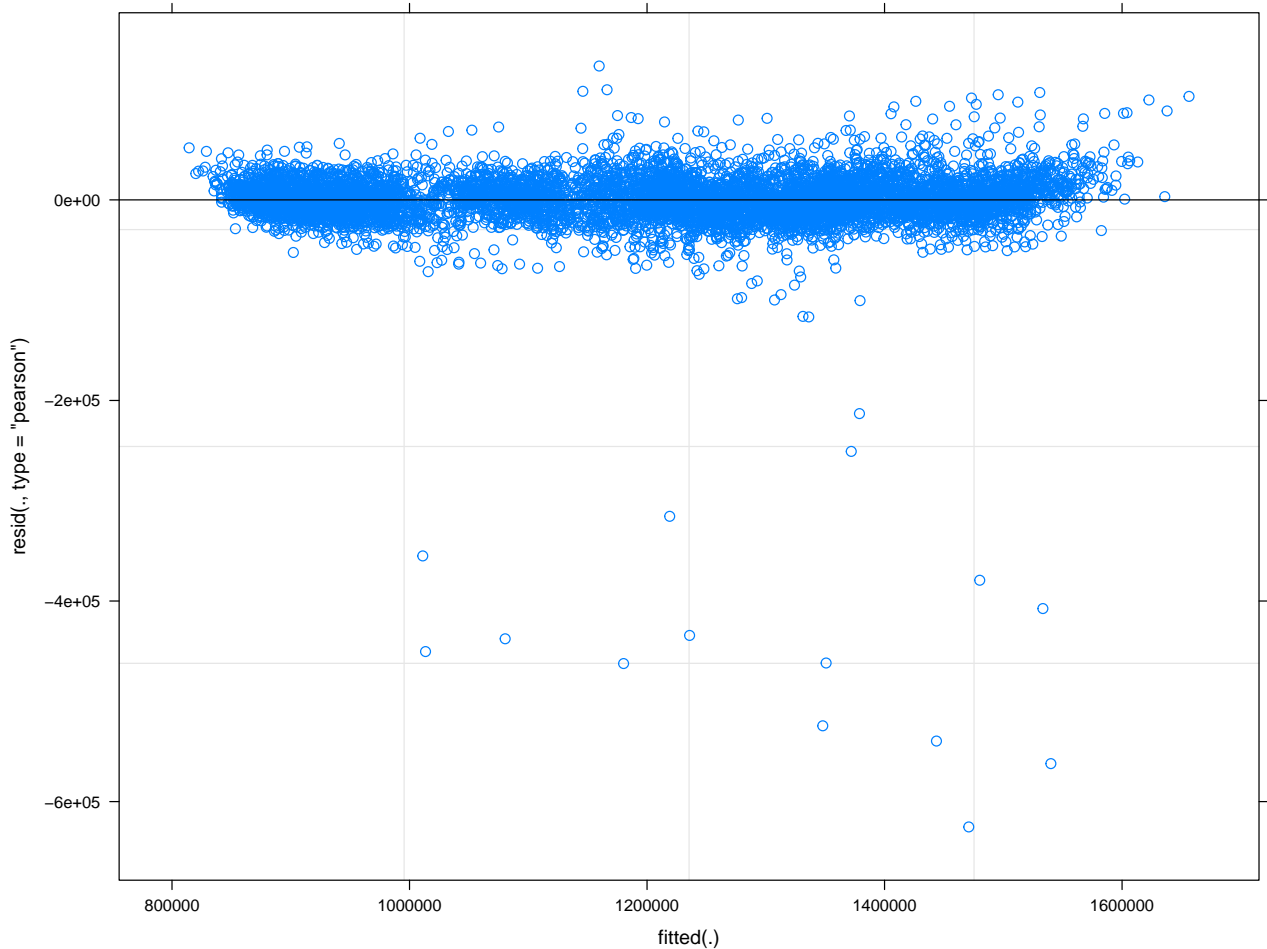


Fig A1: Detecting outlier MRAs

We adopted a simple procedure to detect outliers in the OCRed MRA data. We fit a simple mixed effects model of total MRA allocations using congress fixed effects and district level random effects. Any district*year entry with a residual from this model of more than 200,000 was classified as an outlier, replaced with missing, and replaced with an imputed value.

