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# *Interest-Group and Party Influence Agents in the Legislative Process: A Comparative State Analysis*

Charles W. Wiggins

Texas A&M University

Keith E. Hamm

Rice University

Charles G. Bell

University of California-Davis

Rather than focusing on the development and internal dynamics of interest groups, the study reported here examines the involvement and success of interest groups in relation to party-oriented influence agents in the legislative public policy-making process. Party influence agents studied are the governor, legislative majority party leadership, and legislative minority party leadership. Data employed are interest group, gubernatorial, and party leadership positions on a random sample of bills considered by the legislatures of California, Iowa, and Texas, with the ultimate success of each agent based on the legislature's final disposition of measures in which agents were involved and held the same or conflicting positions.

This study strongly suggests overall that the two influence agents within government—governor and legislative majority party leadership—can effectively offset the lobbying efforts of interest groups. Of these two-party agents, however, no consistent pattern appears across states as to their relative importance.

## INTRODUCTION

James Madison's discourses on the role of factions in public policymaking under a new constitutional arrangement have long been recognized as the foundation for American political theory about interest groups (Berry 1984, 2–4). In essay No. 10 of *The Federalist Papers* (1961, 77–84), Madison emphasized a major potential problem for democratic government resulting from the propensity of small numbers of citizens with similar interests to form factional groupings in pursuit of their own special interests, often damaging society as a whole as well as less organized and influential citizens in particular.

Two mechanisms were postulated by Madison as having significant potential for controlling the damaging effects of such potential "mischiefs of fac-

tions.” First, the proposed constitution called for a republican form of government, under which a number of public officials would be popularly elected and responsible to a relatively large number of citizens, or constituents. To acquire and retain their offices, such officials would be forced to take broader views of citizen desires than those of narrower special interests. Besides governmental structure, Madison emphasized that overall socioeconomic diversity would operate to control special interest influences in many instances. The country, so he reasoned, was so large and pluralistic in character that the numerous special interests would inevitably conflict with each other on many, if not most, political issues and naturally dampen the effectiveness of any particular interest grouping. Thus, a countervailing power phenomenon would occur with factions essentially self-regulating themselves in their efforts to achieve favorable public policy decisions.

Madison’s concern about factions wielding excessive influence in public policymaking has found continued expression up to the present period in American political history. For example, criticism voiced in several quarters today about the inordinate and indirect influence wielded by interest groups via growing PAC contributions to numerous candidates for public office is a more contemporary dimension of the long-term broader issue of the power of special interests, and one where the remedy generally proposed calls for further legal controls. But what about the two devices Madison argued would limit the influence of interest groups in policymaking—the republican form of government and countervailing group power phenomena? How effective have they been in controlling or countering group lobbying efforts?

Several political scientists have recently attempted to address the effectiveness of only one of these devices—the countervailing power phenomenon—and the results have generally been that this mechanism really does not operate in the manner anticipated by either Madison or such pluralist theorists as Truman (1951), Latham (1952), or Zeigler (1965). For example, in a previous delineation of interest-group activity in three state legislative systems, the conclusion was that the normal interest-group pattern was for *all* groups involved in a proposed measure to either favor or oppose it, with only a minority of situations generating conflicts between interest groupings (Hamm, Wiggins, and Bell 1983).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, on the infrequent occasions when groups were in conflict, the dominant group coalition was successful in almost three-fifths of the situations. Although at times in somewhat different contexts, the frequent absence of any countervailing power phenomenon in public policymaking has also been noted by Adams (1953, 481), Cary

<sup>1</sup>On a random sample of bills introduced during legislative sessions in California, Iowa, and Texas, group conflict was present on only 41%, 29%, and 38% respectively of the bills on which one or more groups took a position.

(1955, 778), McConnell (1966, 362), Wahlke (1970, 102), Presthus (1974, 167), Jewell and Patterson (1977, 380), and Wiggins and Browne (1982, 551).

