# The Rise of Floor Leaders in the United States Senate, 1890–1915

Gerald Gamm
*University of Rochester*
grgm@troi.cc.rochester.edu

Steven S. Smith
*Washington University in St. Louis*
smith@wustl.edu

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Introduction

Senate leadership and party organization emerged in the decades around the turn of the 20th century to address competitive pressures. In the early 1890s, Arthur Pue Gorman (D, Md.) became the first person elected in the Senate's history to serve as his party's leader on the floor. Chosen by his colleagues as chairman of the Democratic caucus, Gorman quickly transformed the longstanding position of caucus chairman into a wholly new institution. Republican senators had routinely elected caucus chairmen since before the Civil War, and Democrats had done so since the 1870s. But, before Gorman, caucus chairmen had typically done little more than preside over party meetings. Except on rare occasions, their position as caucus chairmen did not give them any special role on the Senate floor or in the public realm. All that changed in the 1890s. Gorman's long chairmanship, which began in 1890 and lasted until his resignation in 1898, redefined the position of Democratic caucus chairman. He and his successors became the Senate's first elected floor leaders.

By 1913, when John W. Kern (D, Ind.) became majority leader with his election as chairman of the Senate Democratic caucus, the institution of Democratic leader was more than two decades old. While his position as majority leader and his relationship with President Woodrow Wilson allowed Kern to play a special role in the development of Senate party leadership, his election was just one of several events in the 1910s that signified the maturation of the Senate parties. The Republican caucus, which until 1913 had lacked an elected party leader in the Senate and instead relied on the collective leadership of the Republican Steering Committee, that year finally adopted the two-decade-old Democratic model and designated their caucus chairman as minority leader. Over the ensuing three years, between 1913 and 1915, the two Senate parties formalized their leadership structures. The Democrats created the position of whip in 1913, the Republicans in 1915.

Our thesis—that Senate party leadership and organization emerged in response to inter-party competition—stands in contrast to arguments with sharply different emphases. According to Rothman (1966), the development of strong state parties and political careers was essential to Senate party development, while Brady et al. (1989) contend that noncareerists, affected by changes in electoral coalitions, bred party centralization in the 1890s. Munk (1970, 1974) focuses on the creation of the majority leader's post in 1913 and claims that it was established to meet President Wilson's need for a lieutenant to push his program through a divided, filibuster-prone Senate. Finally, Baker and Davidson (1991) argue that the Senate's longstanding reliance on "baronial committee chairmen" ended in the 1910s and necessitated the invention of new leadership positions to coordinate the work of the Senate.

Themes in these previous discussions of the development of modern Senate parties do not aggregate to a coherent theory. In this paper, we sketch a more comprehensive and viable explanation. We then turn to an account of developments in the 1890-1915 period, which proved to be a pivotal era in

the development of Senate leadership. Before the 1890s, neither Senate party elected a floor leader. Each relied on its caucus and its caucus's committees to manage business off the floor, and each relied on powerful committee chairmen and bill managers to supervise the floor. In the 1890s, the two caucuses pursued different paths of innovation. The Republicans, in the majority, managed the Senate through the Republican Steering Committee, while the Democrats looked to their caucus chairman to lead them on and off the floor. By the middle 1910s, the basic institutions of modern party organization had been created. Both parties elected floor leaders, and both floor leaders were assisted by whips.

The development of floor leadership at the turn of the last century—one of the seminal events in the history of American national government—has never before been told. Indeed, until now scholars have not even known the identity of Republican Senate caucus chairmen before 1911 or Democratic chairmen before 1903. The most important existing account of the period, Rothman's *Politics and Power* (1969), suspends the discussion in 1901 when party divisions appeared to be their deepest, but long before renewed competition for control of the Senate stimulated new innovations in party organization in the 1910s. And Rothman's account focuses primarily on the informal leadership exercised by bill managers and committee chairmen, rather than the formal institutions created by the caucuses. Ripley (1969b, 25, also 26), citing only Rothman for evidence, contends that the practice of electing "a chairman of their caucus who was assumed to be the party's floor leader" was already well-established by the Republicans in the 1880s, even as he suggests that this practice remained irregular until the 1910s (Ripley 1969b, 26, 28–29; Ripley 1969a, 4, 21). Other scholars, who emphasize the period in the 1910s when John Kern served as Democratic leader, begin their studies by suggesting that Kern's election as "floor leader" in 1913 represented a sharp break with existing practice (Munk 1974, 28; Baker and Davidson 1991, 4; Oleszek 1991). And Riddick (1971, 4), examining the exact language used by the Republican and Democratic caucuses when they gathered to elect caucus chairmen, reports that the practice of referring to caucus chairman as floor leaders in caucus minutes began only in the 1920s.

We offer a radically different account, grounded in many thousands of newspaper stories. As we will argue, Gorman created the position of Democratic floor leader in the early 1890s, and the Democratic caucus routinely elected and reelected floor leaders in subsequent decades. In every regard, Gorman and his successors were responsible, as leaders, to their party colleagues. They functioned as party spokesmen, they formulated the party's policy and agenda in the Senate, they helped manage floor activity, they led the party caucus, and they served as their party's liaison to the president. They did not always perform these tasks well. Indeed, some of the best evidence that the position of party leader was established in the 1890s are the complaints of senators and contemporary observers that Gorman's successors in the 1900s were not leading their party effectively and that, consequently, they should be replaced by new leaders. But the position of elected floor leader was certainly established in the 1890s,

and new party institutions emerged in the 1910s, all in response to competitive pressures between the two Senate parties.

## A Theory of Party Leadership and Organization

In the electoral arena, parties organize to win elections in order to control the policies and benefits of government (Aldrich 1995). Our working hypothesis is that in the halls of Congress parties are organized to both win elections and control policy. The most important factor influencing the achievement of those goals is the behavior of the other major party. Inter-party competition motivates innovation in legislative parties as they seek to overcome collective action problems and more effectively coordinate strategies to win elections and legislative battles. Thus, we look to variation in inter-party competition for an explanation of the nature and timing of developments in Senate party organization and leadership.

More specifically, we argue that parity or near parity in the strength of the Senate parties stimulates the parties to enhance their organizational effectiveness through innovation. Relative party strength has figured centrally in explanations of changes in House rules, especially those rules that shape the parliamentary rights of minorities (Binder 1997; Dion 1997). As observers have noted, a small majority party cannot afford to lose the votes of even a few members without losing majority control over legislative outcomes. Moreover, with a small majority party, a change of a few seats reverses majority control of the chamber. Consequently, small margins enhance the incentive to maximize the effectiveness of the party efforts—to retain control for the majority party and to gain control for the minority party. But the lack of variance in minority or minority party rights in the Senate, in contrast to the House, has limited scholarly interest in the effect of party competitiveness for organizational change in the upper chamber.

Party competition is not the only possible explanation for party development in the Senate. In fact, existing scholarship on the Senate emphasizes other factors. Careerism (Brady, Brody, and Epstein 1989, Ripley 1969, Rothman 1966), policy distance between the parties (Aldrich and Rohde 1997, 1998 Brady 1988, Brady, Brody, and Epstein 1989, Cooper and Brady 1981), legislative work load (McConachie 1898, Baker and Davidson 1991), and new membership (Aldrich and Rohde 1997, Davidson and Oleszek 1977, Evans and Oleszek 1997, Fenno 1997) have been offered as factors that shape institutional developments in congressional procedure and organization, including features of party organization and leadership. But our ongoing study of institutional innovation in Senate history leads us to minimize the significance of these other factors and to emphasize instead the centrality of party competition.

Our thesis that inter-party competition drives legislative party development has important individual-level foundations. Senators' personal electoral and policy goals are not readily achieved by individual action alone. Their reelection prospects are affected by the public's perception of the party with they are affiliated (Cox and McCubbins 1993, Sinclair 1983). Achieving their legislative goals is necessarily influenced by the strategies of other legislators. Collective action by legislators with compatible individual goals—those sharing a party label and certain policy objectives—enhances the likelihood that individuals will succeed, particularly in the face of collective action by other legislators with different party labels and policy objectives. Collective action, of course, has well understood problems—principally, the tendency of individuals to invest too little in collective action—so there always is room for improvement in party organization and leadership.

In the interest of parsimonious explanation, we might simplify our view of parties' collective goals by arguing that either electoral (Cox and McCubbins 1995, 2004) or policy (Aldrich and Rohde 1997, 1998; Schwartz 1989) goals motivate the creation of congressional parties and their leaders' strategies. We find important insights about legislative politics in the single-goal studies of parties, which have the advantage of a connection to important single-goal accounts of the motivations of legislators—reelection (Mayhew 1974) or policy (spatial theories). Moreover, single-goal accounts of legislative parties are able to deduce a range of implications of the goals for party or leader behavior.

In our view, single-goal accounts misconceive congressional parties. Legislators' electoral and career goals, their general policy attitudes, and their party labels are interdependent and imported to Congress. Candidates' choice of party may reflect both electoral and policy considerations. Electoral success may reflect both policy and party considerations. And policy positions may reflect the influence of both electioneering and partisans. By the time a legislator arrives on Capitol Hill, these relationships are established. Legislators do not choose their legislative party free of constraint in order to maximize utility in electoral or policy terms. Instead, the party label with which they ran for office dictates, with very few exceptions, the party with which they caucus in Congress. Thus, the most reasonable assumption appears to be that legislators bring to Congress a set of interdependent goals that bind them to each other and motivate the development of legislative parties.

Similarly, the collective electoral and policy goals of congressional parties are interdependent. Gaining or maintaining a majority of seats is pursued through a legislative agenda, among other things, and legislative success is affected by who gains election to Congress. This interdependence implies that even if party members are single-minded seekers of policy or reelection, as the single-goal theories assume, then fellow partisans share an interest in both collective goals.

Furthermore, while a congressional party's electoral and policy goals are interdependent, they are often not fully compatible, at least in the short term. For example, on a given issue, a leader may not be

able to fashion legislation that simultaneously attracts a majority of votes on the floor and maximizes the electoral value of the effort for party colleagues and candidates. The collective goals are pursued in a competitive process, one filled with uncertain elements, and generate intra-party conflicts over party strategies—conflicts that are aired in leadership contests and party meetings and sometimes become intense in battles over important legislation, presidential nominations, and treaties. Resolving conflicts among colleagues often involves making tradeoffs between the short-term electoral and policy interests. Making these tradeoffs is a public good for a legislative party that its members seek to provide through party organization and leadership.

The responsibility of the party leaders is to further both party goals while minimizing the severity of the tradeoffs that are required. This responsibility is manifested in the everyday activities of party leaders. These activities include managing the party organization, coordinating with the president or leaders of the other chamber, speaking on behalf of the party for the media and other audiences, managing floor activity, negotiating legislation within the chamber and with leaders of the other policy-making institutions, and even taking the lead in writing legislation and building majorities.

At times, the tactical adjustments of individual legislators and their leaders are perceived as insufficient solutions to the strategic problems that fellow partisans confront. Innovations in party organization and leadership positions are proposed and adopted. Innovations could occur at any time, but the incentive to innovate is greatest when the potential benefits are greatest—when inter-party competition is most intense. This proposition—that inter-party competition drives innovation in legislative party organization and leadership—is our central thesis.

## Data

To explain institutional innovation in the Senate, we must first present an accurate account of the development of Senate parties and leadership. Until now, a full account has not existed. That has been due, in part, to the fact that few scholars have studied the rise of leadership in the Senate. Those who have studied the subject have confined their attention either to the rise of centralized, but informal, leadership in the Republican party in the 1890s or to the years following 1913, when John Kern became majority leader. No one has previously examined the transition from the 1890s to the 1910s or the rise of formal institutions in the Senate caucuses in that period.

