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# Bringing Down the House: The Causes and Effects of the Decline of Personal Relationships in the U.S. House of Representatives

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## **Abstract**

Over the past 35 years, personal relationships have declined among members of the United States House of Representatives. In the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, polarization and partisanship have risen on Capitol Hill, only to be exacerbated by the impact of Newt Gingrich and the 1994 Republican Revolution. As a result of this increased polarization and partisanship, members of Congress are less able and less willing to forge the personal relationships that are necessary for Congress to function. These relationships make Congress more effective as an institution and result in the body passing more productive legislation. In the absence of these close social bonds, Congress is less effective and does not function the way that it ought to.

This paper identifies several factors that have led to the decline of personal relationships, beginning with a discussion of the impact of the 1994 midterm elections and the new Republican majority in the 104th Congress. Following that is an analysis of external factors (changes outside Congress), which include: members no longer moving their families to Washington, the changing nature of Congressional campaigns and fundraising, the characterization of Washington as a “dirty word,” redistricting, and media proliferation. Internal factors (changes inside Congress) are analyzed next, and they include: centralization of power in the party leadership, a shorter workweek and rules changes, House demographics, and the impact of Congressional delegation trips abroad. A final factor discussed is the role that the President of the United States has on relationships.

Interviews with nine former members of Congress and several former Congressional staffers were an integral part of the research for this paper, as were a variety of books, articles, and reports. So too was previous literature on this topic, some of which is reviewed in this paper, as well as variety of sociology books that explained the nature of relationships. A brief summary and analysis of relationship formation is included in this paper to lay the proper foundation for my argument.

In the conclusion, I offer four practical recommendations that can be implemented to reverse the decline of personal relationships in the House. They are: redistricting reform, return to a five-day workweek, campaign finance reform, and decentralization of the power of party leadership. None of these will be easy to enact or fix the problem on its own; rather, members of Congress need to recognize this as a serious policy issue and take the initiative to solve their relationship problem before they can solve the other problems that the United States currently faces. While Congress may never return to the “good old days” of weekend golf and after-work cocktails, the institution needs to take the necessary steps to make sure that it revives relationships in order pass productive legislation that benefits the American people and moves this country forward.

## **Keywords**

Congress, personal relationships, polarization, comity, American politics, Humanities, Political Science, John Lapinski, Lapinski, John

## **Disciplines**

American Politics



# BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE

*The Causes and Effects of the Decline of Personal Relationships in the U.S. House of Representatives*

BY EVAN M. PHILIPSON

*University of Pennsylvania  
Department of Political Science  
Senior Honors Thesis*

*April 2011*



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The cartoon on this paper’s title page is adapted and taken from Rep. David Skaggs’ June 10, 2010, PowerPoint presentation entitled “Why is Congress the Way it is? & What can we do about it?”

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*Evan M. Philipson*  
Philadelphia, PA  
April 2011



## *Preface*

I had the idea to write a paper on the topic of personal relationships in Congress during summer 2010 when I was an intern at Prime Policy Group, a government relations firm in Washington, DC. I enjoyed listening to the lobbyists there tell me about their time as staffers in Congress. Their old war-stories from the Hill depicted a time very different than today. It was a time when members lived in Washington with their families, had a drink together after work, and played golf together on the weekends. It was a time when partisan politics mattered less than friendships and relationships, and Congress was the better for it.

Working in Washington that summer, just months after the healthcare debate finally concluded and only a few months short of November 2010 midterm elections, I began to think critically as to why Congress was different today. Why didn't members play golf together any more? Why didn't more members move to Washington with their families? Why has political rhetoric become more extreme? And what can be done to fix it?

At that time, I didn't have the answers to those questions. But knowing I had a thesis to write, I had a unique opportunity to answer them. I also knew this topic would be interesting, timely, and above all else, critically important for members and observers of Congress to understand and identify as a very real – but very solvable – problem in contemporary American politics.

## *Abstract*

Over the past 35 years, personal relationships have declined among members of the United States House of Representatives. In the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, polarization and partisanship have risen on Capitol Hill, only to be exacerbated by the impact of Newt Gingrich and the 1994 Republican Revolution. As a result of this increased polarization and partisanship, members of Congress are less able and less willing to forge the personal relationships that are necessary for Congress to function. These relationships make Congress more effective as an institution and result in the body passing more productive legislation. In the absence of these close social bonds, Congress is less effective and does not function the way that it ought to.

This paper identifies several factors that have led to the decline of personal relationships, beginning with a discussion of the impact of the 1994 midterm elections and the new Republican majority in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress. Following that is an analysis of external factors (changes outside Congress), which include: members no longer moving their families to Washington, the changing nature of Congressional campaigns and fundraising, the characterization of Washington as a “dirty word,” redistricting, and media proliferation. Internal factors (changes inside Congress) are analyzed next, and they include: centralization of power in the party leadership, a shorter workweek and rules changes, House demographics, and the impact of Congressional delegation trips abroad. A final factor discussed is the role that the President of the United States has on relationships.

Interviews with nine former members of Congress and several former Congressional staffers were an integral part of the research for this paper, as were a variety of books, articles, and reports. So too was previous literature on this topic, some of which is reviewed in this paper, as well as variety of sociology books that explained the nature of relationships. A brief summary and analysis of relationship formation is included in this paper to lay the proper foundation for my argument.

In the conclusion, I offer four practical recommendations that can be implemented to reverse the decline of personal relationships in the House. They are: redistricting reform, return to a five-day workweek, campaign finance reform, and decentralization of the power of party leadership. None of these will be easy to enact or fix the problem on its own; rather, members of Congress need to recognize this as a serious policy issue and take the initiative to solve their relationship problem before they can solve the other problems that the United States currently faces. While Congress may never return to the “good old days” of weekend golf and after-work cocktails, the institution needs to take the necessary steps to make sure that it revives relationships in order pass productive legislation that benefits the American people and moves this country forward.