For the most part, however, political scientists have not attempted to gauge in a systematic manner the effectiveness of Madison's other device for controlling the "mischiefs of faction"<sup>2</sup>—public officials elected by and responsible to broad groupings of constituents. This is the main focus of the ensuing analysis.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW: GROUPS VERSUS PARTIES

Unlike Madison, most modern political theorists have posited that it would be difficult for a group of relatively unorganized or autonomous public officials to represent effectively broader viewpoints and perspectives on the issues of the day, although popularly elected by and responsible to a large number of constituents. Instead, they point to the development of political parties as instruments for the representation of larger interest collectivities. Not only were parties formed to function as electoral mechanisms for attaining public office, but they were also to assist public officials once elected in the organization of power within government and the promotion of broad public policy goals (Key 1964, 651–721; Sorauf 1976, 13–14). The framers of the U.S. Constitution had provided for a highly complex and fragmented structure of government—with federalism and separation of powers as two of its main features—and large organizations with which elected public officials could identify and use as instruments of governance were necessary if coordinated public policymaking activities were to occur and result in reasonably coherent policy decisions. A strong system of political parties was viewed as the appropriate response to potentially troublesome problems associated with the basic structure of the American governmental system.

A strong party system has also often been viewed as necessary, if not desirable, to check the undue power wielded by interest groups in the public policy-making process. For example, E. E. Schattschneider, an early spokesman for a strong party system, observed that, "aside from a strong party system there is no democratic way of protecting the public against the disintegrating tactics of the pressure groups" (1942, 197–98). Walter Dean Burnham has also presented a rather forceful and eloquent perspective on the need for political parties of sufficient strength to counter interest-group power (1970, 133).

While Schattschneider and Burnham were primarily addressing the role of political parties in constraining group power within the national political arena, other political scientists have expressed similar views regarding their

<sup>2</sup>An exception would be Wiggins (1981).

role within state political systems (Zeigler and Van Dalen 1976, 134–35; Morehouse 1981, 100).

Especially at the state level, what particular party activities within government appear to play critical roles as instruments for thwarting interest-group influence? Generally, political analysts have tended to emphasize either one of two possible constraining mechanisms: (1) the legislative parties in general and the majority legislative party in particular, and (2) the gubernatorial party. Although acknowledging the importance of several political and socio-economic environmental variables, Zeigler and Van Dalen (1976, 94–95), for example, suggest that pressure groups tend to play a less influential role in states where legislative party cohesion is strongest. In surveys of the Iowa public and various political elites, Patterson, Hedlund, and Boynton (1975, 128–30) found that both the public and elites were in agreement that lawmakers should and did give priority to the views of legislative party leaders over those of the governor and interest groups when making decisions on the issues before them. Jewell and Patterson (1977, 298) also argue that lawmakers generally are more likely to have the upper hand in dealings with lobbyists.

At the state level, the political analyst who has most emphasized the role played by the governor in public policymaking is Morehouse (1981, 239). To her, party government under the leadership of a state's chief executive is especially critical to preventing well-organized special interests from dominating public policy outcomes at the state level. She observes,

Where the governor has a strong coalition in the electoral party, he or she is better able to convince the legislators to support him or her. The governor can extract loyalty by promises of rewards or deprivation. The pressure groups deal with the party's leadership. If a governor's coalition has control over his or her party, the legislator knows that the governor can make good on promises. A governor's coalition may be part of an ongoing coalition in the electoral party . . . [T]he strength of a governor's . . . coalition . . . was a major explanation for redistribution policies in the states (1981, 305).

In addition to Morehouse, Bernick (1978) has also emphasized the role of the governor as a legislative cue-giver, noting that party cohesion increases significantly even in one-party state legislatures when the chief executive becomes a factor in voting.

### III. SCOPE AND METHODS

In the ensuing analysis, we will attempt to gauge the actual involvement and success of interest groups within the legislative systems of three states: California, Iowa, and Texas. In examining the involvement and success of interest groups in these three states, special emphasis will be given to comparing interest-group activities and successes with those of three other influence agents: governor, majority legislative leadership, and minority leg-

islative leadership. In our concluding analysis, we assess the relative effectiveness of each agent.