Missing MRA values for district*year entries (including removed outliers) were imputed using the R

package Amelia. Because we intended to use MRAs as a denominator to construct our primary dependent variable *Share of MRA Spend on Legislative Staff*, we needed MRA values for our full time-series from 1994-2013. MRAs, however, were not used in the house until 1996, so we backwards projected MRA values by including 1994 and 1995 in the imputation model.

We used a year level time series imputation model cross-sectionally indexed by district, and included estimated total staff spending as well as both leading and lagging variables for MRA totals and estimated total staff spending. We used third order polynomial effects to account for time. The imputed values used are the mean values of 100 imputations.

The results of the outlier imputation are shown in Figure A2.

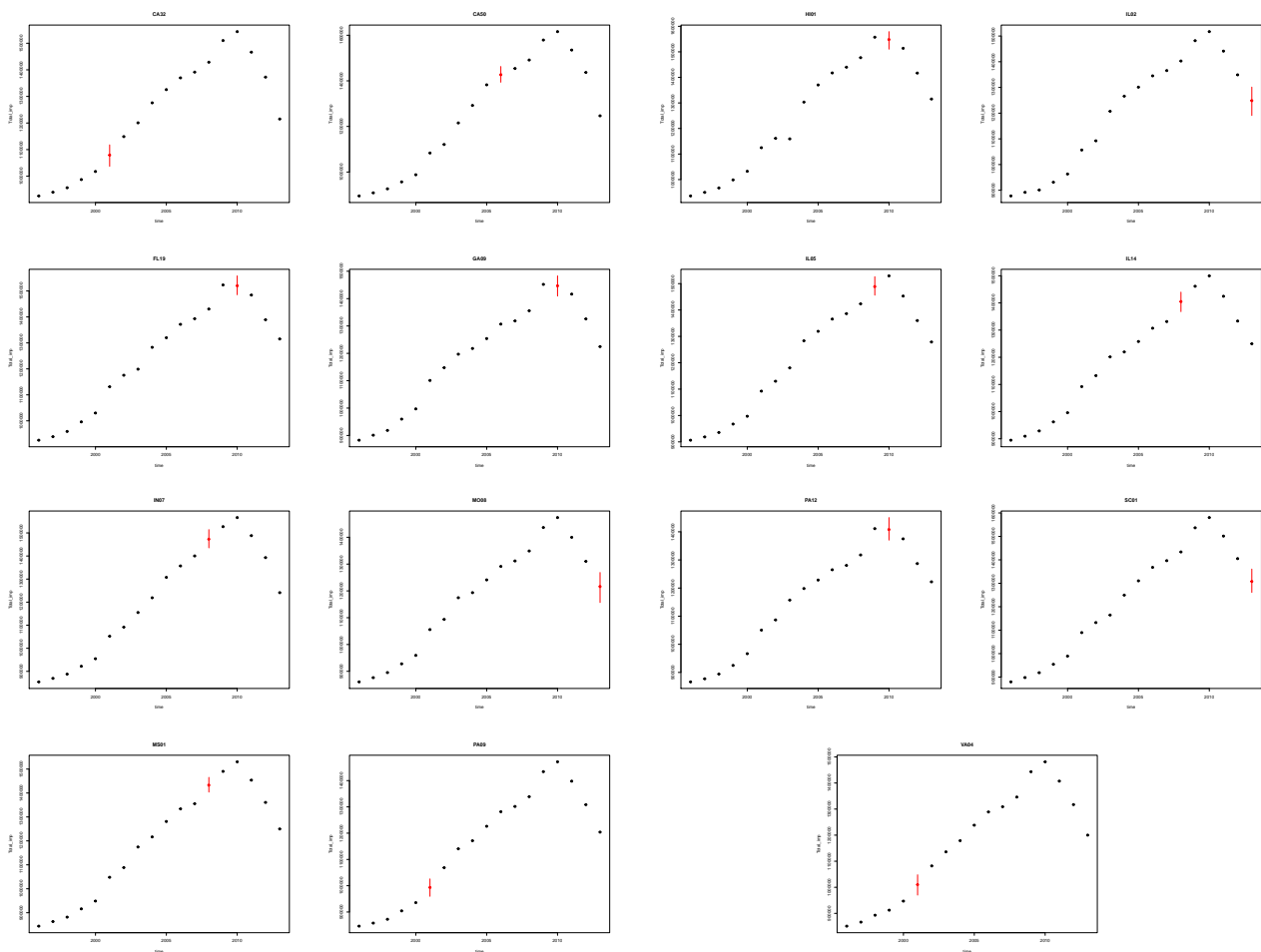


Fig A2: Imputed values for MRA outlier values

Appendix B: Staff Salary Coding

As noted throughout, our analyses rely upon a large dataset of staffer responsibility classifications. To develop these classifications, we employ a hybrid human- and machine-based coding algorithm. According to this protocol, certain job titles receive automatic coding decisions, which are assigned via a simple algorithm in Python. However, for more ambiguous job titles, research assistants investigated the staffer's responsibilities for the specified year and quarter in greater detail. This additional investigation involved searching for staffers in quarterly volumes of the *Congressional Yellow Books*,¹ where factors such as the staffer's office location (Washington versus the district), policy portfolio (if one exists), and (occasionally) more descriptive job titles are listed. This information was incorporated systematically into the assistants' coding decisions, as delineated in the coding protocol. We include a facsimile of that coding protocol below.

While some studies have opted to fully automate similar coding decisions, such automation is highly likely to encourage both measurement error and systematic bias. Careful human coding can capture cross-sectional differences and over-time changes in naming conventions and more accurately report staffers' responsibilities. Therefore, this study opts for a hybrid approach that harnesses the efficiency gains of automated coding without forfeiting the nuance provided by human coding.

Several design features of our protocol merit further discussion. Before providing such discussion, however, it is important to reiterate that our codes are meant to correspond with a staffer's *primary* office responsibilities. For example, if a Chief of Staff has legislative issues associated with her *Yellow Book* entry, we assume that a larger portion of her time is occupied by legislative matters than a Chief of Staff presenting no associated legislative issues. This is not to say that such a staffer does nothing but legislative work; rather, it is designed to capture the differences in Chief of Staff duties that is apparent between offices. Chiefs of Staff are particularly important, because they occupy a significant portion of a member's MRA. Other titles are