A major reason for the lack of earlier studies has been the inaccessibility of data, a function of the extralegal nature of Senate party organization. For the House, the primary institutions of majority leadership in this era were the Speakership and the Committee on Rules. Both of these institutions were recognized in the rules of the House—indeed, the Speakership is created by the Constitution itself—so both are amply documented in the House Journal and the *Congressional Record*. But that is not the case

for the Senate. Unlike the Speaker of the House, who is elected by the full membership of the chamber and whose election has consequently been a matter of public notice since 1789, the majority and minority leaders of the Senate have never been selected in public. And, unlike the House Committee on Rules, the Senate Republican Steering Committee was never recognized on the floor of the Senate or documented in Senate papers. The primary institutions of Senate party leadership in these years—the caucuses themselves, the caucus committees (including the steering committees and the committees on committees), and, eventually, the leaders—developed and flourished off the Senate floor. Except for rare mentions, they are invisible in the Senate Journal, virtually unmentioned in the *Congressional Record*.

Until now, the minutes of the Senate Democratic and Republican caucuses, which were once preserved as secret records but have recently published by the Senate Historical Office, have been privileged as the only official record of caucus business. Riddick (1971), in his brief account of floor leadership in the Senate, gained access to these unpublished minutes, relying on these minutes to argue that the position of Democratic leader did not emerge until 1920 and that of Republican leader until 1925. Other scholars, who lacked access to these minutes, relied on personal papers of senators, published biographies, lists passed on from one year to another by researchers in the Senate Library, and various newspaper accounts, though no scholars have previously examined newspapers for the entirety of this period in any comprehensive way.

Riddick (1971) and Munk (1970, 1974), the two scholars who published lists of Senate caucus chairmen in this era, were careful to explain that their lists were fragmentary, incomplete, and perhaps inaccurate in parts. Thus Riddick (1971, 6–7) presents two tables, the first a list of caucus chairmen "from unofficial sources in the period predating the caucus minutes" and the second a list drawn directly from surviving caucus minutes, which begin in 1903 for the Democrats and 1911 for the Republicans. As we now know, Riddick's first list was filled with errors, omitting several caucus chairmen entirely and identifying other senators incorrectly as caucus chairmen in this era. Munk (1970, 371–72), too, acknowledges that her own list of caucus chairmen "still represents only a starting point for this study, since there are numerous discrepancies and uncertainties." Despite Munk's and Riddick's careful efforts to call attention to the tentative quality of their lists, subsequent scholars and, until recently, official historians of the Senate simply reprinted these lists as authoritative. Since these lists were incomplete and inaccurate, the true identities of caucus chairmen in the 19th century and early 20th century have been unknown. Consequently, past analyses of the relationship between caucus chairmen and the rise of party leaders, even basic knowledge of the seniority of early caucus chairmen, have been based largely on speculation and assumption.

In this study, we have supplemented existing sources, including the minutes of the Republican and Democratic caucuses, with an enormous archive gleaned from a century's worth of newspapers.

While the Senate floor took little notice of caucuses or party organization, journalists wrote about Senate parties in profusion. Between the 1870s and 1920s, the nation's leading newspapers gave extensive coverage to every aspect of congressional affairs, including mundane details of organization and accounts of caucus meetings. The descriptions of caucus meetings appear to have been remarkably accurate, since the newspaper versions of the 20th-century meetings can be verified by comparison to the long-secret caucuses.

Thus the principal source of data for this study is the day-by-day account of Senate affairs written by journalists. We have invested thousands of hours—our own hours and those of our research assistants—reading an array of newspapers. We have read multiple newspapers, twelve or thirteen different newspapers in some cases, to obtain comprehensive accounts of the opening weeks of each Congress between the 1820s and the 1940s. We have read every page of every issue of the *Washington Post* and many issues of the *New York Times* for the period 1883–1901. We have consulted every relevant entry in the index to the New York Times and in fragmentary indexes to the *Washington Evening Star* and *Baltimore Sun*. Moreover, the new, searchable, on-line database established by ProQuest Historical Newspapers has dramatically expanded our ability to understand the development of the Senate. We have combed through this database—which now includes the full text of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Atlanta Constitution*, and *Chicago Tribune*—and we have supplemented that database with various regional newspapers collected in Ancestry.com.

None of these methods was sufficient in itself to yield a comprehensive view of steering committees and other features of Senate organization. Even the on-line database maintained by ProQuest Historical Newspapers, as extraordinary a resource as it is, is imperfect, missing some articles we ultimately identified in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* that relate to the rise of steering committees—and none of the articles, of course, that come from newspapers not included in that database. Taken together, however, these various sources offer unprecedented insight into the timing and nature of institutional change in the Senate. For the first time, in the long history of the Senate, we can recover the daily business of the Senate parties, in detail and from multiple perspectives.

The first fruits of this work appear as Table 1. This table represents the first complete list ever assembled of Senate caucus chairmen and floor leaders. This information comes directly out of our vast newspaper archive. Not only do we identify every Senate party leader—from the moment in the mid-19th century that each party established a regular caucus chairmanship to the present day—but we list exact dates of service. The Senate Historical Office has already adopted an earlier version of this table for its official roster of caucus chairmen, and it has updated the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress with this information.

With this paper, however, we move beyond an examination of the caucus to an accounting of the rise of party leadership. The position of caucus chairman predated the position of floor leader. On that point we agree fully with other scholars, including those in the Senate Historical Office. But we will show that floor leadership developed in the Senate a full generation earlier than other scholars have realized. The Senate Historical Office, as Table 2 shows, continues to follow Riddick (1971) in insisting that neither caucus designated its chairman as a floor leader earlier than the 1920s, and no other scholars have previously placed this event earlier than 1913. But both dates are based on incomplete information. In the early 1890s, Senate Democrats came to regard their elected caucus chairman as their floor leader, and the two roles have been joined by Democrats ever since. Republicans adopted this practice in 1913.

Nomenclature in the respective party conference minutes—which is the source for the previous understanding that floor leadership was not recognized until the 1920s—is misleading. The language used in caucus minutes to describe these positions was formal and brief, and that language lagged considerably behind the changed reality. Riddick (1971, 4) deems it a historic event that in January 1920 the Democratic caucus was called for the purpose of selecting a "leader," rather than a "caucus chairman." But there is no evidence in the minutes or in contemporary newspapers that these senators believed that they were doing anything innovative. There is no suggestion that they were creating a new position with that language, rather than bringing a long-familiar term into the formal language of the caucus. And there was little consistency even in the formal language. When Alben Barkley was elected the Senate Democratic leader in 1937, the official minutes state that he was nominated to be "Leader of the Senate" but that he was only elected to the position of "*Conference Chairman*" (italics in original). This language is nearly indistinguishable from that used in 1906, when Joseph Blackburn was elected to the position of "Chairman of the Conference" and when the official caucus minutes explain that, by this election, the Democratic senators had chosen Blackburn to serve as "their chosen official leader in the great forum of the Senate of the United States." Whatever the language of these minutes, certainly no one doubts that Barkley was elected both conference chairman and floor leader for the Senate's Democrats in 1937. Neither, we contend, should anyone doubt that Blackburn—and Gorman before him—was also elected to serve in both capacities more than three decades earlier.

## Caucus Chairman and the Origins of Party Leaders, 1890–1913

Until the 1890s, the caucus chairmanship was a largely ceremonial position. According to Rothman (1966, 16), Henry B. Anthony (R, R.I.), chairman of the Senate Republican caucus between 1862 and 1884, named the members of the Republican committee on committees, but did not sit on the committee himself or attempt to influence the committee in any way. John Sherman (R, Ohio), who succeeded Anthony as caucus chairman, was unable even to secure his own committee preferences. In March 1885,

on the day that new committee assignments were announced, Sherman rose on the floor of the Senate to declare— "in tones," according to the *New York Times*, "in which anger was scarcely suppressed"[1]—that he refused to accept reappointment to the Finance Committee. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* reported that Sherman's anger resulted both from the ideological composition of the committee and the committee on committee's decision not to offer him the chairmanship. Sherman's position as chairman of his party's caucus appears to have mattered little in the battle to shape committees. "Neither the caucus nor the caucus committee," the *Post* stated, "seems to have seen its way clear to make the change desired by the Senator from Ohio."[2]

To be sure, the caucus chairmanship was often filled by distinguished and powerful senators. This was certainly true on the Republican side of the aisle, and it was the Republican party that dominated the Senate throughout this era. Sherman chaired the Finance Committee for many years before resigning his seat in the Senate in 1877 to become Secretary of the Treasury, and he chaired the Foreign Relations Committee when he returned to the Senate in the 1880s. The Sherman Antitrust Act and the Silver Purchase Act, both passed in 1890, are monuments to Sherman's influence on the legislative process. George Edmunds (Vt.), who became caucus chairman in 1885, after Sherman's election as president pro tempore,[3] was chairman of the Judiciary Committee for most of the 1870s and 1880s. And William Boyd Allison (R, Iowa), Republican caucus chairman from 1897 until his death in 1908, chaired the Appropriations Committee. Eugene Hale (R, Maine) succeeded to both chairmanships upon Allison's death.

Democratic caucus chairmen, too, were generally numbered among their party's most influential senators. George Pendleton (D, Ohio), who chaired the Democratic caucus in the early and middle 1880s, helped lead the battle for civil reform as a junior senator. The Pendleton Act, passed in 1883, was evidence of his success. "Senator [James] Beck of Kentucky is the leading authority on the Democratic side on all subjects relating to the tariff and finance," the *New York Times* reported in 1888, "and as he is the Chairman of the Democratic Caucus Committee his opinions have naturally great weight with his associates."[4] In that same year, when Beck still served as caucus chairman, Gorman was already regarded as a major figure in his party. President Grover Cleveland summoned Gorman to the White House in 1888 and sought his assistance with tariff legislation (Lambert 140).

Still, in neither party before the 1890s did the caucus chairman enjoy any special status as his party's designated leader in the Senate. In the 1870s and 1880s, the Republican and Democratic caucus

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1 "Mr. Sherman Declines to Serve," *New York Times*, 14 March 1885.

2 "The Republican Senate Caucus," *Washington Post*, 12 March 1885.

3 "Attitude of the Senate," *New York Herald*, 12 Dec. 1885, 2.

4 "The Senate Tariff Bill," *New York Times*, 1 Sept. 1888, 1.

chairmen were, at best, one among a group of senators who helped manage their party's affairs in the Senate, speak to reporters on behalf of their party, and meet with the president. The caucus chairman would generally be included in this group, but he received no special standing from his official position. Caucus chairmen sometimes offered routine resolutions in the first days of a Congress, as representatives of their party, but they did not assume any responsibility for managing business. Thus the selection of a chairman was entirely an internal party matter. Though newspapers generally reported the election of a new caucus chairman, the news story was perfunctory and very brief, an incidental detail in the larger account of the caucus meeting.

What was true of both parties until the early 1890s remained true of the Republican party until the 1910s. Throughout the 1890s and 1900s, a small group of Republicans—among them Allison and Hale, but also including such senators as Nelson W. Aldrich (R, R.I.), John Spooner (R, Wisc.), and Orville Platt (R, Conn.)—worked collectively to manage the party's affairs. They chaired many of the Senate's leading committees, and they and their allies controlled the Republican Steering Committee. Aldrich, whose mastery of financial and tariff legislation made him the most influential senator in this group, helped manage the Senate's affairs for more than two decades. "In all matters political or parliamentary Aldrich is easily the leader of the Republicans in the Senate," the *Baltimore Sun* observed in 1901. "He knows when to 'bluff,' when to bully, when to flatter and when to anger. The man who is lacking in alertness he bluffs, the timid man he bullies, the vain man he flatters and the man whose judgment is overturned when angry he torments and taunts until he loses his temper and is put at fault."[5] As Thompson (1906, 32) argued five years later, "Aldrich is a chess player with men." But he never served as his party's elected Senate leader.