The data base for the analysis consists of the positions of interest groups and other influence agents on a randomly drawn sample of measures introduced during a session of the legislature in each state, plus the final disposition (passed versus not passed) of each bill. A 12% sample was drawn of all bills introduced during the 1981–1982 session in California, a 15% sample of those introduced during the 1977–1978 session in Iowa, and a 15% sample for the 1983 biennial session in Texas. This procedure resulted in a data set of 731, 287, and 577 bills respectively for the three states. Since the use of slightly different procedures was necessary in each state in acquiring the information desired about the positions of interest groups and other influence agents on the bills selected in each sample, we will discuss these procedures. However, the following discussion of nuances in research procedures employed in each state should not distract from our firmly held perspective that such procedures were similar enough overall to render the resultant data sets worthy of meaningful and valid comparative analyses.

In California, numerous official and unofficial records were consulted in an attempt to ascertain what agents were involved in each bill falling into our random sample and what their positions were. On the interest-group side of the ledger, since it is a norm in the California legislature that any group desiring to lobby on a bill should indicate such via communications with the measure's legislative sponsor, interviews were conducted with legislative staff members to determine what groups had communicated with their employers on bills which he or she had introduced during the 1981–1982 sessions. (In all but a few cases, we were also permitted to have direct access to the bill files maintained by sponsors of sample bills and which usually contained written communications from interest-group representatives.) In addition, pertinent bill files kept by party caucus offices in each chamber (i.e., The Republican Caucus in the Assembly and the Democratic and Republican Caucuses in the Senate) were perused for interest-group positions, as were those maintained by the Assembly and Senate Offices of Research. Relevant files were consulted in the governor's office, so we are confident about the validity of our information in this regard. Ascertaining the involvement and positions of California legislative party leaders on our bill sample posed the biggest data gathering problem for our study, since party leaders and staff were not available for personal interviews and virtually no formal party caucus positions are taken in either legislative chamber. Therefore, a wide variety of less direct information sources than used in Iowa and Texas was utilized in determining California party leaders' positions. Included were whether or not they were sponsors or cosponsors of given bills, how they voted on measures considered by the standing com-

mittees on which they served, and, last but not least, how they voted on measures considered on the floor of their respective chambers. Where all of these data sources revealed a consistent pro or con position by a Republican or Democratic leadership cadre (presiding officer and floor leaders) on a sample bill considered in its chamber, we concluded that this was the party leadership's position and we are reasonably confident that this particular methodology has resulted in an accurate delineation of party leadership involvement and positions in the California legislature for the 1981-1982 period.

Procedures employed to ascertain the position of interest groups, governor, and legislative party leaders in Iowa were much simpler, although still quite time-consuming. In that state, lobbyists not only have to register the fact that they are lobbyists and the names of the groups that they represent, but they also must register on each bill in which the groups they represent are interested. Thus, for the random samples of bills drawn for the 1977-1978 session, the bill registration lists maintained by the chief administrative officers of both legislative chambers were perused and registrants identified. All lobbyists thus identified were subsequently contacted via personal or phone interview to determine their groups' position on these bills. The legislative liaison officer for the governor's office perused our master list of bills for several hours and indicated which ones the governor had taken a position on, as well as what that position was. The party floor leaders in both chambers kindly consented to reviewing personally this master list and indicated on what measures they had taken positions in their roles as party spokesmen.

In complexity, the procedure for collecting interest-group information in Texas approached that of California more than Iowa. Essentially, lobbyist registration lists maintained by the Secretary of State's Office were scrutinized for group interest and/or positions on bills. This information was supplemented by the examination of legislative committee hearing records, committee witness affirmation cards, and interest-group newsletters. In addition, personal correspondence and telephone interviews with several lobbyists were necessary to obtain additional information or double-check the reliability of previously acquired information. For information about the governor's positions on our random sample of bills, as well as those of the Democratic presiding officers in each chamber (the majority Democrats have no floor leaders per se and, of course, there was no Republican leadership given the small representation of the minority party in the legislature at that time), the top staff aides to all three officials kindly consented to review our master list of sample bills and indicated, where relevant, their superiors' positions on them.