¹See <https://www.leadershipdirectories.com/Products/LeadershipinPrint/Government/CongressionalYellowBook> for more information.

less consequential, but our process nevertheless treats them with equal care. Interns, for example, are known to perform multiple functions for the office, even though many focus primarily on answering phone calls or giving tours. As such, we instruct our coders to make certain that interns are not listed in the *Yellow Book*, before rendering their coding decision. In some cases, a staffer will exhibit conflicting responsibilities, and no single responsibility category appears to predominate. In this case, after careful consultation with the principal investigator, the coder would split the staffer's salary equally between the conflicting responsibility codes.

Another crucial feature of the coding process is that it is designed to minimize under-estimation of legislative investment. As the protocol indicates, any code may be overridden by the presence of legislative responsibilities within the *Yellow Book*. In practice, research assistants even assured that the "automatic" codes were not underestimating legislative responsibility (although it was exceedingly rare that a Caseworker exhibited legitimate legislative responsibilities). Thus, the protocol as written establishes a baseline procedure that helps coders navigate new or somewhat unique cases, ensuring that member offices are credited with the fullest possible measure of legislative investment. Constituency service is handled similarly. For years in which such information is available, presence in the district moves a staffer into the "Constituency Service" responsibility code, unless they exhibit legislative responsibility.

This coding procedure therefore renders the "Legislative", "Constituency Service," and "Communications" codes as the most precise coding categories available in the dataset. Each such code is associated with an informative, concrete coding rule, bolstered by qualitative evidence of the underlying responsibilities associated with that code. By contrast, "Political Management" and "Office Management" serve as residual categories. While the combination of salary information, absence of legislative responsibilities, and presence in Washington suggest that such staff are not legislative or constituency service, for example, we cannot be certain that staff coded as political managers are executing exactly the responsibilities associated with that

coding category. Nevertheless, our coding scheme ensures that such members are not conflated with legislative staff (who have clearly delineated legislative responsibilities). It also ensures that we are not treating all residual codes similarly, based on pay. Still, users of these data should use these categories with caution, understanding that their presence serves primarily to ensure the accuracy of the legislative, constituency service, and communications investment measures.

In sum, the coding procedure provides a coherent framework for consistently and carefully coding staffer responsibilities. Additional information may be found at [URL redacted for review].