## Caucus Elections and the Rise of Party Leaders

In the early 1890s, Gorman created the formal position of Senate party leader. There is no record of any debate or discussion in the Democratic caucus about Gorman's decision to transform the caucus chairmanship and assume responsibility for leading his party on the floor. But senators of both parties witnessed the event, and journalists took careful notes throughout the decade. When Gorman stepped down as his party's caucus chairman in April 1898, newspapers treated the event as a major story. This type of coverage was entirely unprecedented. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Evening Star*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Los Angeles Times* all ran major stories covering the event.[6]

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5. "Aldrich as a Leader," *Baltimore Sun* 29 December 1901.

6 "Turpie Succeeds Gorman," *New York Times*, 30 Apr. 1898, 2; "Mr. Gorman Retires," *Washington Post*, 30 Apr. 1898, 4; "Democratic Senators Caucus," *Washington Evening Star*, 30

"Mr. Gorman Resigns—Gives Up the Chairmanship of the Democratic Caucus of the Senate—Senator Cockrell in Tears," the *Baltimore Sun* reported, in a story that ran eleven paragraphs.[7]

While the coverage of Gorman's resignation in April 1898 referred to him as his party's "caucus chairman" rather than "leader," the prominence of the stories suggested that Gorman had functioned as much more than the presiding officer of his party's caucus. Senators and journalists had been referring to Gorman as his party's elected leader throughout the 1890s, and they quickly began to speculate who would replace Gorman in the next Congress. (David Turpie, of Indiana, who had been elected caucus chairman in April 1898, upon Gorman's resignation, was defeated that year in his own bid for reelection the Senate.) In evaluating potential successors, observers emphasized the fitness of candidates for leading the Senate's Democrats. "During the fight on the pending treaty in the Senate the democrats have been looking over their senatorial timber for a recognized leader after March," the *Baltimore Sun* reported in February 1899.[8] That December, according to the *Washington Post*, "the Democrats recognized the leadership of Senator [James K.] Jones, of Arkansas, by making him their caucus chairman."[9]

*Selection standards*. Through the 1890s, elections of caucus chairmen appear to have been uncontroversial, unanimous, and little-noticed. The most important business of the caucus, in the first weeks of a Congress, was to assign members to committees and to select the party's candidates for president pro tempore and other Senate offices. While senators appear to have regarded election to the caucus chairmanship as a sign of respect, the position received less attention than that of president pro tempore. Republicans chose their caucus chairmen based largely on seniority, while Democrats generally selected a broad range of members to chair their caucus.

The first two chairmen of the Republican caucus, John P. Hale (R, N.H.) and Henry B. Anthony (R, R.I.), were chosen within their first years of coming to the Senate. Hale was in his second term, and Anthony was just three years into his first term when he was elected chairman of the Republican caucus. But Anthony's colleagues were evidently pleased by his management of caucus meetings. "Mr. Anthony, who has acted as chairman of the Senate caucus for the last seven years, to-day proposed to resign that position," the *New York Herald* reported in December 1869, "but his fellow members would not consent that he should do so."[10] Eight years later, the *New York Tribune* noted that Anthony "has for many years

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Apr. 1898, 8; "Gorman Succeeded by Turpie," *Boston Globe*, 30 Apr. 1898, 7; "Chairman Gorman Resigns," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 Apr. 1898, 3.

7 "Mr. Gorman Resigns," *Baltimore Sun*, 30 Apr. 1898.

8 "Will Succeed Mr. Gorman," *Baltimore Sun*, 2 Feb. 1899.

9 "Both Parties in Caucus," *Washington Post*, 6 Dec. 1899.

10 "Senatorial Caucus," *New York Herald*, 8 Dec. 1869, 5.

been the chairman of all party gatherings in the Senate."[11] Editor and owner of a Providence newspaper, Anthony came to the Senate in 1859 at the age of forty-four. By the time of his death in 1884, he had served twenty-five continuous years in the Senate, nearly all of them as chairman of his party's caucus.

George Edmunds and John Sherman were among the most senior members of their party when they were elected to chair the Republican caucus. The Republican decision to choose caucus chairmen on the basis of seniority appears to have been a consequence of Anthony's long service in the chair. Anthony, the Republican caucus chairman, was "the oldest Senator in consecutive service," the *New York Times* reported in 1883. "There is no man in the United States Senate now who was a member of it when Henry B. Anthony took the oath of office, March 4, 1859."[12] Though Anthony himself had been elected to the caucus chairmanship midway through his first term as senator, he unwittingly established the seniority rule simply by growing old in the office. Sherman, who became caucus chairman in 1884 after Anthony's death, had entered the Senate two years after Anthony, though he had not served continuously.[13] Edmunds, ranking next to Sherman in earliest date of service and ranking first in continuous service, succeeded to the caucus chairmanship in 1885, when Sherman was elected president pro tempore.

Through the 1920s, as Table 3 suggests, Republican senators consistently considered seniority in the election of their caucus chairmen. William Allison, beginning his fifth consecutive term, was the second-ranking member of his party when he became caucus chairman in 1897; Justin Morrill (R, Vt.), the only member with greater seniority, was almost eighty-seven years old. Eugene Hale, who succeeded Allison in 1908, was also among the most senior senators in the chamber, having served continuously since 1881. Shelby Cullom (R, Ill.), Jacob Gallinger (R, N.H.), and Henry Cabot Lodge (R, Mass.) all assumed their positions as Republican caucus chairmen on the basis of seniority. "Senator [William] Frye [R, Maine] declined to be chairman of the caucus, because of his infirmity," the *Washington Post* reported in April 1911. "Seniority, that inflexible rule of the Senate, never violated, passed responsibility to Mr. Cullom. He accepted it, and was declared chairman."[14] Cullom, in his fifth term, was eighty-one years old when he was elected. Gallinger, seventy-five, was in his fourth term. With Gallinger's death in 1918, Lodge became the most senior member of the Senate and was elected Republican leader without opposition.[15]

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11 "The Republican Caucus," *New York Tribune*, 19 Nov. 1877, 1.

12 "Senator Anthony," *New York Times* 30 October 1883.

13 In 1877–81, Sherman was Secretary of the Treasury.

14 "Senate Dozen Win," *Washington Post* 5 April 1911.

15 "Lodge to Succeed to Leadership," *New York Times* 18 August 1918; "Republicans Name Lodge as Leader," *Washington Star* 24 August 1918.

Charles Curtis (R, Kans.), elected in 1924, was the first Republican leader chosen without regard to seniority. But Republicans did not entirely disregard their seniority rule. Francis Warren (R, Wyo.)—whose service in the Senate had begun in 1890 and who had served continuously since 1895—was the most senior member of the party, and his colleagues recognized his right to the caucus chairmanship. "Senator Warren undoubtedly can have the leadership unless he should himself decide not to take it," the *Washington Star* reported. "The mere expression of a wish on the part of Senator Warren to have the leadership of the Republicans in the Senate, made vacant by the death of Senator Lodge of Massachusetts, would assure the Senator from Wyoming that office. In fact, unless Senator Warren should state that he has no desire for the office, it would be given him."[16] But Warren, eighty years of age and chairman of the Appropriations Committee, declined the office. The caucus then elected Curtis. With Curtis's election, Republicans ceased to consider seniority in selecting their leaders. James Watson (Ind.) became Republican leader at the start of his third term in the Senate.

As Table 3 indicates, Democrats followed no seniority rule. Rather, they elected many new members to their caucus chairmanship, only rarely electing senior Democrats to the post. John Stevenson (D, Ky.), William Wallace (D, Penn.), and George Pendleton all assumed their chairmanships in their first (and only) terms in the Senate. James Beck was elected caucus chairman in March 1885, at the beginning of his ninth year in the Senate. The election of newer members to the caucus chairmanship may have reflected a belief among Democrats that this was a low-status position, but the decision rule itself—or lack of decision rule—meant that a Democratic caucus might elevate a senator to the caucus chairmanship on the basis of ability and capacity for leadership. Beck, for example, was well-regarded by other senators. "He is by far the best posted man on the tariff and kindred subjects on the Democratic side of the chamber," the *New York Times* reported in 1888, when Beck was suffering from a serious illness.[17]

Arthur Pue Gorman became acting caucus chairman in March 1889. He had served in the Senate for eight years and was a few days short of his fiftieth birthday. One year later, upon Beck's death, Gorman became caucus chairman. The *Washington Post* speculated that the election of Gorman was due, in part, to his conservative views on the tariff.[18] In 1898, when Gorman resigned the caucus chairmanship, the caucus elected David Turpie to fill the vacancy. The selection of Turpie, who had first sat in the Senate during the Civil War, appears to have been a short-term solution. James K. Jones, a third-term senator, was elected caucus chairman in 1899. Gorman served again as caucus chairman and

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16 "Session Is Called on Lodge Vacancy," *Washington Star* 17 November 1924; "Curtis' Selection as Senate Leader Believed Certain," *Washington Star* 23 November 1924.

17 *New York Times* 12 September 1888, 5. See also "Honors to the Dead," *Washington Post* 5 May 1890.

18 "Caucus of Democratic Senators," *Washington Post* 8 March 1889. See also "A Democratic Caucus," *Washington Star* 7 March 1889.

party leader from 1903 until his death in 1906. Between 1906 and 1913, four different senators served as Democratic caucus chairman. Two of them, Joseph Blackburn (D, Ky.) and Hernando Money (D, Miss.), were chosen as "stop-gaps," to fill out the remaining terms of their predecessors. But the two others, Charles Culberson (D, Tex.) and Thomas Martin (D, Va.), were generally regarded at the time of their election as capable, strong leaders, and their elections aroused great interest.[19]

As the Republican seniority rule was a product of Anthony's long chairmanship, so the Democrats followed a different set of criteria in their selection of caucus chairman. Because of the short Senate terms of early Democratic caucus chairman, no one became a senior senator while serving as caucus chairman. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, the very decades in which Anthony was serving uninterruptedly as chairman of the Republican caucus, Democrats continued to select junior members as their caucus chairman. They chose chairmen based on ability, political philosophy, and vigor, rather than seniority. With Gorman's leadership, this practice continued in more self-conscious fashion, since now the Democrats were selecting their Senate leader when they elected their caucus chairman. From the 1890s onward, Democrats invested great energy in considering who was best fitted to lead them in the Senate. Indeed, their selection of three senior Democrats to brief terms—Turpie, Blackburn, and Money—were widely described as transitional appointments, buying the party time as it selected its next leader.

*Election contests*. Norms in both party caucuses into the 1890s discouraged senators from campaigning for the caucus chairmanship. As late as the 1910s, at a time when active contests for the office routinely occurred, senators continued to avoid open campaigns. Kern, elected Democratic leader in 1913, explained that, "while he had not been a candidate for the office, he highly appreciated the great honor conferred upon him."[20] Elections appear to have been unanimous and relatively nonconflictual before the rise of elected floor leadership. Republicans maintained this norm with relative ease, since the seniority rule limited discretion in choosing a new caucus chairman. Even after the breakdown of the seniority rule, Republicans continued to avoid major contests until the 1940s. Democrats, though, whose decisions did not follow seniority and whose caucus chairmen were exercising significant leadership powers by the 1890s, experienced constant difficulty in suppressing open contests.