Thus, our data base consists of the positions of interest groups, governors, majority party leaders, and minority party leaders (except Texas) on a ran-

domly determined sample of bills introduced during legislative sessions in California, Iowa, and Texas. To ascertain the success of each of these influence agents on the bills in which it was involved, we merely related the final outcome of the bill (as determined by consulting bill histories/indexes in each state) to its position on the bill.<sup>3</sup> Thus, if an agent favored a measure and it passed, its activities were scored as a success; likewise, if an agent opposed a measure and it did not pass, the agent's efforts were deemed a success. Bills on which more than one group took positions posed a special methodological problem which was resolved by adopting the rule that the position of interest groups was that side of the question, pro or con, which had the most groups supporting it.

Due recognition should be given to the fact that the formula used here for measuring interest-group and other influence agent success ignores several important and commonly accepted facets of the legislative process. For example, we acknowledge at the outset that the salience of legislative issues varies a great deal, as does the degree of concern and involvement taken by groups and other influence agents on specific measures under consideration in the legislative body. Furthermore, we acknowledge that bills have many facets, with specific positions taken by groups, governors, and legislative party leaders being more complex than simply supporting or opposing a given measure in its entirety. Although the measure of success employed in our analysis may also suffer from the imputations of influence problems associated with parallelisms as described by Salisbury (1975, 207), the point is that any empirically based analysis of group influence in relation to other agents must begin someplace if this important area of political science research is to be further nurtured and cultivated. In the end, the analysis presented here should be considered as a first-cut examination of group and other influence agent involvement and success on a broad range of legislative measures in three states, and one which we hope will stimulate subsequent studies in other settings employing more complex models and methodologies.

#### IV. POLITICAL SETTING

Before embarking on our data analysis, we will provide a brief overview of the political context within which legislative decision making occurred in each state. Although we do not argue that these states constitute a random

<sup>3</sup>Our intent was to measure the position taken by the relevant actors as near as possible to the outset of the legislative process (i.e., at the time of introduction or at committee hearings). This task was much easier to pursue for interest groups than for the gubernatorial and legislative leaders. In addition, the subsequent results are in no way meant to suggest that positions do not change as amendments are adopted at different points in the legislative process.

sample, they do have characteristics salient to the study of interest groups and other party-oriented influence agents. For example, an impressionistic categorization of state interest-group systems reveals that Iowa and Texas have "strong" interest-group systems, while the California system tends to be more moderate in character (Morehouse 1981, 107–13). Moreover, information from the early 1970s indicates that all three states rank near the top among the American states in terms of the number of registered lobbyists (Jewell and Patterson 1977, 281).<sup>4</sup> This was the case even though significant differences existed among the three states in formal lobbyist registration requirements. Collectively, our three states probably represent the more active and influential interest-group systems in the United States.

On measures of party strength within government, the power of the governor (measured primarily by the magnitude of the electoral coalition within his or her party) is generally regarded as strong in Iowa, moderate in California, and weak in one-party Democratic dominant Texas (Morehouse 1981, 116–18). In terms of party strength as measured by the cohesion of the legislative parties, Iowa is considered to rank slightly above average, California below average, with Texas well below average in legislative party unity (Jewell and Patterson 1977, 384–85). In terms of party organizational strength, as measured by selection of legislative leadership and committee chairs, Iowa is considered to rank high, California moderate, and Texas weak (Harmel and Hamm 1986).<sup>5</sup> Thus, overall, our three states tend to differ more on the party strength dimension than they do on the interest-group power dimension. It will be interesting to examine what effects, if any, these differences may have on the ability of party systems to check the influence that interest groups wield in the public policy-making process in the three states.<sup>6</sup>

## V. GROUPS IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

At the outset it is reasonable to ask whether the presence of group support or opposition appears to make a difference in the passage or defeat of legislation in the first place? Also, does the degree, or level, of group support/opposition have an impact? The patterns displayed by the data in table 1

<sup>4</sup>Texas, California, and Iowa ranked third, fourth, and sixth respectively.

<sup>5</sup>During the 1983 session, the speaker in the Texas House rewarded both Democrats and Republicans with key committee positions, while the lieutenant governor of Texas assigned a Republican to chair one of the nine standing committees in the senate. Given the absence of Republican leadership posts in either house, it may be more fruitful to characterize the leadership positions without reference to the majority and minority party in Texas (see Harmel and Hamm 1986).