PROTOCOL FOR STAFFER CLASSIFICATION

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STEP 1 – CLEANING THE DATA

1. We need these spreadsheets to be basically identical to those made by the RAs collecting the 90s data. Thus you’ll need to do a couple of data-cleaning things.
2. First, clean the member’s name. Instead of their full name, I want the member name to be the *last name only*. Fix it as such. Also, if it is not in all caps (it already should be), please change it accordingly.
3. Next, you’re going to need to fill in the district name, since the data doesn’t have it in the format I want it in. To do this, **wait until after you are at step 5**. Then, once you are in the Yellowbook, you can go ahead and fill in the district number.
 - a. The format I would like is “STATEABBR#”—no spaces. In other words, California’s 10th congressional district would be: CA10.

STEP 1 – CLASSIFICATION: THE EASY CASES

1. For all “easy cases,” I want you to *leave the classification section blank*. I will fill those in with a computer program, which will save you some time in the long-run.
2. A case is “easy” if the job title:
 - a. Contains the letters “legis”
 - b. Contains the letters “constit”
 - c. Contains the letters “casework”
 - d. Contains the letters “district”
 - e. Contains the letters “communic”
 - f. Contains the letters “press”

STEP 2 – THE KINDA EASY CASES

1. There are a couple of “kinda easy” cases that are not as easy to automate with a computer program. So, instead of automating these, I am going to have you enter them.
2. For this, you’ll need to know that category codes. Here they are:
 - a. **Legislative staff = 1**
 - b. **Political management = 2**
 - c. **Communications = 3**
 - d. **Office management = 4**
 - e. **Constituency service = 5**
3. If a title reads “**field representative**,” you can mark this as constituency service.
4. If a title reads “**systems administrator**,” you can mark this as office management.
5. If a title reads “**grants coordinator**,” you can mark this as constituency service.
6. If a title reads “**intern**” or “**paid intern**,” you can mark this as constituency service.

SUMMARY: Step 3 Classifications	
<i>Title</i>	<i>Classification</i>
Systems Administrator	Office management
Field Representative	Constituency service

Grants Coordinator	Constituency service
Intern	Constituency service

STEP 4 – THE HARD CASES

1. If the title does not fall into any of the categories in Step 2 or Step 3, then it is a “hard case.”
2. For all hard cases, please write “unc” into the classification cell and then highlight the cell **blue**.
3. Once you have a decent number of blue cells, turn to the corresponding edition of the *Congressional Yellowbooks*.
4. For each unclear case, look up the name of your staffer. Based on the information you see in the entry, you may be able to make a classification decision.
5. First and foremost, if the staffer has *legislative issues* listed under the name somewhere, **classify them as legislative staff**.
6. If there are not legislative issues, it gets a little complicated:
 - a. If the person is a chief of staff or deputy chief of staff, mark them as *political management*.
 - b. If the person is an administrative, staff, or executive assistant and is **paid more than \$10,000**, mark them as *political management*.
 - i. Similarly, if they are **paid less than \$10,000**, mark them as *office management*.
 - c. If the person is a shared employee, mark them as *political management*.
 - d. If the person is marked as counsel, mark them as *political management*.
 - e. If the person is marked as an office manager, mark them as *office management*.
 - f. If the person is marked as a special projects coordinator, mark them as *constituency service*.
 - g. If the person’s title references veterans or veteran services, mark them as *constituency service*.

SUMMARY: Step 4 Classifications – (assuming no legislative responsibility)	
<i>Title</i>	<i>Classification</i>
Chief of Staff / Deputy Chief of Staff	Political management
Administrative/Staff/Executive Assistant – over \$10k	Political management
Administrative/Staff/Executive Assistant – under \$10k	Office management
Shared Employee	Political management
Counsel	Political management
Office Manager	Office management
Special Projects Coordinator	Constituency service
<i>Includes veterans or veteran services</i>	Constituency service

* \$10,000 refers to a staffer’s *quarterly* earnings, not yearly.

** Shared employees and part-time staff are removed from this analysis, so their associated coding procedures do not affect the results presented in the paper.