*Tip O'Neill and Bob Michel probably differed as much as any two people you could possibly know in terms of philosophy in how Government should work. Tip O'Neill was an FDR liberal Democrat from Massachusetts, and Bob Michel was from Peoria, IL, a middle America Republican. They did not agree on how Government should work necessarily from a philosophical standpoint, but they knew how to make Government work.*

*They spoke more in one day back then than some of the leaders later on spoke in a year because the House changed to a position where now many times leaders do not speak to each other. I would suggest that government was not any worse off when you had a Tip O'Neill and a Bob Michel traveling together, playing golf together, drinking in the evening and having a cocktail together, playing golf together, betting on sporting events together, which I know they did because they had a relationship that allowed them to find out, What do we have to do to accomplish what we both realize is best for this country?*

**Senator John Breaux**, D-Louisiana  
Farewell to the United States Senate  
November 18, 2004<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Breaux, "Farewell to the United States Senate," *Congressional Record - 108th Congress*, November 18, 2004, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov) (accessed March 15, 2011).



## **Section I: Introduction**

In Politics, Aristotle wrote, “Man is by nature a social animal.” While that sentiment may have held true in Ancient Greece, it certainly applies to the members and relationships of the United States House of Representatives. The House, like any other organization, is a social network comprised of hundreds of members. These members, as a consequence of their positions, forge social bonds and personal relationships during their tenure on the Hill. These relationships have been critical for effective lawmaking for year. While these relationships have always been an important part of the way Congress works, the nature of these bonds has evolved over time – for the worse. These relationships have broken down in recent years, and this has had an important and negative consequence on lawmaking: As a result, this thesis hypothesizes that *Congress is less effective as an institution*. As polarization and partisanship has risen on Capitol Hill, personal relationships have deteriorated and have played an increasingly smaller role inside the Beltway. This, in turn, has resulted in Congress passing fewer pieces of productive and quality legislation and has done damage to the institution as a whole.

### ***The Good Old Days***

Many observers of Congress look to the post-World War Two era as a time when Congress worked. Although Washington was divided and partisan, members of both parties were able to rise above the political fray and pass legislation that benefited the American people. This had as much to do with legislative skill as it had to do with the relationships between members that enabled such laws to be passed. Members of Congress, who spent a significant amount of time in Washington, DC, were able to forge personal relationships with their colleagues – of both parties – and these relationships were an integral part of how Washington worked during this era.

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In the 1950s, Democrat Sam Rayburn (D-TX) and Republican Joe Martin (R-MA) were their party's leaders in the House and each occupied the office of Speaker several times. They were also close friends. At that time, according to Eric M. Uslaner, "Congress was a civil, if not very open, institution. The House was guided by Rayburn's maxim, 'To get along, go along.'"<sup>1</sup> That was the established, unwritten rule for the next several decades, as well. In the 1980s, Democratic Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-MA) and Republican House Minority Leader Bob Michel (R-IL) famously played golf together on weekends and would routinely have a drink and play cards after work. Despite their different political philosophies, the two men were genuine friends, and their friendship enabled a spirit of collegiality in the House during their respective tenures as party leaders. Michel made it a point to get to know everyone in the Republican caucus, and then get to know everyone in the Democratic caucus. O'Neill was a member of a regular Wednesday night poker group at the University Club, and he recalls the card games as

A great way to meet some of my colleagues and to learn what was going on in their districts around the country. On any given night, there would be two or three dozen congressmen, a handful of senators, and several former members eating together in a private room. After dinner, we told stories and played cards. As many as seventy-five men would play during the course of the year, and over the months I got to know them all, Democrats and Republicans alike. There were no parties and no factions in that room. There was only fellowship.<sup>2</sup>

These types of relationships allowed the House to maintain a level of civility that is missing today. Legislation was frequently passed with bipartisan support. Even President Ronald Reagan understood the way things worked in Washington in the 1980s. "Here in Washington we're all

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Uslaner, *The Decline of Comity in Congress* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas P. O'Neill, *Man of the House: The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neill* (New York: Random House, 1987), 157.

friends after 6,” the president said, referring to the fact that partisanship was not a 24-hour-a-day job.<sup>3</sup>

That is not to say that personal relationships only became important in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the early days of the American Republic, personal relationships have always been an important part of the American body politic. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Pierre L’Enfant designed the new federal city on the banks of the Potomac River to foster a spirit of communication and interconnection among its residents. That attitude was evident from this country’s beginning, when the founders went to Washington to create a new government for the young country. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, members of Congress constituted what James Sterling Young called *The Washington Community*. This community was both social and professional in nature. Members, according to Young, “lived together in the same lodgings. They took their meals together around the same boardinghouse tables. Privacy was no more to be found during leisure than at work.”<sup>4</sup> In fact, members who lived together frequently voted together as well, providing an early example that the social relationships forged outside of Congress had an impact within it.

While this account by no means characterizes every relationship in the early 1800s, it does provide a solid point of comparison to today. That is not to say that all relationships were perfect a century ago. In 1789 two members of Congress fought each other, one using a cane and the other a fire tong.<sup>5</sup> Dueling was a common way to settle disputes among members in the early days of the Republic, as well. In 1793 and 1838 members were killed in duels, prompting

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<sup>3</sup> Chris Matthews, "What Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill could teach Washington today," *The Washington Post*, January 18, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/17/AR2011011703299.html> (accessed January 18, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> James Sterling Young, *The Washington Community, 1800-1828* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 87-88.

<sup>5</sup> Uslaner, 40.

Congress not to punish the offenders, but to pass a law outlawing duels in the Capitol in 1838.<sup>6</sup> Much of this mid-nineteenth century Congressional violence was due to the rise in partisanship over the issue of slavery and the Civil War. In 1856, in one of the most famous breaches of comity in Congressional history, Rep. Preston Brooks (D-SC) beat Sen. Charles Sumner (R-MA) with a cane on the floor of the United States Senate.<sup>7</sup> Congress has evolved since the Brooks-Sumner affair, and become an, arguably, more civilized place over the past 150 years. Over that time period, bipartisanship and personal relationships were an integral part of the legislative process and played key roles in getting landmark legislation passed.

In the years after the Watergate Scandal, as polarization and partisanship have risen, the importance and role of personal relationships have declined. However, partisanship, at its core, is a positive thing; it allows two voices to be heard, it allows for two perspectives during debate, and it protects the interests of the minority. Just because Democrats and Republicans are political opponents does not make them personal enemies. That was the prevailing view in Congress for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when politics did not get in the way of bipartisan legislation or friendships that frequently crossed the aisle. “Strong partisanship and civility are not mutually exclusive. Pleas for civility are not calls for blurring partisan differences,” wrote Kathleen Hall Jamieson in a 1997 Annenberg Public Policy Center report on civility in the House.<sup>8</sup>

However, things have changed since Ronald Reagan occupied the Oval Office and Tip O’Neill wielded the Speaker’s gavel. Due to a variety of factors that will be examined later in this paper, personal relationships have become a casualty of increased polarization and

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<sup>6</sup> Uslander, 40.