<sup>6</sup>More detailed descriptions of the specific political state contexts within which our study occurs are available from the authors.

TABLE 1  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTEREST-GROUP SUPPORT/OPPPOSITION  
PATTERN AND BILL OUTCOME  
(IN PERCENTAGES)

Positions of Interest Groups	State and Bill Passage		
	California (1981-1982)	Iowa (1977-1978)	Texas (1983)
All Favor			
>3	75.4 (84)*	57.1 (21)	48.6 (37)
1-3	69.8 (222)	39.4 (109)	51.4 (185)
Majority Favor			
>4	51.4 (37)	66.7 (3)	45.5 (22)
1-4	50.5 (93)	9.5 (21)	23.6 (55)
Balanced	43.2 (44)	9.1 (22)	30.3 (33)
Majority Opposed			
1-4	21.8 (55)	17.6 (17)	15.4 (39)
>4	16.7 (12)	0.0 (3)	26.7 (15)
All Opposed			
1-3	25.0 (36)	7.4 (27)	13.8 (29)
>3	33.3 (6)	0.0 (2)	0.0 (15)
No Involvement	36.6 (142)	21.0 (62)	34.7 (147)
All Bills	52.0 (731)	27.5 (287)	36.6 (577)

\*Numbers in parentheses represent total number of bills involved in each interest-group support/opposition pattern.

strongly suggest that the answer to both of these questions is in the affirmative. Bills supported by groups tend to have a notably better chance of passing compared to all measures under consideration and especially in relation to those where there is no group involvement.

Furthermore, an even stronger relationship occurs when groups oppose a measure, a finding supportive of the conventional wisdom that groups are more effective when opposing legislative initiatives than when supporting them. Table 1 also reveals that, although there are exceptions in given circumstances, the probability of a bill's passing is linked to the level of group support it receives, while the chances of it not passing are related to the level, or degree, of interest-group opposition. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the bill passage/defeat rate for situations in which the number of group supporters and opponents are equal, or balanced, falls generally between the groups favor and opposes gradations.

Thus, while group support is not needed for a legislative proposal to pass or opposition is not a prerequisite for it to be killed, our data strongly support the view that a measure's chances of passage are substantially enhanced

where more group support is mustered without arousing the antipathies of potential opposition groups.

## VI. GROUPS AND PARTY-ORIENTED INFLUENCE AGENTS

Our analysis of the role of interest-group and party-oriented influence agents in the legislative processes of the three states studied will focus on four dimensions of their activities. First, we will assess the extent to which each agent is involved in the legislative process. Second, the degree to which each agent is successful in getting its preferred public policy position adopted by the legislature will be determined. Third, we will focus on the propensity for the dominant (or majority) interest-group coalition to be opposed or in agreement with the party-oriented influence agents. Finally, we will attempt to ascertain what relative impact party-oriented agents and interest groups have on the possibility of legislation being adopted. As our analysis unfolds, we will also explore the similarities and differences revealed among the three states on these dimensions.

How involved are interest groups in the legislative process compared with the other influence agents? Figures related to this general question are presented in table 2. Overall, they reveal that interest groups are substantially more involved in the legislative process than other agents.

Although some measures elicit no group concern, a substantial and fairly consistent majority do have group involvement across the three states. Yet, as before (Wiggins 1981; Wiggins and Browne 1982), it should be emphasized that the higher incidence of group involvement in relation to other agents is primarily a function of the fact that there are far more organizational units involved in the interest-group "system" than there are with regard to

TABLE 2  
INVOLVEMENT OF INTEREST GROUPS AND OTHER  
INFLUENCE AGENTS  
(IN PERCENTAGES)

Agent	California (1981-1982)	Iowa (1977-1978)	Texas (1983)
Interest Groups	80.6*	78.4	74.5
Governor's Office	54.1	24.7	36.8
Majority Leadership	23.2	36.6	5.7
Minority Leadership	22.4	18.6	N/A
Possible N	731	287	577

\* The interest-group involvement figure for each state is the proportion of bills on which one or more groups indicated they favored (or opposed) the measures.

the other agents. Put simply, many different groups take positions on many different bills; collectively, they take positions on a large number, as well as proportion, of bills.

