

Understanding Legislative Negotiation

Center for Congressional Studies and Washington College of Law
American University

Join [Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 858 2037 7811

Passcode: CCPS

All Times Eastern

9:00 Introductory Remarks

9:20-10:00 **Adam Zelizer (University of Chicago), Mehdi Shadmehr (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), and Elizabeth Dorssom (Lincoln University of Missouri):**

Going Along to Get Along? Three Experiments on Conformity and Strategic Voting in State Legislatures

To determine the degree to which today's legislators are motivated by the desire to conform to the policy positions of the legislative body, we conducted experiments in three state legislatures in which we provided legislators with their peers' support for legislation on randomly selected bills. We find no evidence for conformity or herding behavior: legislators' support is not influenced by peers', although legislators did update beliefs about bills' probability of passage. We similarly find no evidence that legislators change their bill positions when informed they are more likely to be pivotal to the bills' success. Legislators' positions appear to be driven by policy content far more than the legislative context.

10:05-10:45 **Matthew Green (Catholic University):**

Why do Legislative Negotiations Succeed or Fail? A Sweep Approach.

Congressional scholars have lacked a data set of cases of legislative negotiation which could be used to determine the conditions under which negotiations are more likely to succeed. This project constructs such a data set, employing the "sweep" method pioneered by David Mayhew to identify instances of legislative bargaining between 1981 and 2010, drawing from histories, biographies, and articles about Congress. Preliminary analyses uncover several important patterns and permit tests of hypotheses regarding when legislative negotiation will bear fruit.

10:45-11 Break

11-11:40 **James Curry (University of Utah) and Jason Roberts (University of North Carolina):**

Interpersonal Relationships and Legislative Action in Congress

This project explores the role interpersonal relationships play in legislative collaboration and action on Capitol Hill. Drawing on interviews with high-level congressional staff, and a unique dataset of CODEL travel (a leading indicator of relationship development), we find that relationship building can promote legislative collaboration across the aisle. Currently, we are exploring the degree to which relationship building can promote legislative effectiveness through these collaborations, and we plan to turn to systematically analyzing which members of Congress are more (and less) likely to be involved in relationship-building activities (such as travel).

11:40-1 Lunch and Conversation with Former Senator Barbara Mikulski [12-12:45]

1-1:40 **Nadia Brown (Georgetown University), Christopher Clark (University of North Carolina), and Anna Mahoney (Tulane University):**

Collective Representation Negotiated by Black Women Legislators

This project examines the role that identity-based caucuses play in terms of how members go about negotiating with one another. Using interview data with Black women legislators, we find that while caucuses are useful in advancing the policy priorities of Black women lawmakers, the politics and strategies they use to advance their policies differ. Thus, we observe varied ways that this population draws on their identities to negotiate within the caucuses.

1:45-2:25 **Alison Craig (University of Texas):**

The Collaborative Congress: Finding Common Ground in a Polarized House

The Collaborative Congress provides the first in-depth study of collaborative efforts in the House of Representatives. Using a new dataset of communications between members, along with qualitative interviews and case studies, this project examines why members choose to co-author policy initiatives with each other and how they benefit from doing so. I find that nearly every member of the House engages in collaboration when given both incentive and opportunity.

Furthermore, collaborative legislation is more successful at every stage of the legislative process. Contrary to expectations, members of Congress work together because it is an effective way to create policy on important issues for their constituencies.

2:30 Closing Remarks