<sup>7</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 150.

<sup>8</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Civility in the House of Representatives: A Background Report*, (Philadelphia: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, 1997), 3.



partisanship. Current members of Congress do not have the same relationships with their colleagues – neither intra- nor inter-party – that many of their predecessors had. Over that time period, there has been a “dramatic change,” said former Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY).<sup>9</sup> Relationships have changed “quite mightily,” said former Rep. Bill Frenzel (R-MN), adding that relationships “make a substantial difference in legislation.”<sup>10</sup> As a result of today’s highly charged partisan environment, it is increasingly difficult to pass legislation in a place where members from opposite parties rarely, if ever, get to know each other personally. Many members simply do not trust each other enough anymore. And if you can’t trust someone, why cut a deal with him or her today if you are not sure they will reciprocate tomorrow?

Based on my research and interviews with nine former members of Congress, two points became increasingly clear: first, that relationships have undoubtedly declined; and second, that this decline makes Congress less effective. It makes it harder to get to know colleagues on the other side of the aisle, harder to work with the other party, and above all else, harder to pass quality legislation.

This paper will address the evolution and decline of personal relationships in the House of Representatives, analyzing the post-Watergate era through today, with specific emphasis on the Republican takeover of the House following the 1994 midterm elections. To date there has been very little literature on this topic and the role that the lack of collegiately has on legislation. Thus, the paper will analyze the decline of personal relationships in terms of the other factors that have led to increased polarization and partisanship, looking at the relative importance of

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<sup>9</sup> Sherwood Boehlert, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 7, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> William Frenzel, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 11, 2011).

each factor. Furthermore, the paper will try to discern if there is any effect on legislation due to a decline of collegiality among members.<sup>11</sup>

This study is important for several reasons. First is that there seems to be an overwhelming belief that the decline of personal relationships is a problem for American democracy. Although current members of Congress have not yet resorted to fighting with fire tongs or caning each other on the Senate floor, the lack of comity on Capitol Hill is astonishing. However, civility is not necessary for effective lawmaking; people can disagree and still be civil. That is not the case in today's Congress. The institution is arguably not functioning the way that it ought to. Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN), who served in the U.S. Senate for 12 years and grew up in Washington when his father, Birch Bayh, served in the Senate, chose to retire because of the extreme partisanship and lack of civility that has permeated Washington. In a February 2010 op-ed announcing his retirement, Bayh wrote,

When I was a boy, members of Congress from both parties, along with their families, would routinely visit our home for dinner or the holidays. This type of social interaction hardly ever happens today and we are the poorer for it. It is much harder to demonize someone when you know his family or have visited his home. Today, members routinely campaign against each other, raise donations against each other and force votes on trivial amendments written solely to provide fodder for the next negative attack ad. It's difficult to work with members actively plotting your demise.<sup>12</sup>

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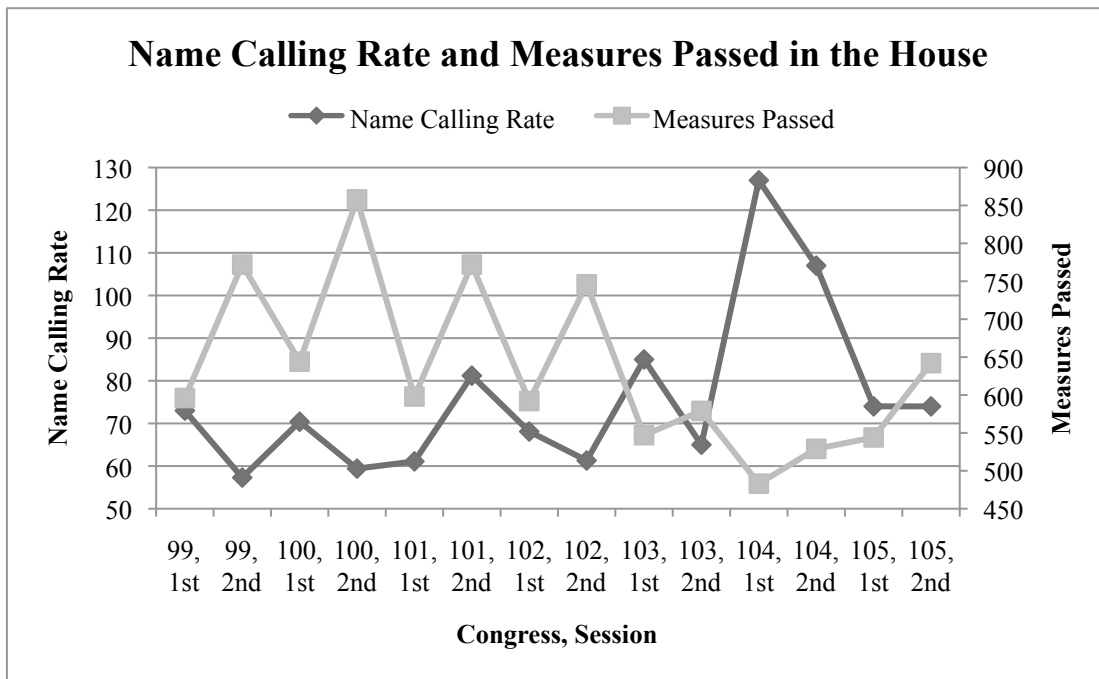
<sup>11</sup> This paper will focus on the decline of personal relationships in the House of Representatives. That is not to say that the United States Senate is not plagued by a decline of personal relationships as well, because it is and merits its own study. In the interests of thoroughness, this paper will focus solely on the House. Nevertheless, the Senate will not be ignored completely and will be mentioned and noted where appropriate.

<sup>12</sup> Evan Bayh, "Why I'm Leaving the Senate," *The New York Times*, February 20, 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/opinion/21bayh.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/opinion/21bayh.html?_r=1&pagewanted=1) (accessed March 24, 2011).

Today, members are unable and unwilling to create the necessary relationships – both inter- and intra-party – to pass quality legislation and Congress is less productive as a whole. Partisan politics often trump all other concerns.