Given this situation, the involvement of other influence agents is more significant and especially worthy of our consideration. Generally, the governor appears to be the most involved of the party-oriented influence agents, although the divided party control situation which existed in Iowa during the period studied probably led him to downplay his role somewhat in this regard.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, a highly institutionalized bill review operation in the governor's office, such as exists in California, would appear to be a prerequisite to that office becoming involved in policy questions on the magnitude of approximately one-half of the bills considered during the course of a legislative session.

The figures in the table also reveal that the involvement of the majority party leadership differs somewhat markedly across the three states. As noted previously, the relatively high involvement of the Iowa majority leadership, in comparison with their counterparts in other states as well as the Iowa governor, can be at least partly attributed to the fact that it assumed a major programmatic leadership role when confronted with an executive branch controlled by a seasoned member of the opposition party.<sup>8</sup> The relatively low involvement of the Texas legislative leadership is probably reflective mainly of patterns of decentralization of legislative power (at least down to the committee level), but the personal predispositions of the two individuals involved cannot be ignored. We also might conjecture that the California figure might be somewhat higher if its two top majority party leaders had achieved their positions within an atmosphere involving greater cohesion within their party. Yet, we should also emphasize that an increasingly salient function assumed by the California leaders—fund raising for their partisan colleagues—probably distracts substantially from their capacity to become more involved on a programmatic level in legislative policymaking.

The figures for the minority party leadership in the two relevant states are generally consistent with our expectations. Generally, they are the least involved.

How does the success of interest groups compare to other influence agents? (See table 3 for data pertinent to this question). Success figures for interest groups range from a high of slightly more than 67% in California to a low of 51% in Iowa. Yet, the table also reveals that each of the party-oriented influence agents was consistently more successful in achieving the

<sup>7</sup>Wiggins (1981) reports that the same governor, or second-term Robert D. Ray, was involved in 35% of a random sample of bills examined during the 1971 legislative session when Ray's party controlled both chambers.

<sup>8</sup>The Republican majority in 1971, under a Republican governor, had taken positions on 15% of the bills (Wiggins 1981).

TABLE 3  
SUCCESS OF INTEREST GROUPS AND OTHER INFLUENCE AGENTS  
(IN PERCENTAGES)

Agent	California (1981-1982)	Iowa (1977-1978)	Texas (1983)
Interest Groups	66.9 (544)*	50.7 (203)	55.4 (397)
Governor's Office	83.8 (394)	69.0 (71)	94.8 (212)
Majority Leadership	78.4 (190)	79.9 (139)	73.1 (41)
Minority Leadership	71.0 (186)	73.6 (72)	N/A

\*Numbers in parentheses represent the number of bills on which an agent took a position. Included are bills favored or opposed by a majority of groups in "groups in conflict" situations, as well as those favored or opposed by all groups. Success scores for legislative leaders were based on actions taken on bills appearing before their chambers; therefore, a bill which passed one chamber and was forwarded to the other chamber was included twice in the calculations.

policy positions in which it was involved. Leading the way in this regard were the Texas and California governors, with the California majority party leadership trailing close behind. The Iowa governor, given opposition party control of the assembly, did not fare as well as his counterparts in other states, but the majority party leadership did. Interestingly enough, the minority party leadership's success in Iowa substantially exceeded that of interest groups, while the California minority's success was only slightly higher to that of interest groups.

However, a much better assessment of the ability of party-related agents to impact the prowess of interest groups can be attained by examining how successful the dominant group coalition is when a party agent takes a position in opposition to, or agreement with, the coalition. Before examining such relationships, however, we should emphasize that groups and each agent actually differ on only a small portion of the bills on which they take a stand. The results presented in table 4 show that, although marginal differences exist among the three states, groups and party-oriented influence agents engage in conflict only on roughly one-fifth of the measures in which they become mutually involved. Thus, although disinterest is much more likely to characterize group-party agent relationships than is involvement, agreement is the mode rather than conflict when there is mutual involvement.