With the transformation of the Democratic caucus chairman into the party's Senate leader, the threat of active leadership contests grew. When Gorman was elected acting caucus chairman in 1889, he

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19 "Culberson of Texas," *Washington Star* 6 November 1907. See also "Culberson Gives Up Senate Leadership," *New York Times* 5 December 1909; "Election Is Deferred," *Washington Star* 6 December 1909; "Money Senate Leader," *Washington Star* 9 December 1909.

20 "Kern Named to Head Democrats in Senate," *Washington Star* 5 March 1913.

was replacing a senator with sharply different policy views. The *Washington Post* noted, laconically, that Gorman's election "excites comment."[21] But Gorman faced no challenges to his leadership in the 1890s. His success as caucus chairman and party leader was widely appreciated. Gorman's retirement, though, left vacant the leadership of the Democratic party in the Senate, and senators began treating this office with new seriousness. James K. Jones and Francis Cockrell (D, Mo.) were both identified as potential Democratic leaders in a February 1899 news story, though there is no record that Jones faced opposition when he was elected caucus chairman later that year.[22]

By 1901, however, Democrats dissatisfied with Jones's leadership openly discussed opposing his reelection as caucus chairman.[23] In early March, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported that Augustus Bacon (D, Ga.) denied reports "that he is seeking to replace Senator Jones, of Arkansas, as leader of the democratic minority in the senate." According to the newspaper, Bacon believed that such a contest "might do more harm than good," since any effort to defeat Jones could rupture the party. [24] A week later, however, the *Constitution* published a story suggesting that many senators, as well as William Jennings Bryan, continued to hope that Bacon would challenge Jones for the leadership post. "Strong pressure is being brought to bear upon Senator Bacon to accept the chairmanship of the democratic steering committee of the senate, which carries with it the minority leadership," the *Constitution* wrote. There is a great deal of dissatisfaction with Jones's leadership . . . A number of democratic senators have urged Senator Bacon to accept the position."[25] That fall the *Baltimore Sun* confirmed that widespread concern existed with Jones's leadership. "The minority leadership in the Senate this winter is likely to be confused . . . Senator J. K. Jones, of Arkansas, occupies officially the position which should carry with it authority in dealing with political questions," the *Sun* reported in November 1901. "Toward the close of the last Congress considerable grumbling was heard within the ranks of the minority, and there was some talk of deposing Senator Jones and electing a new chairman of the Democratic caucus. A contest with this in view might have been begun but for the fact that those opposed to Senator Jones could not agree upon anyone whom they regarded as entitled to be his successor."[26] Although Jones indicated at the

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21 "The Senate Committees," *Washington Post* 8 March 1889.

22 "Will Succeed Mr. Gorman," *Baltimore Sun*, 2 Feb. 1899.

23 "No One Yet to Lead," *Baltimore Sun* 24 November 1901; "Democratic Senators," *Washington Star* 12 December 1901.

24 "Senator Bacon To Make No Fight for Leadership," *Atlanta Constitution*, 1 Mar. 1901, 1.

25 "Bacon Suggested for Leadership," *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 Mar. 1901, 2.

26 "No One Yet To Lead," *Baltimore Sun*, 24 Nov. 1901.

December caucus meeting that some senators might wish to nominate a new leader, the Senate Democrats unanimously reelected him to a new term.[27]

Within months of Jones's reelection, however, journalists and Democratic senators begun looking forward to 1903, when Gorman would return to the Senate. In April 1902 the *Baltimore Sun* published a story noting that it was generally assumed that Gorman would be elected to his old position of "leadership of the Democratic side in the Senate" when he returned in 1903.[28] But even Gorman faced opposition. A few younger members of the Democratic caucus expressed reservations about Gorman's election as minority leader and caucus chairman, insisting that they would support his election only if he committed himself to naming two younger Democrats to the party's steering committee. "A movement is on foot among the older Democrats of the Senate to establish Senator A. P. Gorman at once in the leadership of the minority," the *Baltimore Sun* reported in March 1903. "It has developed , however, that there will be opposition on the part of the younger element which has dominated during the last two years."[29] After Gorman agreed to expand the size of the steering committee, the opposition quickly evaporated.[30] The *Washington Evening Star* reported that Gorman was elected "by common consent and without the suggestion of rivalry."[31]

The *New York Times*, meanwhile, emphasized that, with his election as Democratic caucus chairman, Gorman became the "parliamentary leader" of Senate Democrats.[32] The *Chicago Tribune* explicitly noted that Gorman had been elected minority leader when he was elected caucus chairman. "Senator Gorman today was chosen formally leader of the democratic party in the senate," the *Tribune* explained to its readers. "He becomes chairman of the caucus committee, which carries with it the position of chairman of the caucus and chairman of the steering committee, as well as floor leader of the party."[33] The *Baltimore Sun* declared that Gorman's election to the position of caucus chairman "carries with it the leadership of the minority" in the Senate.[34]

Over the next decade, newspapers continued to report on elections for chairman of the Democratic caucus, and they continued to recognize that with this chairmanship came the official position of Democratic leader in the Senate. In 1905, when Gorman sought reelection, newspapers reported that

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27 "Democratic Senators," *Washington Evening Star*, 12 Dec. 1901, 17.

28 "Must Start Anew," *Baltimore Sun* 17 April 1902.

29 "Some Opposition to Gorman," *Baltimore Sun*, 6 Mar. 1903, 1.

30 "Gorman Chosen Leader," *Baltimore Sun*, 7 Mar. 1903, 1.

31 "Democratic Caucus," *Washington Evening Star*, 6 Mar. 1903, 1.

32 "Gorman Chosen Leader," *New York Times*, 7 Mar. 1903, 9.

33 "Gorman To Lead Party in Nation," *Chicago Tribune*, 7 Mar. 1903, 1.

34 "Gorman Chosen Leader," *Baltimore Sun*, 7 Mar. 1903, 1.

dissident Democrats again considered contesting the position. Joseph Bailey (D, Texas), who was identified as a potential challenger for the position of Democratic leader, himself nominated Gorman at the 1905 caucus meeting.[35] Gorman was then elected "chairman of the caucus and leader of his party on the floor," in the words of the *Baltimore Sun*; "minority leader of the Senate," in the words of the *Washington Post*.[36] As the *Washington Evening Star* recognized in June 1906, upon Gorman's death, the big question in Congress was this: "Who will succeed Mr. Gorman as minority leader in the Senate?"[37] Blackburn succeeded to the party leadership, but only to fill the position until his retirement from the Senate in the next year.[38] "Mr. Blackburn, who succeeded to the post of leadership, was but a stop-gap," the *Washington Evening Star* explained. "The prize was of the consolation order, and was thrown to him because of his age and his defeat at home. Had there been the need of a strong man just then he, of course, would not have been chosen."[39]

In January 1907, according to both the *Star* and the *New York Times*, the Democratic leadership contest was the primary topic of conversation in the Senate Democratic cloakroom.[40] Bailey, Bacon, Charles Culberson, Thomas Martin, John Daniel (D, Va.), Furnifold Simmons (D, N.C.), and Murphy Foster (D, La.) were all regarded as serious candidates for the minority leadership. "It is not an easy matter to find a man who will combine good qualities of leadership on the floor of the Senate with ability to preserve Democratic harmony," the *New York Times* observed. "The job is not going begging. There are aspirants in plenty, though it is not generally considered a position for which a Senator comes out boldly and announces himself a candidate."[41] In December 1907, after months of discussion, Culberson was elected "minority leader of the Senate" by the Democratic caucus.[42] Culberson was reelected caucus chairman and Democratic leader in March 1909, but resigned his position that December. For his successor, the Democrats avoided a contest by selecting Hernando Money. In electing Money as their leader, the Democrats were paying tribute to a colleague in poor health, who had already announced his

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35 "Gorman Still Leader," *Baltimore Sun*, 9 Dec. 1905.

36 "Gorman Still Leader," *Baltimore Sun*, 9 Dec. 1905; "Gorman Again Chosen as the Minority Leader," *Washington Post*, 9 Dec. 1905, 4.

37 "The Senate's Minority Leadership," *Washington Evening Star*, 7 June 1906.

38 "Blackburn To Lead Minority," *Washington Evening Star*, 8 June 1906.

39 "Culberson of Texas," *Washington Evening Star*, 6 Nov. 1907. See also "Democrats at Sea Without a Pilot," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 Feb. 1907, 1.

40 "The Senate's Minority Leader," *Washington Evening Star*, 27 Jan. 1907; "Senate Democrats Look for a Leader," *New York Times*, 30 Jan. 1907, 4; *Washington Sunday Star*, 3 Feb. 1907, 2.

41 "Senate Democrats Look for a Leader," *New York Times*, 30 Jan. 1907, 4.

42 "Culberson Is Elected," *Washington Post*, 4 Dec. 1907, 4.

intention to retire from the Senate in 1911. They made this decision, it appears, in order to avoid dividing the caucus by considering other candidates.[43]

The first open contest for Democratic leader occurred in 1911. Progressives, following the advice of William Jennings Bryan, announced plans to nominate their own candidate for Democratic caucus chairman, in opposition to Martin, who was supported by conservative Democrats. In an effort to prevent the open contest, Democratic senators postponed their organizational caucus. According to the *Washington Post*, "It was manifest that an effort was being made to harmonize the conflicting differences, if possible, and to elect a chairman unanimously."[44] But unanimity could not be secured. At the caucus, Martin defeated Benjamin Shively (D, Ind.), twenty-one votes to sixteen.[45] "If there ever was a time when the party needed harmonious action it was now," Augustus Bacon said after the vote, in remarks paraphrased in the *Post*. "For the first time during the sixteen years of his service, he said, a ballot had been taken for the election of a chairman of the caucus. He hoped it would be the last time, and at that sentiment there was a general shaking of heads in approval. Hitherto such action has been unanimous and by common consent."[46] But unanimity could not be restored. Candidates now competed vigorously for the Democratic leadership. In 1913, "in the interest of party harmony," Martin withdrew his name as a candidate for reelection, ensuring the unanimous election of John Kern.[47] Kern, elected by a Democratic party that now controlled the Senate, was the universally regarded as the Senate's "majority leader"—inheriting a position invented two decades earlier by Gorman.

Democrats after Kern took part in vigorous, open battles for the position of party leader. With little opposition, Martin himself gained election as Democratic leader in 1917, when Kern left the Senate. But two years later, after Martin's death, Gilbert Hitchcock (D, Nebr.) and Oscar Underwood (D, Ala.) engaged in a fierce struggle for the leadership position. "The contest thus far has been a friendly rivalry, and no bitterness is expected to be engendered," the *Washington Star* reported in December 1919.[48] But the contest was not easily resolved: on two ballots in January, the caucus divided evenly, nineteen votes for Underwood and nineteen votes for Hitchcock.[49] In April 1920, after Hitchcock withdrew his name in

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43 "Election Is Deferred," *Washington Evening Star*, 6 Dec. 1909; "No Minority Leader Yet," *New York Tribune*, 7 Dec. 1909, 2; "Money the Captain," *New York Tribune*, 10 Dec. 1909, 3.

44 "Senate Dozen Win," *Washington Post* 5 April 1911.

45 "Martin Made Leader," *Washington Post* 8 April 1911; "Defeat for Bryan in Senate Caucus," *New York Times* 8 April 1911.

46 "Martin Made Leader," *Washington Post* 8 April 1911.

47 "Martin Drops Out," *Washington Star* 28 February 1913.

48 "Minority Leadership in Senate Discussed; Two May Be in Race," *Washington Star* 7 December 1919.