A 1999 follow-up to the aforementioned Annenberg report on civility argued, “Productivity and civility go hand-in-hand.”<sup>13</sup> One chart, reproduced below, shows the inverse correlation between the name-calling rate among members of the House with the amount of legislation passed:

Figure A: Name Calling Rate and Measures Passed in the House<sup>14</sup>



Note the huge increase in name-calling at the beginning of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress and how unproductive and uncivil it was as compared to previous Congresses.

<sup>13</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Erika Falk, *Civility in the House of Representatives: The 105th Congress*, (Philadelphia: The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 10.

<sup>14</sup> Jamieson and Falk, 10. The data in this chart was taken from the author’s analysis of the Congressional record. The Name Calling rate correlates inversely with the passage of measures ( $r=-.62$ ).

The results are clear: comity has declined in the House, personal relationships have declined along with it, and Congress has become less productive. Of the nine former members of Congress that I interviewed for this paper, each told me that not only has there been a dramatic decline of personal relationships on the Hill, but also *that these relationships are critical for members to be effective legislators*. Members think that these bonds are important for several reasons. Personal relationships enable compromise and discussion. They make it easier to work with the other party, to find common ground, and to get to know their colleagues outside of a work environment. This country currently faces a host of serious problems with which Congress has to find a solution. The decline of personal relationships ought to be added to that list.

### ***Roadmap***

This paper will proceed in three main parts. Section I comprises the introduction, background information, literature review, and explanation of research methods. First, I will define key terms and summarize existing literature on the formation of personal relationships from a sociological point of view. It is important to understand the ways in which relationships are created in general, and then apply that knowledge to relationships among members of Congress. Then I will define personal relationships as they apply to members of Congress. Next, I will summarize the research methods and describe interviews that were conducted for this paper. Then, I will examine existing literature on this topic, including several studies of interpersonal relationships among members of state legislatures.

Section II will discuss the reasons for the decline of personal relationships among members of Congress. Each factor will be analyzed to see what effects it may have on the topic at hand. The factors will be broken up into two parts: external and internal. They will both be examined after a discussion of the 1994 Republican Revolution, which was a benchmark event

that exacerbated the decline of personal relationships. Led by Newt Gingrich, Republicans devised a strategy to take back the House that reviled compromise and bipartisanship. Their tactics included total obstructionism in order to convince the American people that Congress “was thoroughly corrupt and dysfunctional and that sweeping change was necessary.”<sup>15</sup> External factors will deal with issues outside the halls of Congress. They include: members no longer moving their families to Washington, the changing nature of Congressional campaigns and fundraising, the characterization of Washington as a “dirty word,” redistricting, and media proliferation. Internal factors, changes inside Congress, are analyzed next, and they include: centralization of power in the party leadership, a shorter workweek and rules changes, House demographics, and the impact of Congressional delegation trips abroad. A final factor discussed is the role that the President of the United States has on relationships, as well as the effect of divided versus united government.

Section III will consider the consequences for the House of Representatives and American democracy as a result of the decline of personal relationships. In this section, I will offer four practical solutions to reverse the current trend and lay the foundation to create strong and lasting relationships among members of Congress. The solutions are redistricting reform, return to a five-day workweek, campaign finance reform, and decentralization of the power of party leadership. While each of these solutions has its own obstacles to overcome, I will make the case that each is vital if Congress is to operate the way that it needs to in order to solve our country’s problems. This section will conclude with a prognosis for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress and beyond.

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *The Broken Branch: How Congress is Failing America and How to Get It Back on Track* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 65.

## ***Personal Relationships***

In order to appropriately understand this paper's argument, it is important to have a clear definition of a "personal relationship" as it applies to this paper. Although this is a political science thesis, the creation and function of personal relationships falls primarily under the discipline of sociology. Therefore, I will offer a brief discussion of personal relationships from mainly a sociological perspective (though this has no real impact on applying this work to political science) in order to accurately assess the relationships between and among members of Congress.

### **Definitions**

A relationship is a series of related interactions between participants in which the persons involved are interdependent on one another, "each affected by past episodes, and in turn affecting future interactions."<sup>16</sup> However, the key here is *interdependence*, as not every series of interactions necessarily constitutes a relationship. For example, as Robert Hinde discusses in his 1979 book *Towards Understanding Relationships*, a series of interactions between a caller and a telephone operator does not represent a personal relationship, as neither party is interdependent on the other person – the caller will have the same result even with a different operator. If the parties are interchangeable, wrote Hinde, then it is not a relationship.<sup>17</sup>

Even within the realm of personal relationships, there are many different varieties: spousal relationships, parental relationships, business relationships, sexual relationships, and numerous others. These relationships can be categorized as either primary or secondary ones,

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<sup>16</sup> Philip Blumstein and Peter Kollock, "Personal Relationships," *Annual Review of Sociology* (Annual Reviews) 14 (1988): 467-490, p. 468.

<sup>17</sup> Robert A. Hinde, *Towards Understanding Relationships* (London: Academic Press, Inc., 1979), 16.

according to the sociologists Alvin Gouldner and Helen Gouldner. They explain the difference as,

In general, primary relations are found in such groups as families, circles of friends, closely knit work groups, street-corner gangs, army “buddies,” and neighbors...Secondary relations, on the other hand, tend to be more formal, more reserved, less intimate, and confined to a specific purpose.<sup>18</sup>

Another sociologist, Harold Kelley defines a “close personal relationship” as one that is

Long-lasting in nature; the fact that the persons spend much time together, do many things together, and (often) share living or working quarters; the intercommunication of personal information and feelings; and the likelihood that the persons see themselves as a unit and are seen that way by others.<sup>19</sup>

Based on these definitions, this paper will analyze “primary” or “close” personal relationships between members of Congress.

### **Factors Influencing the Formation of Relationships**

This paper will now turn to the factors that cause relationships to form. Diana Dwyer identifies six factors that contribute to the formation of relationships. They are proximity, similarity, physical attraction, reciprocal liking, complementarity, and competence.<sup>20</sup> Other scholars focus on three models of friendship – propinquity, similarity, and having desirable characteristics.<sup>21</sup> Not all of these factors are relevant for the purposes of this paper (physical attraction, for example), but many have direct implications for the creation of relationships among members of Congress.

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<sup>18</sup> Alvin W. Gouldner and Helen P. Gouldner, *Modern Sociology: An Introduction to the Study of Human Interaction* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963), 305.