Which influence agent has the greatest impact in terms of the passage or defeat of a bill? To answer this question, we used a probit analysis with the dependent variable being a dichotomous variable coded 1 if the bill passed both houses of the legislature and 0 if it did not. We tested the effects of different influence agents using a four variable model. The position taken by interest groups is measured using a 10-point scale which takes into account

TABLE 4  
 CONFLICT/AGREEMENT BETWEEN INTEREST GROUPS AND OTHER INFLUENCE AGENTS  
 (IN PERCENTAGES)

Groups and:	California (1981-1982)			Iowa (1977-1978)			Texas (1983)		
	Conflict	Agreement	No Mutual* Involvement	Conflict	Agreement	No Mutual* Involvement	Conflict	Agreement	No Mutual* Involvement
Governor's Office	16.2	40.3	43.6	5.4	20.7	73.9	4.3	33.5	62.2
Majority Leadership	3.5	13.2	83.3	7.4	32.4	60.2	0.7	6.3	93.0
Minority Leadership	5.2	12.1	82.7	3.9	15.8	80.3	N/A	N/A	N/A

\* No mutual involvement involves situations in which groups have taken positions on bill, but the other influence agents have not taken positions.

the relative amount of support and opposition exhibited by different groups.<sup>9</sup> Three variables tap legislative and executive leadership. The governor's position is coded 1 for support, 0 for no position, and -1 for opposition. The majority party leadership variable is a combination of the positions of the house and senate majority party leaders. The variable ranges from -2 when both leaders oppose the legislation to +2 when both support it.<sup>10</sup> The minority party leadership variable is constructed using the same scheme as for the majority party leadership. Scores could range from -2 to +2.

The results of the probit analyses are shown in table 5. Overall, this model produces a significant Chi-square value for each state. The percent of cases correctly predicted and Yule's *Q*, a measure of association, are very robust, being largest for Texas. What are the chances of passage under this model if all of the relevant actors take a positive position versus one where they adopt a position of opposition to the bill? The differences are quite instructive. With the greatest support from all the key actors, the probability of passage hovers around .9, while when all are in opposition the probability sinks to an abysmal value of approximately .002.

Which of these four agents appears to be most crucial to the passage or defeat of legislation? At first glance, the most obvious conclusion is that they are all significant in each state. Each coefficient is statistically significant at the .1 level or lower. The problem is determining which factors are most important since probit estimates are not as easy to interpret as are regression coefficients. However, a method exists which permits the relative comparison across states and across variables (Huckfeldt 1986; Stein 1990). Using the probit estimates, it is possible to calculate the probability of a bill passing

<sup>9</sup>The conditions associated with the various values for the scale are:

Category from Table 2	# Groups Favor	# Groups Oppose	Scale Score
All Favor	>3	0	10
All Favor	1-3	0	9
Majority Favor	>4	1-4	8
Majority Favor	1-4	1-3	7
No involvement	0	0	6
Balanced Those in Favor = Those Opposed			5
Majority Opposed	1-3	1-4	4
Majority Opposed	1-4	>4	3
All Opposed	0	1-3	2
All Opposed	0	>3	1

<sup>10</sup>In those cases where the legislative party leadership adopted conflicting positions (e.g., majority house leader supported the bill while the senate majority leader opposed it), the party leadership variable was coded as -1. This occurred in only seven cases (i.e., two cases for the California majority party leadership, four cases for the California minority party leadership, and, one case for the Iowa majority party leadership).

TABLE 5

INTEREST-GROUP AND PARTY LEADERSHIP MODEL PROBIT ESTIMATE FOR BILL OUTCOME BY STATE

Variable	California	Iowa	Texas
Constant	-1.667*****	-1.919*****	-2.076*****
Interest Groups' Position	0.197*****	0.088**	0.088*
Governor's Position	1.060*****	0.511**	2.802*****
Majority Party Legislative Leadership Position	0.353***	0.961*****	0.503**
Minority Party Legislative Leadership Position	0.263**	0.721*****	N/A
Number of Cases	731	287	577
Chi-Square	303.7	128.1	507.5
Significance Level	.0000	.0000	.0000
Percent Correctly Predicted	77.8%	85.7%	97.2%
Yule's Q	.855	.944	.998