Appendix C: Alternative Model Specifications

Majority Control and Legislative Investment

	Percentage of MRA Spent on Legislative Staff						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
<i>Elected Post-Contract</i>	-0.201*** (0.045)	-0.206*** (0.063)			-0.051** (0.024)		
<i>Year of Election</i>			-0.020*** (0.005)	-0.021*** (0.005)		-0.034* (0.018)	
<i>Majority</i>	0.060 (0.038)	0.055 (0.040)	0.055* (0.031)	-3.956 (7.215)	0.059*** (0.019)	0.056*** (0.018)	0.002 (0.003)
<i>Post 1994 * Majority</i>		0.008 (0.051)					
<i>Year of Election * Majority</i>				0.002 (0.004)			
<i>Congress</i>							-0.010*** (0.002)
<i>Seniority</i>	0.029** (0.012)	0.029** (0.013)	0.016 (0.019)	0.015 (0.019)	0.047*** (0.006)	-0.015 (0.037)	0.007*** (0.003)
<i>Seniority²</i>	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.002** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.0003)	-0.003*** (0.0003)	-0.0001 (0.0001)
<i>Committee Chair</i>	-0.220*** (0.061)	-0.217*** (0.069)	-0.249*** (0.067)	-0.231*** (0.061)	-0.239*** (0.039)	-0.241*** (0.039)	-0.026*** (0.007)
<i>Subcommittee Chair</i>	-0.072** (0.037)	-0.071* (0.037)	-0.068* (0.041)	-0.060* (0.032)	-0.062*** (0.022)	-0.059*** (0.022)	-0.005 (0.004)
<i>Power Committee</i>	-0.042 (0.029)	-0.042 (0.036)	-0.054* (0.032)	-0.053 (0.034)	-0.048*** (0.018)	-0.050*** (0.018)	0.002 (0.006)
<i>Extremism</i>	-0.233*** (0.057)	-0.235*** (0.065)	-0.113*** (0.042)	-0.121*** (0.036)	-0.129*** (0.041)	-0.129*** (0.041)	-0.024 (0.023)
<i>Female</i>	-0.053*** (0.020)	-0.053** (0.022)	-0.028 (0.018)	-0.026 (0.018)	-0.026 (0.021)	-0.024 (0.021)	
<i>Vote Share</i>	0.027*** (0.007)	0.027*** (0.007)	0.028*** (0.006)	0.028*** (0.006)	0.024*** (0.005)	0.025*** (0.005)	0.005*** (0.001)
<i>Vote Share²</i>	-0.0002*** (0.00004)	-0.0002*** (0.00004)	-0.0002*** (0.00004)	-0.0002*** (0.00004)	-0.0002*** (0.00004)	-0.0002*** (0.00004)	-0.00003*** (0.00001)
104th Congress					0.199*** (0.032)	0.259*** (0.048)	
105th Congress					0.142*** (0.033)	0.263*** (0.080)	
106th Congress					0.047 (0.034)	0.230** (0.114)	
107th Congress					0.110*** (0.035)	0.356** (0.150)	
108th Congress					0.130*** (0.036)	0.440** (0.186)	
110th Congress					-0.138*** (0.038)	0.302 (0.258)	
111th Congress					-0.117*** (0.038)	0.391 (0.295)	
112th Congress					-0.117*** (0.039)	0.457 (0.332)	
113th Congress					-0.267*** (0.040)	0.371 (0.367)	
Constant	-1.949*** (0.307)	-1.947*** (0.294)	36.911*** (10.415)	39.081*** (9.362)	-2.062*** (0.189)	65.870* (36.543)	0.770*** (0.208)
Observations	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256	4,256
Member-Level FE?	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y
R ²	0.066	0.066	0.095	0.095	0.118	0.118	0.554
Log Likelihood	4,313.237	4,313.272	4,392.532	4,393.361	4,458.096	4,457.791	