<sup>19</sup> Harold H. Kelley, *Personal Relationships: Their Structures and Processes* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1979), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Diana Dwyer, *Interpersonal Relationships* (London: Routledge, 2000), 29.

<sup>21</sup> Gregory A. Caldeira and Samuel C. Patterson, "Political Friendship in the Legislature," *The Journal of Politics* (Cambridge University Press) 49, no. 4 (1987): 953-975, p. 959.

Dwyer argued that proximity is “the single most important factor” that influences the creation and permanence of relationships.<sup>22</sup> Living, working, studying, and/or socializing in close proximity to another person or group of persons significantly increases the chance that a bond will develop between them. Proximity is often thought about as a “closed-field,” according to B. I. Murstein, in the sense that people often have no control over their propinquity to others.<sup>23</sup> Classmates, roommates, colleagues – people generally are not able to control who these people will be.

There have been numerous studies that have confirmed that proximity is an important factor that influences the formation of relationships. These studies have looked at friendships among couples on the same floor of an apartment building, police cadets in the same dorm room, and students sitting next to each other in a classroom. Each has found that closeness was a critical factor in creating their friendship. There are several factors why proximity influences the formation of friendships. They include familiarity, constant exposure, low cost, and the expectation of continued interaction.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the characterization of proximity being the most important factor, it is not without criticism. Close proximity also has the potential to create animosity between two people or exhaust the relationship and become boring. Nevertheless, the sociological evidence still undoubtedly points to proximity as affecting the formation of relationships in a positive way.

Another key factor identified in the creation of personal relationships is similarity. Known more colloquially as “birds of a feather flock together,” this cliché actually has

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<sup>22</sup> Dwyer, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Rudi Dallos, "Change and Transformations of Relationships," in *Social Interaction and Personal Relationships*, ed. Dorothy Miell and Rudi Dallos (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 221.

<sup>24</sup> Dwyer, 32.



sociological evidence to support it. People tend to associate with others that share similar values, socioeconomic status, religion, political preference, age, sex, etc.

Donn Byrne's classic "bogus stranger" experiment proved this point. In the study, Byrne had participants fill out a questionnaire, and then rate the level of attractiveness of another person based solely on their questionnaire. However, the "other person" was not real; Byrne simply created a fake questionnaire based on the participant's responses. As a result, he found that "the greater the perceived similarity between the subject and the 'stranger' the higher the ratings on the liking scale."<sup>25</sup> Despite criticism that the study does not include personal or face-to-face interactions, additional studies by Byrne and others have confirmed that similarity does, in fact, have an effect on the creation of friendships and relationships.

A third factor influencing the formation of relationships is reciprocity or validation. In other words, "we like people who like us and dislike those that dislike us."<sup>26</sup> This circles back to Byrne's "bogus stranger" experiment, as well as an inherent human need to be "liked." Dwyer explained this as a self-fulfilling prophecy, citing an experiment in which participants were led to believe that another person liked them very much. As a result, these people shared more information and exhibited a more positive attitude than participants who were led to believe that they were not liked.<sup>27</sup> "One of our most vital psychological needs is to gain *validation*," wrote Rudi Dallos, and "we need to have our view of the world, including our view of ourselves, affirmed by others."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Dallos, 224.

<sup>26</sup> Dwyer, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>28</sup> Dallos, 223 (original emphasis).

### ***Relationships Among Members of Congress***

For the purposes of this thesis, a personal relationship between two members of Congress is defined as: *an interaction between members of Congress that go above and beyond normal business duties in the House. This includes socializing outside of work, getting to know the family of another member, and forging genuine friendship, regardless of party affiliation. This type of relationship is more than a business relationship.* This definition is based on the earlier one provided from sociology literature and interviews with nine former members of Congress.

It is also extremely important to properly assess the *actual* versus *perceived* decline of personal relationships on the Hill. While it is extremely difficult to determine if relationships have actually declined, it is both feasible and critical to determine whether or not members of Congress perceive that relationships have deteriorated on the Hill. This is not only measurable, but the foundation for this paper's main argument. The actual versus perceived distinction is an important one. If members think that relationships have declined, then in practice they have, and members act and govern based on that point of view. If a member can look back over his or her Congressional career and point to key differences in relationships between, say, 1985 and 2005, then that is important to study, regardless if the nature of relationships have *actually* changed over that 20 year period.

When asked to define a personal relationship among members of Congress, the people whom I interviewed gave a variety of answers as to what a personal relationship is and on what grounds they are based. Spending a lot of time with another member creates a relationship, whether it be on a Congressional delegation trip to another country, working out in the House Gym, or sitting for hours together in committee or sub-committee hearings. Sheer time spent with one other – regardless of party – is the best way to form a relationship with another member. This links back to proximity as being an important cause of relationship formation.

But simply getting to know another member is sufficient, but not necessary, for creating a genuine personal relationship. Knowing that you can trust the word of another is important, said Frenzel. Once you get to know another member very well, you are able to understand what is most important to him, added Boehlert.<sup>29</sup> Several members told me that playing basketball in the House Gym is a great way to forge a relationship. Former Rep. Mike Arcuri (D-NY), a moderate Blue Dog Democrat, became very friendly with conservative Republican members because they played ball together and enjoyed each other's company, not because they agreed on much legislation.<sup>30</sup> Before members had unlimited travel budgets, they would often drive back to their districts together, swapping stories and strengthening relationships on a long drive from Washington to Boston or Chicago or Cleveland. Congressional trips abroad also enabled relationships to form in a non-political environment. So too did living near another member and his family in Washington, where relationships formed around community or religious organizations, though their spouses' friendship, and their kids' carpools to soccer practice. On a 12-hour flight to Iraq or in a game of pick-up basketball, there are no Republicans or Democrats. That is how trust and friendship is built.

Today's partisan environment has made it more difficult to forge lasting personal relationships between House colleagues. There is just too much pressure on members to fundraise and return to their districts on the weekends. Many will not work with the other party for fear of being labeled "too moderate." Today's relationships – while great among some members – have declined since the days when Tip O'Neill, Bob Michel, and Dan Rostenkowski would play golf on the weekends or have a drink and play gin rummy after a day of debate on the House floor. The reasons for this decline are myriad and will be discussed later in this paper, but

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<sup>29</sup> Boehlert interview.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Arcuri, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 14, 2011).

it is clear that there has been a noticeable decline in personal relationships among members of the House.