\**p* < .10; \*\**p* < .05; \*\*\**p* < .01; \*\*\*\**p* < .001; \*\*\*\*\**p* < .0001.

knowing the level of the other independent variables.<sup>11</sup> The procedure is to hold constant all other independent variables at their mean value, and then to calculate the probability of a bill passing for each value of the selected independent variable. An example of the procedure is provided for the governor's position variable. For each state the mean values and probit estimates for the three other variables (i.e., interest-group position, majority party leadership position, and minority party leadership position) are assigned. Then, we vary the governor's position, across an array of values (i.e., support to opposition). The difference between the probability values associated with the governor supporting the bill and opposing the bill, the two extreme values, represent our change in probability shown in table 6. Thus, in Texas the probability of a bill passing the legislature increases by .791 between opposition to support positions, while in Iowa the change is only .213.

An examination of the data in table 6 reveals no consistent pattern across states in terms of which actor is most important. In California, the governor and interest groups have relatively the same impact. Majority and minority party leaders have a less significant effect. The results for Iowa and Texas provide two additional sets of outcomes. In Iowa the majority and minority legislative party leaders provide the greatest change in the probability of legislation passing, while in Texas the key actor appears to be the governor.

<sup>11</sup>The formula used for determining the probabilities of a bill passing are  $P = 1/(1 + e^{-xb})$  where the matrix of independent variables equals *X*, and the vector of coefficients to be estimated is *B* (see Huckfeldt 1986, 164).

TABLE 6  
CHANGE IN PROBABILITIES\* FOR BILL OUTCOME BY STATE

Variable	State		
	California	Iowa	Texas
Interest Groups' Position	.412	.162	.181
Governor's Position	.483	.213	.791
Majority Party Legislative Leadership Position	.253	.345	.232
Minority Party Legislative Leadership Position	.257	.466	N/A

\* See text for explanation.

Interestingly, the impact of interest groups is diminished in Iowa and Texas relative to their impact in California.

Thus, we would conclude that the relative importance of the governor and majority legislative leadership vis-à-vis interest-group success within states varies across states at any single point in time. Such across-state differences may be partly a function of rather durable institutional arrangements, such as the presence of a centralized gubernatorial bill clearance system in California, for example, as well as partly a function of salient contextual factors, such as the appearance of programmatic majority legislative leadership under divided party control in Iowa during the period studied. Only comparable studies in additional states and at different points in time will permit us to delineate more definitively the terrain and causal forces in this area.

## VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have assessed the overall effectiveness of party-oriented influence agents within government in providing checks and balances to the lobbying efforts of interest groups. We did this by examining the involvement and successes of groups and party agents on random samples of bills drawn from legislative sessions in California, Iowa, and Texas.

Overall, our analysis supported the general notion that popularly elected officials representing broad constituencies would dampen the power of special interests. Even though it also supported the theory of more contemporary political analysts, such as Schattschneider and Burnham, that only strong, party-oriented leadership groups within government can thwart the power of interest groups, a major finding is that party influence agent involvement is limited, plus there is a greater propensity for party leaders to agree with group positions when involved. Furthermore, our study was not consistently supportive of Morehouse's contention that party-oriented leadership and strength centered in the state chief executive's office is more

effective for the achievement of balanced public policies than is party-oriented legislative leadership, although the effect appears in two of the three legislatures.

For the most part, our analysis has been based on the assumption that, when groups usually lose on a substantial majority of occasions when confronted by organized, party-oriented opposition within government, they will take heed of the effectiveness of such potential opposition when devising their public policy proposals in the future and probably do one (or both) of two things. They will either anticipate the possible negative reactions of such agents or actually consult with them in an attempt to negotiate, bargain, and compromise before the ink is dried on their final bill drafts. In either case, this phenomenon is a fruitful area for future research.

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Charles W. Wiggins is professor of political science, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843.

Keith E. Hamm is an associate professor of political science, Rice University, Houston, TX 77251.

Charles G. Bell is professor of political science, University of California-Davis, Davis, CA 95616.