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Appendix D: Extra Figures

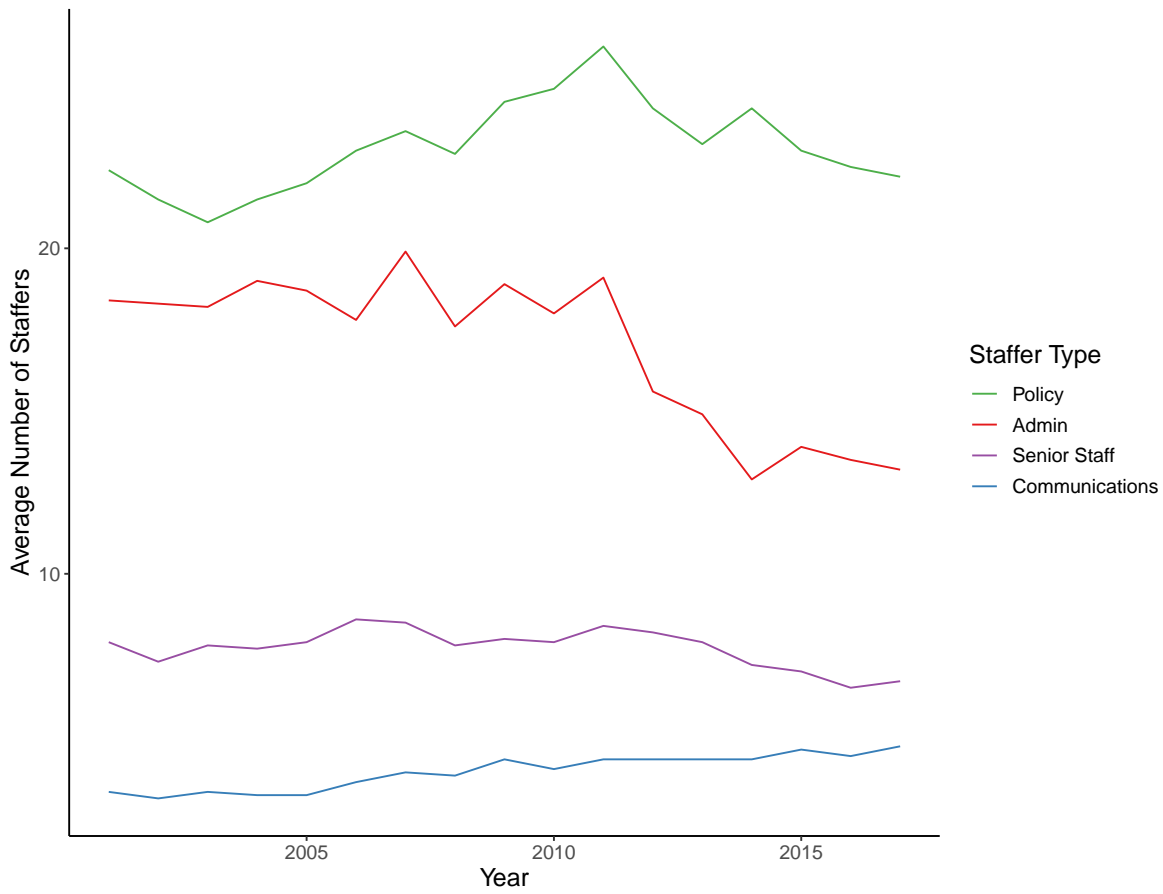


Fig A3: Average number of committee staff by type across all committees except for Appropriations.