### ***Interviews***

This paper is about how personal relationships are linked to other more recognizable elements of contemporary politics in the United States, namely polarization and partisanship in Congress, specifically within the House of Representatives. There is much literature on both topics, exploring causes and effects of their rise over the past several decades. This paper touches on those causes and effects, as well. However, there is little existing literature that studies the role of personal relationships in the House, whether or not they have declined, and what the effects are for Congress and the legislative process as a whole. Because of a lack of scholarly literature on the topic, I proceeded in an inductive fashion by conducting interviews with former members of Congress and staffers. I built empirical generalizations that can be used in the future to create more theoretical approaches to studying how personal relationships fit into polarization and lawmaking.

During the course of my research, I interviewed nine former members of the House of Representatives. These members served a combined 170 years between 1957 and 2011, served under 11 different presidents, and rose to a variety of leadership positions, including House Minority Leader, Chairman of House Science and Technology Committee, Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee, as well as a number of subcommittee chairmanships and ranking memberships. Table 1 shows the list of the former members of Congress whom I interviewed for this paper, their party, state, and years served:

*Table 1: Interview List*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Years Served</i>
<b>Rep. Michael Arcuri</b>	D	New York	2007-2011
<b>Rep. Sherwood Boehlert</b>	R	New York	1983-2007
<b>Rep. Robert Borski</b>	D	Pennsylvania	1983-2003
<b>Rep. William Frenzel</b>	R	Minnesota	1971-1991
<b>Rep. Robert Michel</b>	R	Illinois	1957-1995
<b>Rep. Patrick Murphy</b>	D	Pennsylvania	2007-2011
<b>Rep. David Skaggs</b>	D	Colorado	1987-1999
<b>Rep. Charles Stenholm</b>	D	Texas	1979-2005
<b>Rep. John Tanner</b>	D	Tennessee	1989-2011

In addition to these nine interviews, I also interviewed several Congressional staffers who worked on the Hill during the time period that this paper addresses. Further information about all of my interviews is listed in this paper's appendix.

### ***Previous Research on Personal Relationships: What We Know and What We Don't***

To date, there has been an extensive literature written about the rise of polarization and partisanship within the halls of Congress. There has been much less analysis about the role that personal relationships play on Capitol Hill. However, there are a few studies about this topic and their conclusions merit examination before moving forward with this paper. This literature serves as a building block for the rest of my study.

Garland C. Routt's 1938 paper is the classic study of personal relationships in a legislative body. In "Interpersonal Relationships and the Legislative Process," Routt studied the 1937 Illinois State Senate in an attempt to draw conclusions about the role of relationships as they pertained to the legislative process. He selected 11 representative senators – six Democrats and five Republicans, six from the Chicago area and five from downstate, six with college training, four veterans, and members of both majority and minority leadership. Routt then noted

all interactions among these 11 senators during each hour the Senate was in session in the spring of 1937.<sup>31</sup>

As a result of this study, Routh drew several conclusions about the importance of personal relationships in legislatures. First, Routh concluded that interpersonal relationships do play an important role in legislative bodies. "Legislatures are able to perform their democratic function, not in spite of the mere humanness of their members, but because of it," he wrote.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, party leaders were, on the whole, more social than their non-leadership colleagues. Most of the interactions that Routh studied were among members of the leadership (both majority and minority) and committee chairmen. There was also much interaction between members with many years of experience with other experienced members, but also with younger members, a phenomenon Routh explained as younger members trying to learn from Senate veterans.

Besides looking at these 11 members, Routh also examined data for the State Senate as a whole, especially the background of individual senators. He found that more than 60 percent of the members of the 1937 Senate had held previous "occupations in which they dealt primarily with people," and another 25 percent dealt with people on a regular basis.<sup>33</sup> Based on Routh's study of the 11 representative senators and a look at the Senate as a whole, he found that leadership positions, legislative experience, and a previous occupation that required personal interaction were more important than party identification in the formation of relationships. These

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<sup>31</sup> Garland C. Routh, "Interpersonal Relationships and the Legislative Process," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Sage Publications, Inc.) 195 (1938): 129-136, p. 133.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

factors, Rouff wrote, led to “the development of interpersonal relationships among the legislators who work together,” regardless party affiliation.<sup>34</sup>

Others have used Rouff’s model as a basis for their own studies of other state Houses and the relationships among their members. In 1959, Samuel C. Patterson wrote “Patterns of Interpersonal Relations in a State Legislative Group: The Wisconsin Assembly.” Patterson interviewed 87 out of the 100 members of the Wisconsin Assembly about their interpersonal relationships with other members. He asked members to name their closest friends in the Assembly, and defined a friend as a “member whom they liked the best and spent the most time with outside the legislative chamber.”<sup>35</sup>

Patterson found three factors were the most important in the formation of friendships. First, members who were from the same geographic region of the state often drove to and from Madison together and were able to forge friendships during these long car trips. Second, there were a significant number of friendships that developed between seatmates in the Assembly chamber. Patterson then “hypothesized that friendships in the Assembly are sometimes a function of sitting together in the chamber.”<sup>36</sup> The final factor that he identified as affecting friendships was leadership positions within each party. Non-leadership members of the Assembly tend to see leaders as “prototypes of their group” and “identify psychologically with their leaders and thus frequently see them not only as leaders but also as friends.”<sup>37</sup>

Patterson also concluded that friendships among legislators are very important.

“Friendship roles are not only functional for the maintenance of the legislative group but also for

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>35</sup> Samuel C. Patterson, "Patterns of Interpersonal Relations in a State Legislative Group: The Wisconsin Assembly," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* (Oxford University Press) 23, no. 1 (1959): 101-109, p. 102.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 108-09.

the resolution of political conflict,” he wrote.<sup>38</sup> The bonds that are formed – by traveling together, sitting next to one another, or through leadership interactions – are critical for the chamber to function effectively.

Stephen V. Monsma also studied the role of personal relationships in a state legislature. He takes a systematic approach to this field of study in “Interpersonal Relations in the Legislative System: A Study of the 1964 Michigan House of Representatives.” Monsma looked at both primary and secondary relationships among members of the Michigan House. He defined a primary relationship like Patterson did, based on friendship and time spent together outside the chamber. He defined a secondary relationship as more of a professional or business interaction, one where members frequently discuss legislation or other pending measures.