49 "The Vote Prevents Senate Minority's Selecting Leader," *Washington Star* 15 January 1920.

order "to terminate this deadlock," the Democratic caucus finally elected Underwood their new leader.[50] Furnifold Simmons (D, N.C.) and Joseph Robinson (D, Ark.) waged a public, tightly contested race to succeed Underwood in 1923, until Simmons withdrew his candidacy.[51] And the battle to succeed Robinson in 1937 began on the train traveling from Washington to Little Rock for his funeral (Ritchie 1991, 127). By a one-vote margin, Alben Barkley (D, Ky.) defeated Pat Harrison (D, Miss.) to become the new Democratic leader.[52]

Elements of Leadership

In a 1907 editorial, the *Washington Evening Star* described the responsibilities of the Senate minority leader. "He should be a thorough parliamentarian, a tactician of a high order, a clever and a ready debater, and an excellent judge of men," the *Star*'s editors contended. "He should know the qualities and possibilities of every man under him, and be able to command his whole force at a moment's notice. He must also have decision, and always know what is going on in his own, and, if possible, in the other fellow's, camp."[53] As the *Star* observed, Gorman had set a very high standard for future leaders. A reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, also writing in 1907, argued that the Democratic leader was ultimately responsible for strengthening his party's electoral prospects. "The necessity for a minority leader . . . never was more apparent, and yet there has never been a time for a generation or so when the democrats in the senate were so lacking in cohesiveness," the *Tribune* observed. "There is none who has as yet developed a capacity for real leadership. Yet it is a fact that the actual issues of the next campaign are still to be developed. There is nothing in sight at the present time on which the democrats can appeal to the people with hope of success."[54]

Modern Senate leaders are required to coordinate at least five dimensions of party activity. First, as party leaders, they work to harmonize differences with their caucuses. Second, they function as

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50 "Hitchcock Drops Leadership Fight," *Washington Star* 24 April 1920. See also "Hitchcock Quits Leadership Fight," *New York Times* 24 April 1920; "Mr. Underwood Leader of Senate Democrats," *Washington Star* 27 April 1920; "Underwood Chosen Democratic Leader," *New York Times* 28 April 1920.

51 "Neck and Neck Race on Minority Leader," *Baltimore Sun* 20 January 1923; "Simmons and Robinson Present Striking Contrasts," *Baltimore Sun* 26 January 1923; "Simmons Leaves Race to Robinson," *Washington Star* 9 February 1923; "Robinson Will Lead Senate Democrats," *New York Times* 9 February 1923; "Underwood Quits as Floor Leader," *Washington Star* 23 February 1923; "Democratic Senators Postpone Open Fight," *New York Times* 4 December 1923; "Robinson, Democrats' Leader in the Senate," *Washington Post* 4 December 1923.

52 "Barkley Named Leader of Senate Democrats by Ballot of 38 to 37," *Washington Star* 21 July 1937.

53 "The Senate's Minority Leadership," *Washington Star* 3 May 1907.

54 "Democrats at Sea Without a Pilot," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 Feb. 1907, 1.

representatives of their caucus to the president. Third, they are spokespersons for their party. Fourth, they offer leadership in formulating policy priorities and setting agendas. And, fifth, they work with the other party's leader in managing the Senate floor. When Senate Democrats established their caucus chairman as their party leader in the 1890s, the position incorporated all five of these elements. And all five of these elements have remained crucial to the position of party leader ever since. In performing these tasks, the Senate leader was reconciling the collective goals of the party, which we contend led to the institutional innovations of the 1890s and 1910s. The leader was pursuing legislative goals consistent with furthering the party's electoral success.

First and fundamentally, the Democratic leaders were responsible for managing their caucus and their party. Indeed, throughout the history of Democratic leadership in the Senate, the positions of caucus chairman and floor leader have been vested in the same person by a single election. As early as December 1890, months after assuming the caucus chairmanship outright, Gorman had already gained a reputation for uniting his party. "The Democrats in the Senate are much more compactly organized than the Republicans," the *Chicago Tribune* wrote. "They have also there a leader whom they obey without hesitation. This leader is Senator Gorman."[55] At times, as leader, Gorman functioned as whip, sending notices to Democratic senators reminding them to be present on the Senate floor throughout the 1894 debate on tariff legislation.[56] He was "the recognized leader" of Senate Democrats, the *Atlanta Constitution* explained in 1895, and he "possesses the confidence of a larger number of senators than any other man in the chamber."[57] Critics of James K. Jones in 1901 argued that he was failing to unite Senate Democrats, that he made commitments to Republican leaders without first consulting with his own party.[58] In their opposition, Jones's critics suggested the importance of party leadership for his job. "His failure to inquire into the views of his colleagues to the extent that is expected of a leader has been interpreted by some as evidence of an arrogant assumption of superiority and a purpose to rely upon his own unaided judgment," the *Baltimore Sun* wrote in 1901. "This has embarrassed his leadership and resulted in lack of harmony in action."[59] Welcoming Gorman back to Senate leadership in 1903, the *Los Angeles Times* emphasized Gorman's ability to keep "the Democrats in the Senate compact, aggressive

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55 "Gorman as a Dictator," *Chicago Tribune*, 12 Dec. 1890, 9.

56 "Amendments in Order To-Day," *New York Times*, 25 Apr. 1894, 2.

57 "After the Battle," *Atlanta Constitution*, 16 Jan. 1895, 1.

58 "Bacon Suggested for Leadership," *Atlanta Constitution*, 10 Mar. 1901, 2.

59 "No One Yet To Lead," *Baltimore Sun*, 24 Nov. 1901, 1.

and effective, whether in the minority or in majority."[60] Culberson, as "minority leader," promised in 1908 to "prod the Democratic Senators to closer attention to business."[61]

Second, beginning with Gorman in the 1890s, Democratic leaders began calling on the president and representing their colleagues to the president. At least in the 1890s and 1900s, most of this came in the form of public statements and speeches on the Senate floor. Except for the four years of Cleveland's presidency, this entire period was one in which Republicans controlled the White House. Still, there were times that the Senate's Democratic leaders visited the president. Thus in March 1898 President William McKinley summoned "Gorman as leader of Democratic senators" to the White House to discuss the looming conflict with Spain.[62] Jones called on President Theodore Roosevelt in the fall of 1902. He told reporters that his main purpose in visiting the White House was to pay his respects to the president, but "admitted having talked politics" as well.[63]

Third, Democratic leaders have functioned as spokespersons for their party. While newspapers continued to quote various "Republican leaders" through the 1890s and 1900s, there was general recognition that a single Democratic senator had been elected to speak on behalf of his colleagues in the Senate. On one remarkable day in 1894, for example, Gorman, as Democratic leader of the Senate, took the floor for two and one-half hours to attack President Cleveland, a fellow Democrat, for his stand on the tariff.[64] The *Atlanta Constitution*, in a front-page story examining the upcoming congressional agenda in December 1902, interviewed Jones, identifying him as "democratic leader in the senate."[65] Jones anticipated that the tariff, trusts, and appropriations would dominate the session. In 1908 Culberson, in his capacity as "Democratic leader," protested proposed increases in railroad rates.[66] Martin, speaking in the summer of 1911, outlined his party's agenda for the next session. "With half a dozen issues to choose from, Senator Martin of Virginia, minority leader of the Senate, is confident that the next session will be taken up chiefly with tariff matters," the *New York Times* reported. "Mr. Martin did not make any predictions for harmonious co-operation next session between the insurgents and the Democrats."[67]

Fourth, from the 1890s onward, Democratic caucus chairmen, in their capacity as leaders, took the initiative in articulating and formulating party policy. Gorman was widely credited with leading the

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60 "Leader Gorman," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Mar. 1903, 1.

61 "Prod Democratic Senators," *New York Times*, 15 Mar. 1908.

62 "M'Kinley Sees Crisis at Hand," *Atlanta Constitution*, 23 Mar. 1898, 1.

63 "President Moves In," *Washington Post*, 31 Oct. 1902, 4.

64 "Gorman," *Lowell (Mass.) Daily Sun*, 24 July 1894, 7.

65 "Side Stepping the Programme of the G.O.P.," *Atlanta Constitution*, 1 Dec. 1902, 1.

66 "Rate Increase Being Fought," *Atlanta Constitution*, 8 May 1908, 3.

67 "Tariff Coming Up Again," *New York Times*, 27 Aug. 1911, 12.

successful fight against the Federal Elections Bill in 1890. Speaking five years later on the Senate floor, Gorman stated that he "had had the honor of being selected as Chairman of the caucus of the Democratic Party to determine what measures should be considered," the *New York Times* reported, "and he had faithfully endeavored to carry out the programme—which was, first, the Nicaraguan Canal bill; second, any financial measures reported from the Finance Committee; third, the Bankruptcy bill—with the appropriation bill always and above everything, and then the bills to admit two new states."[68] As the *Baltimore Sun* noted on the occasion of Gorman's retirement in 1898, he "has for a number of years been the pilot of the senatorial democracy in matters of national legislation, as well as general party politics."[69] In criticizing Jones in 1901, Democratic senators identified precisely these areas as ones in which Jones was failing his party. "The difficulties which Senator J. K. Jones has encountered as a floor manager of the Senate and a leader of party policy arise chiefly from his temperament, which leads him to be misunderstood," the *Baltimore Sun* claimed.[70]

Fifth, and finally, effective leadership was identified with floor management. Gorman's reputation as a strong leader was forged during the battle against the Federal Elections Bill, when Gorman and the Democrats were still in the minority. "He has worked skillfully upon the fears of the Republican Senators who are anxious to secure further silver legislation. He has told them: 'I will consent to this or that in the way of financial legislation if you will kill the Election bill,'" the *Chicago Tribune* reported in 1890. "The few Republicans who are frightened at the bold threats of Senator Gorman of what he will do in the way of opposition are in the curious position of constantly seeking him to obtain his permission or approval as to what can or cannot be done."[71] And this was Gorman in the minority. "As the parliamentary leader of the majority"[72]—as he was described by the *Washington Post* in April 1893—Gorman managed the day-to-day business of the Senate with shrewdness and intelligence.[73]

On larger issues, though, such as managing a divided Democratic party debating a repeal of the Silver Purchase Act, Gorman proved less adept. As caucus chairman, he was held responsible as leader, whether he led well or poorly. "Senator Gorman, who is the recognized democratic leader on the floor of the senate, is not expected to assume a very conspicuous position in the tariff battle," the *Atlanta Constitution* reported in February 1894, "though it is probable he will be the real manager in this, as he is

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68 "Railroads and Pooling," *New York Times*, 24 Feb. 1895, 3.

69 "Will Succeed Mr. Gorman," *Baltimore Sun*, 2 Feb. 1899.

70 "No One Yet To Lead," *Baltimore Sun*, 24 Nov. 1901.

71 "Gorman as a Dictator," *Chicago Tribune*, 12 Dec. 1890, 9.

72 "Discussing Senator Roach," *Washington Post*, 12 Apr. 1893, 1.

73 "Gorman and Hill," *Baltimore Sun*, 16 Jan. 1895, 1.

in almost all things before the Senate."[74] Gorman successfully led the passage of the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Bill, over the opposition of the president as well as many in the House.[75] In 1908 Culberson, in his role as "the minority floor leader in the Senate," worked with Republican leaders to bring the currency bill to vote. Despite his concerns with the bill, Culberson agreed to work to avoid a filibuster.[76] Martin was "a fighter," according to the *Washington Post*. "When he rises to take a fall out of the Republicans he goes right at the point without circumlocution. 'He barks at 'em,' remarked a listener in the galleries the other day when Senator Martin was speaking on the proposition to force a report from the finance committee upon the wool bill."[77]

In addition to his work within the Senate, Gorman played close attention to the larger electoral environment. Following the 1892 elections, when it appeared that the Democrats were on the verge of gaining control of the Senate, Gorman worked closely with other Senate Democrats to manage the state legislative battles that would ultimately determine which party dominated the new Senate. He formed a new, permanent steering committee in 1892–93, which became crucial to his leadership throughout the rest of the decade.