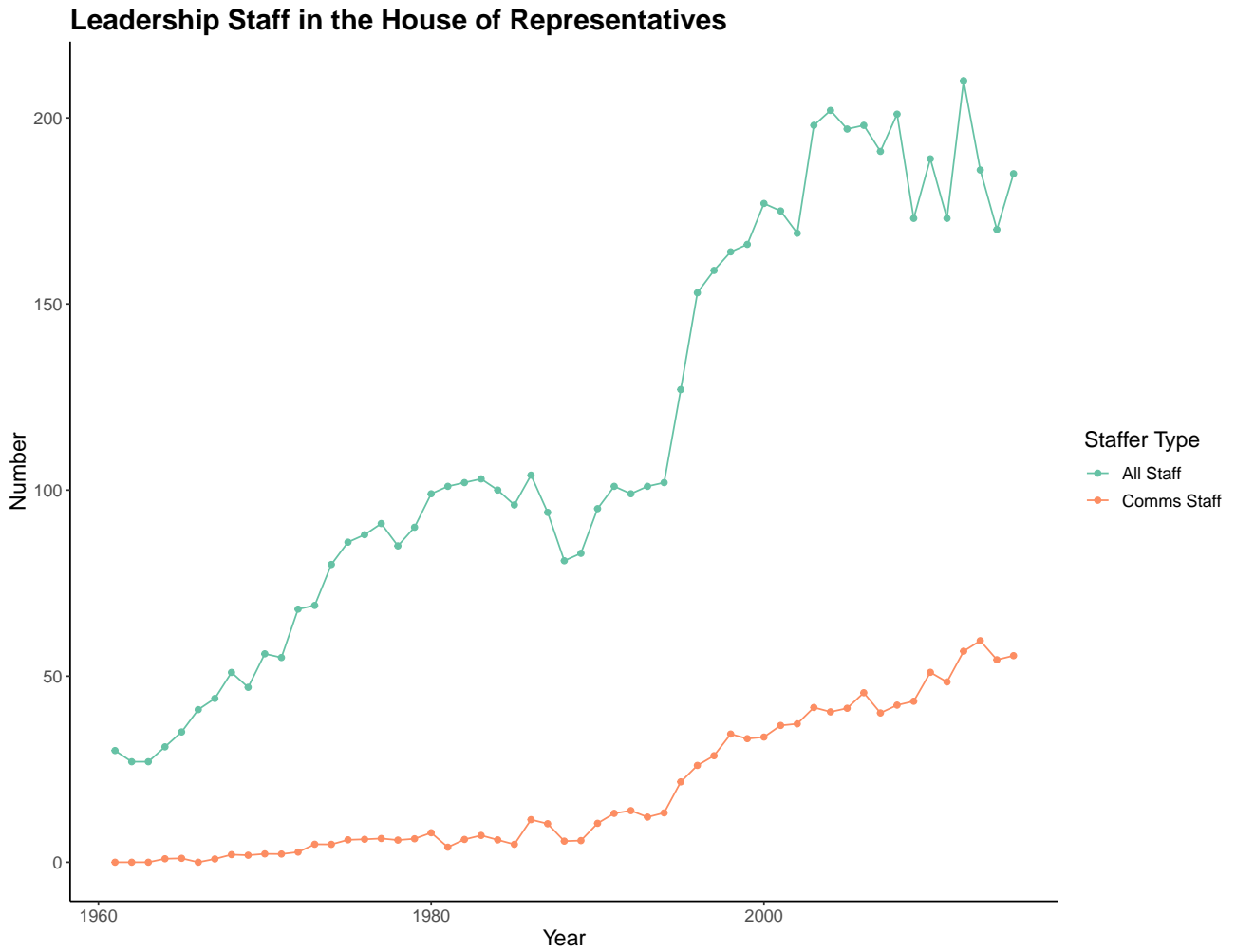


Fig A4: The Rise of Leadership Staff in House Committees, reproduced from Lee (2016, Figure 5-2, 114)

Appendix E: Staff Spending and Office Experience

To be clear, legislative divestment in Congress is crucially linked to members' unwillingness to dedicate MRA funds to the hiring of legislative staff. However, our interest in such spending derives not just from the decline in the *number* of legislative staff in Congress, but from the decline in experience and quality of those staff. Indeed, deinstitutionalization has led members, lobbyists, and other political elites to complain that present-day legislative lack the experience and skills necessary to "actually legislate."

Given the importance of staff experience to our account of deinstitutionalization, we confirm below that the percentage of a member's MRA dedicated to legislative staff is in fact correlated with the cumulative congressional experience of a member's staff.

As summarized in the table, spending on legislative staff appears able to help members retain more experienced staff, even when controlling for factors like member security and committee position, which themselves help members to attract more senior staff. This appears to be the case even when controlling for key factors like legislator seniority.

Table 1

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Total Staff Experience in Office	
	(1)	(2)
<i>Spending on Legislative Staff</i>	0.00000*** (0.00000)	0.00000** (0.00000)
<i>Seniority</i>	1.991*** (0.002)	1.988*** (0.002)
<i>Extremism</i>		-0.032 (0.022)
<i>Committee Chair</i>		0.047*** (0.013)
<i>Subcommittee Chair</i>		0.037** (0.018)
<i>Power Committee</i>		0.046* (0.024)
<i>Female</i>		-0.014* (0.008)
<i>Vote Percentage</i>		-0.007** (0.003)
<i>Vote Percentage²</i>		0.00004** (0.00002)
<i>Democrat</i>		-0.004 (0.008)
Constant	-0.096 (0.449)	0.233 (0.455)
Observations	4,338	4,256
Congress-Level FE?	Y	Y
R ²	0.998	0.998
Adjusted R ²	0.998	0.998
Residual Std. Error	0.397 (df = 4326)	0.391 (df = 4236)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01