Based on interviews of 105 of the 110 members of the chamber, Monsma found that the representatives named an average of 4.2 primary relationships per member, most of whom were intra-party.<sup>39</sup> Secondary relationships tended to be more inter-party, with representatives naming 4.7 of these contacts each. Furthermore, members of the minority named members of the majority more often as secondary contacts than vice versa.

It makes sense that primary relationships tend to be more intra-party. Friendship is based on proximity and similar values, both of which occur within a party caucus. Secondary choices had less to do with party identification and more to do with factors like legislative skill, experience, and influence. Members of both parties viewed committee chairmen and other party leaders as having the ability to successfully whip votes and marshal support for legislation.

Those members who were frequently chosen as secondary contacts had more experience in the

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen V. Monsma, "Interpersonal Relations in the Legislative System: A Study of the 1964 Michigan House of Representatives," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* (Midwest Political Science Association) 10, no. 3 (1966): 350-363, p. 352-53.



state House, possessed a college education, were present for most roll call votes, and were “especially respected for observing the unofficial rules of the game,” meaning that they followed tradition, stuck to their word, and honored political agreements.<sup>40</sup> These factors enabled the creation of successful secondary relationships among members, regardless of party.

Monsma concluded that both primary and secondary relationships matter to the legislative process. “The structure of interpersonal relations in a legislative system,” he argued, “functions so as to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the legislative system.”<sup>41</sup>

Another study about this topic is Gregory A. Caldeira and Samuel C. Patterson’s 1987 paper, “Political Friendship in Legislature.” Their paper takes a more scientific approach to this issue, looking at three models that influence personal relationships among members of the Iowa State House of Representatives. The first of these is called the *attribute model*, which states that members seek out and befriend leaders or other representatives that have characteristics beneficial to the group as a whole. These members tend to have more experience, expertise, serve in leadership roles, and chart a moderate course when interacting with members of the other party. Humans, wrote Caldeira and Patterson, “Choose as friends or leaders people can get the job done.”<sup>42</sup> That sentiment holds true in legislatures, as well.

The second model that they studied is the *homophily-heterophily model*, which is the scientific term for “birds of a feather flock together,” a phenomenon this paper has previously discussed. This model deals with similarity, in that friendships are often based on similar interests, feelings, and values. In the legislature, friendships were most often found intra-party, as members of the same party share many of the same values. In addition, members from the same

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>42</sup> Caldeira and Patterson, 960.

party often represent similar districts and care about many of the same policy issues, both characteristics that positively affect friendship formation.

The third model that offers an explanation for friendship formation in legislatures is the *propinquity model*. As previously mentioned, this model asserts that spatial proximity has a direct and positive effect on the formation of friendships. This is no different in legislatures; members who sit next to each other on the floor or live in nearby districts have a much greater chance of forming friendships with each other. Caldeira and Patterson expand on Patterson's earlier study and come to the same conclusion about proximity. "The more contact, on balance," between two legislators, "the more easily friendship develops," they wrote.<sup>43</sup>

It is clear that these authors – like Routt, Patterson, and Monsma before them – have come to a similar conclusion about the role of personal relationships in legislatures. They claim that

Interpersonal ties among members define the legislature, laying the basis for the dynamics of legislative leadership, supplying the texture for partisan and other aggregations of members, establishing channels of communication, and providing the connections through which bargaining, exchanges of cues, and decision making transpire...Accordingly, it is ultimately inconceivable that legislative decision making could properly be understood without an accounting of the bonds of political friendship in the legislature.<sup>44</sup>

Based on these three models of friendship, the authors concluded that personal relationships, and more specifically friendship among and between members, are important to the legislative process and to the creation of an effective political community.

The four articles that have been discussed provide a representative and thorough review of existing work on personal relationships in legislatures. Nevertheless, these four articles have their shortcomings. First, they each focused on state legislatures, as opposed to the United States

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 964.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 954.

Congress. Congress is a unique institution, with both internal and external forces very different than many state legislatures. The United States is more diverse than any single state, thus Congress must take into account more viewpoints and perspectives than any state legislative body. Furthermore, many of the issues with which Congress deals are highly divisive and require more complex solutions than many of the issues at the state level. So despite some similarities between state legislatures and Congress, there are obvious limitations to making a direct comparison between the level and importance of their respective personal relationships. Second, these four articles are fairly dated, with the most recent article being Caldeira and Patterson's, published in 1987. Time does not necessarily mean that they are extraneous, but the political environment has changed significantly over the past several decades. Over the past 20 years – as this paper argues – there has been a rise in polarization and partisanship, which has negatively affected relationships. Many of the factors that have led to this decline did not exist in their modern form in 1959, or 1987 for that matter. For example, there was no Internet or blogosphere 20 years ago. Despite these limitations, these four articles certainly offer the reader a complete look at the existing academic work on this topic.

If one wishes to look further, there are several other works that would aid in the understanding of this topic. Wayne Swanson, Jay Goodman, and Elmer Cornwell's 1971 article entitled "Interaction Patterns in an Unstructured Legislative Setting" discusses the Maryland Constitutional Convention of 1967-1968 and the interaction of its delegates. "The Functions of Informal Groups in Legislative Institutions," written by Alan Fiellin in 1962, addresses the role of unofficial grouping of members in legislatures. And John Wahlke, Heinz Eulau, William Buchanan, and Leroy Ferguson's 1962 book *The Legislative System: Explorations in Legislative Behavior* supplements Caldeira and Patterson's work regarding friendships in the legislature.

These additional books and articles, while beneficial, do not necessarily offer additional insight over what has been mentioned thus far.

### ***A Persisting and Growing Problem***

In 1977, once the dust from Watergate had finally settled, Brookings Institution scholar Hugh Heclo wrote *A Government of Strangers*, in which he argued that no one in the executive branch personally knew anyone else. Although an obvious hyperbole, Heclo made his point convincingly. The lack of relationships among these politicians and bureaucrats, he wrote, “Is a persisting and growing problem that goes to the heart of a modern democratic government.”<sup>45</sup> Even though Heclo focused his study on the executive branch, the problems that he discussed in 1977 are applicable to Congress today – namely, that a lack of relationships poses a problem for our democracy.

Section I has outlined the background for this study, explained the research design, and defined key terms. It is clear that the decline of personal relationships is a persisting and growing problem. Section II will now delve deeper into what has caused the decline of personal relationships among members of the House.