The Republican Oligarchy

Republicans, in contrast to the Democratic model, continued to regard the roles of party leader and caucus chairman as entirely distinct through the 1890s, 1900s, and early 1910s. In 1906, when William Allison still served as Republican caucus chairman, Thompson reported that "Eugene Hale of Maine has succeeded Mr. Aldrich as the recognized leader of the Senate."[78] In Thompson's analysis of Republican leadership, he did not mention Allison. Republicans in the 1900s, unlike Democrats, did not regard their caucus chairman as their presumptive party leader. Effective party management continued under Hale, as it had under Aldrich, in a person distinct from, though closely allied with, the caucus chairman. "Mr. Hale has come to the front as the floor leader," Thompson observed. "Hale has come to be the great force in arranging party policies."[79] But identifying the Republican party leader—even determining that any single senator held such a post—was, ultimately, a subjective judgment. In 1909,

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74 "Hits Their Purses," *Atlanta Constitution*, 4 Feb. 1894, 15.

75 "Leader Gorman," *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Mar. 1903, 1.

76 "Near an Agreement on Currency Bill," *New York Times*, 27 May 1908, 1.

77 "Sidelights on Washington," *Washington Post*, 9 July 1911.

78 "Hale Senate Leader, Succeeding Aldrich," *New York Times* 2 January 1906.

79 "Hale, Senate Leader, a Warrior for Peace," *New York Times* 8 January 1906.

when Hale was serving as Republican caucus chairman, many observers continued to describe Aldrich as "the republican leader of the Senate."[80]

Though Republicans, like Democrats, had come to expect leadership on and off the floor, they had not yet institutionalized the position by identifying it with the elected position of caucus chairman. As the *New York Times* observed in 1910, when Aldrich and Hale announced their intentions to retire from the Senate, "Mr. Aldrich's power in the Senate is unofficial."[81] Observers, discussing who would succeed Aldrich and Hale as the effective Republican leaders in the next Congress, speculated that "the leadership will be divided among a group, rather than centralized."[82] Senators and newspaper reporters considered the question separately from the issue, rarely mentioned, of who would succeed Hale as Republican caucus chairman. Indeed, the *Washington Star* specifically cited the Finance Committee chairmanship, which Aldrich had held since 1899, rather than the caucus chairmanship, as the position most frequently identified with Republican party leadership in the Senate. "There is no rule or precedent," the *Star* emphasized, "under which the mantle of leadership goes with the chairmanship of the finance committee."[83]

By 1911, senators of both parties had come to expect effective management of their party's business. Though their leaders of the preceding decade had not yet met evolving expectations, Democratic senators continued to regard the caucus chairman as their natural floor leader. Republicans, whose party leaders generally did not hold the caucus chairmanship, faced a serious succession crisis in 1911. Some Republicans, like the Insurgent senator Jonathan Dolliver, hoped that the retirements of Aldrich and Hale represented the end of disciplined party leadership. "When he was asked upon whom he thought the mantle of leadership would fall, he replied," according to the *Times*, "'We are going to take it over to the Smithsonian Institution and keep it as a relic of an obsolete system.'"[84] But party leadership and floor management were functions that senators could not discard so easily.

## Consolidation of Floor Leadership, 1913-1915

When John Kern was elected Democratic caucus chairman in 1913, the *New York Times* noted, matter-of-factly, that "this makes Mr. Kern the Democratic floor leader in the Senate."[85] Kern, the first

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80 "Senator Nelson W. Aldrich—The Man of the Hour," *Washington Star* 25 April 1909. See also "Maine and Massachusetts," *Washington Star* 30 January 1910.

81 "Aldrich to Retire at End of His Term," *New York Times* 16 April 1910.

82 "New Senate Power," *Washington Star* 19 April 1910.

83 "Two Senators Quit," *Washington Star* 19 April 1910.

84 "Insurgents Wary of Aldrich Move," *New York Times* 20 April 1910.

85 "Radicals Control Senate," *New York Times* 6 March 1913.

Democratic leader since 1895 to preside over a majority party, was the first Senate leader consistently referred to as "majority leader." Kern's success at managing the floor and controlling the party's agenda consolidated preexisting expectations that the Democratic caucus chairman be his party's leader. The responsibilities of floor leadership were still poorly defined in 1913, and the office continued to develop over the next three decades, especially as Joseph Robinson and Alben Barkley established modern practices of floor management and asserted their independence from the caucus. But the existence of an elected Democratic floor leader was now firmly established.

Shelby Cullom, the Republican caucus chairman in 1911–13, was not referred to as a party leader. Continuing the traditional responsiblity of Republican caucus chairmen, he presided over caucus meetings but did not assume a leading role in managing the party's business. But the Democratic example, especially in the wake of Aldrich's and Hale's retirements and the loss of majority status in 1913, could no longer be ignored. Jacob Gallinger, who succeeded Cullom as caucus chairman in 1913, was regularly described not only as Republican caucus chairman but as the party's "floor leader."[86] And the practice continued after Gallinger's death. "Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts today was elected chairman of the republican conference of the Senate without opposition," the *Washington Star* reported in 1918. "This means that Senator Lodge is the republican leader of the Senate."[87] By 1921, when the *Times* reported that Lodge had been "re-elected floor leader," the designation was firmly established.[88] Through the middle 1940s—when Republicans formally created the separate positions of conference chairman and floor leader—their conference chairman assumed full responsibility for floor leadership.[89]

Beginning in the late 1870s, the Democratic caucus had regularly elected a secretary as well as a caucus chairman. The chairman appears to have been the only caucus official elected by Republicans until the middle 1890s, when they, too, began electing a caucus secretary. Like the chairman, the caucus secretary's role was restricted to activity within the caucus itself. Newspapers rarely devoted more than a sentence to the election of the caucus chairman; at most, the caucus secretary's election was included within that sentence.[90]

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86 "Radicals Control Senate," *New York Times* 6 March 1913; "Dean of Senators, J. H. Gallinger, Dies," *New York Times* 18 August 1918.

87 "Republicans Name Lodge as Leader," *Washington Star* 24 August 1918.

88 "Re-elect Senate Leaders," *New York Times* 6 March 1921.

89 "Senate Republicans Pick Temporary Slate of Leaders," *Washington Star* 18 January 1944; "GOP Senators Vest Leadership in Three Men," *Washington Star* 15 March 1944; "Republicans in Senate Decide to Continue 3-Man Leadership," *Washington Star* 24 December 1944.

90 See, for example, "Senatorial Caucuses," *Washington Star* 5 March 1885; "Notes from Washington," *New York Times* 6 March 1885; *New York Times* 4 December 1887, 2; *Washington Post* 4

The Democratic caucus created the position of vice-chairman in the middle 1900s, during Gorman's final period as caucus chairman. Joseph Blackburn was elected the first vice-chairman of the caucus and presided over caucus meetings throughout Gorman's extended illness.[91] The creation of the vice-chairmanship probably reflected not only the immediate need to provide assistance to Gorman but the increased importance of the caucus and party organization for Democratic senators. Once established, the position persisted. Through 1913, Democrats regularly elected a caucus chairman and floor leader, a caucus vice-chairman, and a caucus secretary.[92]

Democrats created a new office, the whip, in May 1913. "Senator James Hamilton Lewis of Illinois, the newest of the senators, was elected democratic floor manager and assistant to Majority Leader Senator Kern by the Senate democratic caucus today," the *Washington Star* reported in May 1913. "Senator Lewis' position is a new one to the Senate, and corresponds to the whips in the House and the whip in parliament."[93] The suggestion to establish the whip was made in the midst of a caucus meeting, as Democrats expressed their concern about the number of members who were planning to travel out of town. "Realizing how slender is their majority the democrats were practically unanimous in the demand that no chances be taken," the *Star* reported, and they quickly embraced the plan to choose a party whip "when plans were discussed for keeping members in line and getting them to the Senate when important votes were to be taken."[94] The *New York Times* reported that the Democratic senators created the whip because of their dissatisfaction with Kern's management of the floor.[95] Kern's personal secretary and biographer, though, contended that Kern himself sought the new position to help him keep Democratic senators close to the floor in order to maintain a quorum (Oleszek 1971, 959). Whatever the motive, the decision of the caucus to create the position reflected the increasing importance of party organization generally and of floor leadership specifically. In addition to a whip, the Democratic caucus continued to

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December 1887, 2; "A Democratic Caucus," *Washington Star* 7 March 1889; "First Day in Congress," *New York Times* 8 December 1891; *New York Times* 9 December 1891, 2; "Democrats in Caucus," *New York Times* 8 March 1893; "Republican Senate Caucus," *New York Times* 9 December 1896; "The Senate Organization," *New York Times* 7 March 1897; "Only Talk in Caucus," *Washington Post* 7 March 1897; "Both Parties in Caucus," *Washington Post* 6 December 1899; "Democratic Caucus," *Washington Star* 6 March 1903; "Republican Senators Hold a Brief Caucus," *Washington Post* 6 December 1905; "Senate Dozen Win," *Washington Post* 5 April 1911; "Gallinger Heads Party," *Washington Star* 5 March 1913.

91 "Gorman Still Leader," *Baltimore Sun* 9 December 1905; "Blackburn to Lead Minority," *Washington Star* 8 June 1906.

92 "Culberson Is Elected," *Washington Post* 4 December 1907; "Both Parties in Caucus," *Washington Post* 6 March 1909; "Money Senate Leader," *Washington Star* 9 December 1909; "Martin Made Leader," *Washington Post* 8 April 1911; "Kern Named to Head Democrats in Senate," *Washington Star* 5 March 1913.

93 "Senator J. Ham. Lewis Elected Party Whip," *Washington Star* 28 May 1913.

94 "Senator J. Ham. Lewis Elected Party Whip," *Washington Star* 28 May 1913.

95 *New York Times* 29 May 1913, 1.

elect a floor leader and caucus chairman, a caucus vice-chairman and assistant leader, and a caucus secretary.[96]

The Republicans, who had elected both a caucus chairman and secretary since the middle 1890s, established the position of whip in 1915. James Wadsworth served as whip for one week, when he was replaced by Charles Curtis (Oleszek 1971, 959). In 1921, to assist Lodge, the Republican caucus created a fourth position, the office of conference vice-chairman and assistant leader. Curtis, who continued to serve as whip, assumed the new position. "In the future, when a conference of the republican senators is desired on important legislation or other matters that may be pending and Senator Lodge, the republican leader, is absent, Senator Curtis will be in a position to call the conference together and act as assistant to Mr. Lodge," the *Washington Star* explained in January 1921. "The Kansas senator is recognized as one of the most indefatigable workers in the Senate. It has been his task to handle many important bills and he has a record for putting through legislation expeditiously."[97]

The performance of leadership duties is reflected in the newspaper coverage. In Figure 1, we report the frequency with which the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* mentioned a leader's name in proximity to the formal title in the period since the Civil War. Before the 1890s, the newspapers seldom mention the caucus chairs. After 1890, Gorman and the successor Democratic leaders are mentioned with some frequency and more frequently than comparable Republican leaders. From 1913 on, the formal leaders of both parties are mentioned regularly with the majority leader generally mentioned more frequently than the minority leader. Although beyond the purview of this paper, Democratic leader Joseph Robinson (D-Ark.) is the first leader to consistently reach the visibility in the newspapers typical of modern leaders.

## Inter-Party Competition and Party Innovation for Senate Democrats

Our thesis is that Senate party leadership and organization emerged in response to inter-party competition. After Reconstruction, the two major parties battled on relatively even terms for control of the Senate. In the 46th Congress (1879–81), Democrats had secured a working majority, and in the next Congress (1881–83), the two major parties had each claimed 37 seats. But Republicans maintained control of the chamber for the full decade after 1883, thanks in large part to the strategic admission of certain western states to the Union (Stewart and Weingast 1992). Although their majority was often

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96 "Senator Martin Chosen Leader of Upper House," *Washington Star* 6 March 1917; "Robinson, Democrats' Leader in the Senate," *Washington Post* 4 December 1923; *New York Times* 6 March 1929, 3; "Robinson Heads Party in Senate," *Washington Star* 7 March 1933; "Robinson Named as Senate Leader," *Washington Star* 4 January 1937.

97 "Senator Curtis to Aid Mr. Lodge," *Washington Star* 22 January 1921.

small, Republicans in the fall of 1892 had controlled the Senate in five straight Congresses. That fall there were 47 Republicans, 39 Democrats, and two Populists in the chamber. Election Day, however, proved to be much worse for Republicans than anyone had predicted. Republican majorities in several state legislatures disappeared, and Democrats made unanticipated gains. The implication was clear. At minimum, observers concluded that Republicans would no longer hold a majority of seats in the Senate when the new Congress convened in March, 1893. Whether Democrats could form a majority alone—or whether Democrats outnumbered Republicans only with the addition of Populist senators—was the question that could not immediately be answered. Over the ensuing months, as both parties scrambled for control of the Senate and as Democrats steadily gained their majority, each caucus innovated. It was a moment of institutional invention, which would not be duplicated for another two decades, when the parties again were closely balanced.

Floor leaders and whips emerged in the 63d Congress (1913-15), when Democratic senators controlled the chamber for the first time in nearly twenty years—and controlled it with few votes to spare. When the new Senate assembled in the spring of 1913, Democrats held 51 of 96 seats. Not since the 1890s had a Senate majority been so small. "The next Congress will show a top-heavy democratic majority in the House, but a very light one in the Senate," the *Washington Evening Star* commented in November 1912. "Whatever passes the Senate must poll every democratic vote in the chamber."[98] One month later, in another editorial, the *Star* anticipated the institutional innovations that would quickly distinguish the 63d Congress—noting that the close balance between the two parties in the upcoming Congress made party leadership an urgent problem. "The democrats are confronted by two things, both worthy of consideration: (1) Their majority will be uncomfortably slender, and (2) the opposition will be ably led," the *Star* noted. "If, therefore, they fail to provide for their best leadership, either in committee work, or in the general debate in the chamber, they will be heavily handicapped."[99]

In discussing the decision of the Democratic caucus to establish the position of whip in 1913, contemporary observers emphasized competition between the Senate parties. The 1912 election had given the Democrats control of the Senate, but it was a precarious majority. "The caucus adopted a resolution urging all democratic senators to remain in Washington, and went on record as opposed to any long trips to Europe such as several senators had planned, until the tariff bill has been disposed of," the *Atlanta Constitution* explained in May 1913. "Because of their slender majority plans were discussed for keeping members in line and getting them to the senate for important votes."[100]

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98 "Mr. Gorman and Mr. Martin," *Washington Star*, 12 November 1912.

99 "The Senate Democrats," *Washington Star*, 20 December 1912.

100 "J. Ham Lewis Named Whip of the Senate," *Atlanta Constitution*, 29 May 1913, 1.

Conditions in 1913, with a new, but small, Democratic majority, led both parties to establish new institutions, much as they had done in the 1890s. Two decades earlier, under remarkably similar conditions, Gorman had transformed the caucus chairmanship into an elected leadership position, and Republicans had consolidated their management of the Senate by creating a permanent steering committee. Why was it the Democrats, rather than the Republicans, who took the lead in creating the leadership positions in the early 1890s and the 1910s? Several factors may be involved, and they deserve brief mention.

First, the Republicans enjoyed the extended service of Henry Anthony as their caucus chair in the two decades following the Civil War, which resulted, by the end of his very long term, in a Republican expectation that their most senior member sit in the chair. Anthony pursued only ministerial functions, which he performed admirably, and did not become a particularly influential senator even after years of service in the post. Nevertheless, the experience under Anthony appears to have persuaded his colleagues that senior status and a ministerial role had virtues. In contrast, electoral defeats required Democrats to replace their chairs every four or five years during Anthony's tenure, replacements were seldom senior senators, and expectations for the role of chair did not become as firmly established. Because Democrats elected relatively younger members to the caucus chairmanship, they could potentially select members on the basis of talent and the caucus chairmen themselves had room to experiment with the position.

Second, minority status may have contributed. The need to assert their strength may have led Democrats to seek more effective leadership. The absence of committee chairs who might resent a strong floor leader also was a by-product of minority status and may have contributed to Gorman's emergence as the informal floor leader. On the Republican side, several strong committee chairs would have been impatient with a floor leader substituting for them as leader of the party on matters under their jurisdiction.

Third, it is hard to deny, although we might like to do so, the Gorman's personality and political position within the regionally-divided Democratic caucus played an important role in transforming the chairmanship into a position of floor leadership. While the party had good reason to find effective central leadership in the early 1890s, Gorman's availability and eagerness to fill the role surely was an important factor in the development of the informal role.

Fourth, the ease with which the leading Republicans collaborated, reducing the need for a single floor leader, may have limited the need to identify a formal leader as the Democrats did. In contrast to the argument that party homogeneity on policy matters generates centralized leaders, the cohesiveness of Senate Republicans may have facilitated the collective leadership that emerged as a by-product of the rise to formal position of power among like-minded senior Republicans. The heyday of this collective

leadership occurred when the party had a sizable majority so some inefficiency in central leadership was tolerable during the late 1890s and early 1900s.

## Conclusion

Productive theorizing about legislative parties has been the centerpiece of recent scholarship on Congress. Most of the theorizing makes critical assumptions about why parties exist and further assume that the same calculations are at work in the everyday strategies of parties and their leaders. Remarkably, while scholars have explored some of the behavioral implications of their theories, they have given little attention to the origin of key features of legislative parties, features that ought to be explained by the same theories.

In this paper, we have outlined essential components of a theory of legislative parties and made the argument that both electoral and policy goals are important to an explanation of those episodes. We reported important detail about important episodes of Senate party leadership development. Our thesis—that Senate party leadership and organization emerged in response to inter-party competition—provides a stronger foundation for explaining party development than other accounts.

## Table 1. Caucus Chairs and Floor Leaders in the U.S. Senate

### Chairs of the Senate Republican Caucus

John P. Hale (N.H.), *Dec. 1857*–Dec. 1862
Henry B. Anthony (R.I.), Dec. 1862–Sep. 2, 1884
John Sherman (Ohio), Dec. 1, 1884–Dec. 11, 1885
George Edmunds (Vt.), Dec. 11, 1885–Nov. 1, 1891
John Sherman (Ohio), Dec. 7, 1891–Mar. 4, 1897
William Boyd Allison (Iowa), Mar. 6, 1897–Aug. 4, 1908
Eugene Hale (Maine), Dec. 9, 1908–Mar. 3, 1911
Shelby Cullom (Ill.), Apr. 4, 1911–Mar. 3, 1913
Jacob Gallinger (N.H.), Mar. 5, 1913–Aug. 17, 1918
Henry Cabot Lodge (Mass.), Aug. 24, 1918–Nov. 9, 1924
Charles Curtis (Kans.), Nov. 28, 1924–Mar. 3, 1929
James Watson (Ind.), Mar. 5, 1929–Mar. 3, 1933
Charles McNary (Ore.), Mar. 7, 1933–Feb. 25, 1944
Arthur H. Vandenberg (Mich.), Feb. 25, 1944–Dec. 30, 1946
Eugene D. Millikin (Colo.), Dec. 30, 1946–Jan. 2, 1957
Leverett Saltonstall (Mass.), Jan. 3, 1957–Jan. 2, 1967
Margaret Chase Smith (Maine), Jan. 10, 1967–Jan. 2, 1973
Norris Cotton (N.H.), Jan. 3, 1973–Dec. 31, 1974
Carl T. Curtis (Nebr.), Jan. 14, 1975–Jan. 2, 1979
Robert Packwood (Ore.), Jan. 15, 1979–Jan. 4, 1981
James A. McClure (Idaho), Jan. 5, 1981–Jan. 2, 1985
John Chafee (R.I.), Jan. 3, 1985–Jan. 2, 1991
William Thad Cochran (Miss.), Jan. 3, 1991–Jan. 6, 1997
Connie Mack (Fla.), Jan. 7, 1997–Jan. 2, 2001
Richard J. Santorum (Penn.), Jan. 3, 2001–

### Senate Republican Floor Leaders

Jacob Gallinger (N.H.), Mar. 5, 1913–Aug. 17, 1918
Henry Cabot Lodge (Mass.), Aug. 24, 1918–Nov. 9, 1924
Charles Curtis (Kans.), Nov. 28, 1924–Mar. 3, 1929
James Watson (Ind.), Mar. 5, 1929–Mar. 3, 1933
Charles McNary (Ore.), Mar. 7, 1933–Feb. 25, 1944
Wallace White (Maine), Feb. 25, 1944–Jan. 2, 1949
Kenneth Wherry (Nebr.), Jan. 3, 1949–Nov. 29, 1951
Styles Bridges (N.H.), Jan. 8, 1952–Jan. 2, 1953
Robert Taft (Ohio), Jan. 3–July 31, 1953
William Knowland (Calif.), Aug. 4, 1953–Jan. 2, 1959
Everett Dirksen (Ill.), Jan. 7, 1959–Sep. 7, 1969
Hugh Scott (Pa.), Sep. 24, 1969–Jan. 2, 1977
Howard Baker (Tenn.), Jan. 4, 1977–Jan. 2, 1985
Robert Dole (Kans.), Jan. 3, 1985–June 11, 1996
Trent Lott (Miss.), June 12, 1996–Dec. 20, 2002
William Frist (Tenn.), Dec. 23, 2002–

**Chairs of the Senate Democratic Caucus (since 1873)**
**and Senate Democratic Floor Leaders (since 1893)**

John W. Stevenson (Ky.), *Dec. 1873*–Mar. 3, 1877
William A. Wallace (Pa.), Mar. 5, 1877–Mar. 3, 1881
George Pendleton (Ohio), Mar. 5, 1881–Mar. 3, 1885
James Beck (Ky.), Mar. 5, 1885–May 3, 1890
Arthur Pue Gorman (Md.), May 4, 1890–Apr. 29, 1898
David Turpie (Ind.), Apr. 29, 1898–Mar. 3, 1899
James K. Jones (Ark.), Dec. 5, 1899–Mar. 3, 1903
Arthur Pue Gorman (Md.), Mar. 6, 1903–June 4, 1906
Joseph Blackburn (Ky.), June 9, 1906–Mar. 3, 1907
Charles Culberson (Tex.), Dec. 3, 1907–Dec. 9, 1909
Hernando Money (Miss.), Dec. 9, 1909–Mar. 3, 1911
Thomas S. Martin (Va.), Apr. 7, 1911–Mar. 5, 1913
John Kern (Ind.), Mar. 5, 1913–Mar. 3, 1917
Thomas S. Martin (Va.), Mar. 6, 1917–Nov. 12, 1919
Oscar Underwood (Ala.), Apr. 27, 1920–Dec. 3, 1923
Joseph Robinson (Ark.), Dec. 3, 1923–July 14, 1937
Alben Barkley (Ky.), July 22, 1937–Jan. 19, 1949
Scott Lucas (Ill.), Jan. 20, 1949–Jan. 2, 1951
Ernest McFarland (Ariz.), Jan. 3, 1951–Jan. 2, 1953
Lyndon B. Johnson (Tex.), Jan. 2, 1953–Jan. 3, 1961
Mike Mansfield (Mont.), Jan. 3, 1961–Jan. 2, 1977
Robert Byrd (W.Va.), Jan. 4, 1977–Jan. 2, 1989
George Mitchell (Maine), Jan. 3, 1989–Jan. 2, 1995
Thomas Daschle (S.Dak.), Jan. 4, 1995–Jan. 2, 2005
Harry Reid (Nev.), Jan. 4, 2005–

**Notes and Sources:** The listings in this table of 19th- and early-20th-century leaders are thoroughly new. No accurate lists of 19th- and early-20th-century caucus leaders previously existed. This table also includes precise dates of service for every leader, including 20th-century leaders whose dates of service have been reported erroneously in other sources. Formerly, the most reliable sources of information on congressional leadership—records of the Senate, the Senate Historical Office, and the Congressional Research Service; *History, Rules, and Precedents of the Senate Republican Conference, 105th Congress* (1997); the 1998 web site of the Senate Majority Leader; the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–1989* (1989); Riddick's 1971 study; Munk's 1974 study; Byrd's 1993 volume of historical statistics and tables—relied on incomplete and inaccurate lists of caucus leaders. Caucus chairs and floor leaders are not identified in the *Senate Journal*, in the *Congressional Record*, or in older accounts of congressional debates and proceedings.

To compile this list, we searched for contemporary accounts of caucus meetings for each Congress since the 1820s. Entries are based on accounts of Democratic and Republican caucus meetings published in various newspapers. We also rely on *Minutes of the U.S. Senate Democratic Conference, 1903–1964* (1998) and *Minutes of the U.S. Senate Republican Conference, 1911–1964* (1999). Caucus minutes do not survive from the 19th century and are not available for the period after 1964. Since newspaper accounts of caucus meetings accurately report caucus business for the period for which we have access to conference minutes, we regard newspaper accounts as accurate for the other periods as well. We have located accounts of the election (and, in most cases, biennial reelection) of each leader in this table as well as accompanying references to the death or retirement of the preceding leader. We have italicized the initial entries in the table—the beginning of John P. Hale's term as Republican caucus chairman and of

John W. Stevenson's term as Democratic caucus chairman—because we are not certain when their terms began. In these two cases, we have listed the date of the earliest references that we have found to their roles as chairmen.

Riddick (1971, 6–8), drawing on the then-unpublished caucus minutes, reported two lists of Senate Democratic and Republican leaders for the period since 1893. His first list, which includes pre-1903 Democrats and pre-1911 Republicans, is fragmentary and based on unidentified, "unofficial," sources, while his second list was "determined from the caucus minutes of the two major parties." Munk (1974, 25), who compiled a somewhat different list than Riddick, noted, like Riddick, that the "identities, titles, and terms of service" of leaders in the 1890s and 1900s were "difficult to define with certainty." Of his two lists, only Riddick's second list—the list of Democrats since 1903 and of Republicans since 1911—is accurate. Though Riddick placed greater confidence in this second list, various publications have subsequently republished the two Riddick lists as a single, authoritative list of Senate leaders. The *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–1989* (1989) changed its biographies to reflect the data in Riddick's two lists, while tables in Byrd (1993) and Vincent et al. (1996) directly reproduce Riddick's listings. Drawing on an unpublished draft of the table we present here, the Senate Historical Office updated its records, its web site, and the *Biographical Directory* in early 2000.

We do not include acting caucus chairs and acting leaders on this list, since their dates of service were usually brief and uncertain. (The one exception we make is for Arthur H. Vandenberg and Wallace White, who were elected to leadership positions in the Republican conference in February 1944, immediately before the death of Charles McNary. Unlike others who acted as leaders, these two men were formally elected to their positions as acting chairman and acting leader, and both were reelected to their positions with permanent titles at the start of the next Congress.) Thus we do not include Aaron Cragin (N.H.), who was acting chairman of the Republican caucus when Henry B. Anthony (R.I.) fell briefly ill in January 1877, and John Sherman (Ohio), who served as acting chairman during Anthony's terminal illness, in 1883–84. Neither Isham Harris (Tenn.) nor Arthur Pue Gorman (Md.), who served as acting Democratic caucus chairmen during the final two years of James Beck's (Ky.) term, is listed in this table until May 1890, when Beck died and Gorman assumed the chairmanship in his own right. Similarly, Gilbert Hitchcock (Nebr.), who, as caucus vice-chairman, served as acting Democratic caucus chairman in 1919–20, is not on this list. (We note that various published lists include Hitchcock as a leader, but nothing distinguished his case from those of others who served in a temporary way before him.) And Warren Austin (Vt.), who served as acting Republican leader at various times in the early 1940s, is not included here. Since the establishment of caucus chairmanships in the middle of the 19th century, it appears that no other senators served as acting caucus chairs or acting leaders for any significant length of time.

As we document in the text, Democrats have regarded their caucus chairman as their elected floor leader since the early 1890s and Republicans have done so since 1913. We reached this conclusion after years of careful research and many thousands of newspaper articles. From these dates forward, journalists, presidents, senators, and the caucus participants themselves clearly understood that the caucus chairman was his party's official representative on the floor of the Senate. Our tables, then, reflect this evidence. The first official Democratic leader in the Senate was Arthur Pue Gorman, who assumed that role when Democrats gained control of the Senate in 1893 and who never relinquished that role in later years. When he stepped down in 1898 as caucus chairman, major newspapers across the country understood that the Democrats had to select a new Senate floor leader. Similarly, Jacob Gallinger became the first Republican caucus chairman to be regarded automatically as his party's leader. Nomenclature in the respective party conference minutes—which is the source for the previous understanding that floor leadership was not recognized until the 1920s—is misleading. The language used in caucus minutes to describe these positions was formal and brief, and that language lagged considerably behind the changed reality. Indeed, there was little consistency even in the formal language. When Alben Barkley was elected the Senate Democratic leader in 1937, the official minutes state that he was nominated to be "Leader of the Senate" but that he was only elected to the position of "*Conference Chairman*" (italics in original). This language is nearly indistinguishable from that used in 1906, when Joseph Blackburn was

elected to the position of "Chairman of the Conference." The official caucus minutes state that, by this election, the Democratic senators had chosen Blackburn to serve as "their chosen official leader in the great forum of the Senate of the United States." Whatever the language of these minutes, certainly no one doubts that Barkley was elected both conference chairman and floor leader for the Senate's Democrats in 1937. Neither, we contend, should anyone doubt that Blackburn—and Gorman before him—was also elected to serve in both capacities more than three decades earlier.

## Table 2. Floor Leaders in the U.S. Senate, as Listed by Senate Historical Office

Source: <http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Majority_Minority_Leaders.htm>

"The positions of party floor leader are not included in the Constitution but developed gradually in the 20th century. The first floor leaders were formally designated in 1920 (Democrats) and 1925 (Republicans) . . .

"The posts of majority and minority leader are not included in the Constitution, as are the president of the Senate (the vice president of the United States) and the president pro tempore. Instead, party floor leadership evolved out of necessity. During the nineteenth century, floor leadership was exercised by the chair of the party conference and the chairs of the most powerful standing committees. In 1913, to help enact President Woodrow Wilson's ambitious legislative program, Democratic Conference chairman John Worth Kern of Indiana began functioning along the lines of the modern majority leader. In 1919, when Republicans returned to the majority, Republican Conference Chairman Henry Cabot Lodge, Sr. also acted as floor leader. Not until 1925 did Republicans officially designate Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas as majority leader, separate from the Conference chair. (Five years earlier, the Democrats had specifically named Oscar Underwood of Alabama as minority leader.)"

**Complete List of Majority and Minority Leaders** [from origins to 1929]

**66th Congress (1919-1921)**

Majority Leader: None.

Minority Leader: Oscar W. Underwood (D-AL)

*Note:* Oscar W. Underwood became the first elected party leader on April 27, 1920. There was no elected Republican floor leader prior to 1925. During the 66th Congress, Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) was the party conference chairman and served as an unofficial party leader.

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**67th Congress (1921-1923)**

Majority Leader: None.

Minority Leader: Oscar W. Underwood (D-AL)

*Note:* Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) continued to serve as unofficial Republican leader.

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**68th Congress (1923-1925)**

Majority Leader: Charles Curtis (R-KS)

Minority Leader: Joseph T. Robinson (D-AR)

*Note:* Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) died on November 9, 1924. Charles Curtis was elected Republican floor leader on March 5, 1925. The Democratic party elected Joseph T. Robinson as floor leader on December 3, 1923.

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**69th Congress (1925-1927)**

Majority Leader: Charles Curtis (R-KS)

Minority Leader: Joseph T. Robinson (D-AR)

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**70th Congress (1927-1929)**

Majority Leader: Charles Curtis (R-KS)

Minority Leader: Joseph T. Robinson (D-AR)

*Note:* Charles Curtis resigned his Senate seat on March 3, 1929, having been elected Vice President of the United States.

## Table 3. Years of Prior Service of Caucus Chairs

**Chairs of the Senate Republican Caucus, from origins to 1929**

| Caucus Chair | Election as Caucus Chair | Years since Freshman | Years in Senate | Consecutive Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| John P. Hale (N.H.) | *Dec. 1857* | 10 | 8 | 2 |
| Henry B. Anthony (R.I.) | Dec. 1862 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| John Sherman (Ohio) | Dec. 1884 | 23 | 19 | 3 |
| George Edmunds (Vt.) | Dec. 1885 | 19 | 19 | 19 |
| John Sherman (Ohio) | Dec. 1891 | 30 | 26 | 10 |
| William Boyd Allison (Iowa) | Mar. 1897 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Eugene Hale (Maine) | Dec. 1908 | 27 | 27 | 27 |
| Shelby Cullom (Ill.) | Apr. 1911 | 28 | 28 | 28 |
| Jacob Gallinger (N.H.) | Mar. 1913 | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| Henry Cabot Lodge (Mass.) | Aug. 1918 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Charles Curtis (Kans.) | Nov. 1924 | 17 | 15 | 9 |
| James Watson (Ind.) | Mar. 1929 | 12 | 12 | 12 |

**Chairs of the Senate Democratic Caucus, from origins to 1929**

| Caucus Chair | Election as Caucus Chair | Years since Freshman | Years in Senate | Consecutive Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| John W. Stevenson (Ky.) | *Dec. 1873* | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| William A. Wallace (Pa.) | Mar. 1877 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| George Pendleton (Ohio) | Mar. 1881 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| James Beck (Ky.) | Mar. 1885 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Arthur Pue Gorman (Md.) | May 1890 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| David Turpie (Ind.) | Apr. 1898 | 35 | 12 | 11 |
| James K. Jones (Ark.) | Dec. 1899 | 14 | 14 | 14 |
| Arthur Pue Gorman (Md.) | Mar. 1903 | 22 | 18 | 0 |
| Joseph Blackburn (Ky.) | June 1906 | 21 | 17 | 5 |
| Charles Culberson (Tex.) | Dec. 1907 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| Hernando Money (Miss.) | Dec. 1909 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| Thomas S. Martin (Va.) | Apr. 1911 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| John Kern (Ind.) | Mar. 1913 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Thomas S. Martin (Va.) | Mar. 1917 | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| Oscar Underwood (Ala.) | Apr. 1920 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Joseph Robinson (Ark.) | Dec. 1923 | 10 | 10 | 10 |

**Figure 1. Mentions of Leadership Positions in the New York Times and Washington Post, 1857-2004.**