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<sup>45</sup> Hugh Heclo, *A Government of Strangers: Executive Politics in Washington* (Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1977), 3.

## **Section II: Reasons for Decline**

Now that the foundation has been laid for this paper's research, it is time to look at what has caused the decline of personal relationships. Much of this decline is directly related to the rise of polarization and partisanship in Congress. Many of the factors that have led to increased polarization and partisanship over the past two decades have certainly played a role in leading to a decline in personal relationships. While these factors have been described at length in other literature, there is little analysis of their effects on personal relationships. They will be analyzed here.

This section will first address one overarching cause of this decline – the *1994 Republican Revolution*. It will then discuss three areas of changes that have taken place and their effect on personal relationships. First will be an analysis of *external factors*, which I define as those changes that have taken place outside of Congress. Second will be a discussion of *internal factors*, or changes that have occurred within the institution of Congress. The final part of this section will address the *role of the president* in shaping personal relationships in the House.

### ***Road to Revolution***

The 1994 midterm elections were a watershed event in Congressional history for several reasons. In the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, Republicans took control of the lower chamber for the first time since 1955. It was also in the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress that political rhetoric became more extreme and the House more partisan, both of which contributed to a change in the nature of personal relationships. Both of these significant changes – the GOP takeover and the decline of relationships – were driven by soon-to-be Speaker Newt Gingrich.

Gingrich was first elected to the House in 1978 after two unsuccessful attempts. His foray into the Republican leadership occurred in 1989 when he ran for Minority Whip against Illinois

Rep. Ed Madigan. This race was an example of the growing division within the Republican caucus at the time. Madigan and his supporters generally belonged to the conciliatory and moderate wing of the party; they were happy with Bob Michel's leadership and did not want to alienate their Democratic colleagues. Gingrich, on the other hand, took the complete opposite approach. He argued that the GOP needed to play offense in order to regain the majority. "Newt's conception of the job is figuring out how to become a majority. Madigan's concept of the job is figuring out how to get along with Democrats," noted Republican operative Eddie Mahe during the whip race.<sup>1</sup> Gingrich worked hard to convince his colleagues to "overturn the mindset" that Republicans were destined to be a permanent minority.<sup>2</sup>

Gingrich won the race and began plotting his party's return to the majority. The Georgia Republican shunned the non-confrontational and compromise style of Republican Leader Bob Michel. Instead, Gingrich and his lieutenants hatched a plan that would fundamentally alter the way that the House operated. His vision, as recounted to Congressional scholars Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein,

Was based on the belief that as long as Republicans went along to get along, cooperating with Democrats to make the House work and focusing on winning seats in the House one by one, the advantages of incumbency and the tendency of the public to hate the Congress but love their own congressman would allow the Democrats to stay in the saddle indefinitely. Republicans were going to have to nationalize the Congressional election process and broaden the public hatred of Congress until enough voters became convinced that the place was thoroughly corrupt and dysfunctional and that sweeping change was necessary.<sup>3</sup>

The nationalization of the 1994 election enabled the Republican Party to win control of the House for the first time in four decades. The election also brought to Washington a new breed of

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<sup>1</sup> Robin Toner, "Race for Whip: Hyperspeed vs. Slow Motion," *The New York Times*, March 22, 1989: A22.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas L. Koopman, *Hostile Takeover: The House Republican Party, 1980-1995* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Mann and Ornstein, 65.

congressmen. The 73 freshmen Republicans were not typical politicians. They were younger, had small business backgrounds, worshipped Ronald Reagan, and half had never held elective office of any kind.<sup>4</sup> They characterized themselves as “just regular folks” who were on a mission to fix Washington.<sup>5</sup>

To many members of Congress at the time – of both parties – there was a noticeable change in rhetoric leading up to the 1994 midterms. “Gingrich tore the institution down, trashed Congress, said government is the enemy,” recalled Boehlert.<sup>6</sup> “Newt threw gasoline on the fire,” said Rep. David Skaggs (D-CO), adding that Gingrich and his lieutenants took a “burn the village to save it” mentality when it came to the 1994 election.<sup>7</sup> “Newt was proposing to destroy the House,” wrote former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott in his autobiography, “then restore its power under a different banner.”<sup>8</sup> As a result, the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress was “less civil,” noted former Rep. Charlie Stenholm (D-TX).<sup>9</sup> The 1997 Annenberg report found that incivility and vulgarity spiked in the 104<sup>th</sup>, especially in terms of language on the floor of the House.<sup>10</sup> Lobbyist and former Hill staffer Howard Marlowe described 1995 as “the beginning of ‘gotcha’ politics.”<sup>11</sup> In addition, Republicans used the power of majority to severely limit the power of the new Democratic minority. That started with Gingrich, as well. Looking back over his 22 years in

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<sup>4</sup> Linda Killian, *The Freshman: What Happened to the Republican Revolution?* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 13-14.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Boehlert interview.

<sup>7</sup> David Skaggs, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 25, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Trent Lott, *Herding Cats: A Life in Politics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 127.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Stenholm, interview by Evan Philipson, (February 1, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Jamieson, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Howard Marlowe, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 19, 2011).

the House, Tanner cited one factor as the most important in the decline of personal relationships. “Gingrich,” he told me, “did more to destroy camaraderie” than anything else.<sup>12</sup>

### ***External Factors***

Some of the institutional changes under the Gingrich speakership will be discussed later in this section, but first will be an examination of several external factors that have led to the decline of personal relationships among members. These five factors are listed in order of most important to least important in terms of their effect on the decline of personal relationships. They are not all equal. And because it is difficult to separate these interdependent factors, it is important to view them collectively rather than individually for maximum effect.

#### **I. Members Don’t Move Their Families to Washington**

Based on interviews and research, the single most important reason for the decline of personal relationships is that members and their families no longer live in Washington full-time. Nearly every member that I interviewed argued this played a key role in decreasing relationships. That fewer families live in Washington today is due to a variety of reasons. First, there was a substantial shift in the way travel dollars were allocated to each member. Currently, each Congressional office is allocated a certain dollar amount to cover all of its expenses – travel, staff salaries, office supplies, etc. There is a floor and ceiling in regard to each expense (for example, each office has to spend at least a certain amount on staff salaries and cannot spend more than a certain amount on travel). However, this was not always the case. Before changes were made in the 1970s, each expense was allocated separately, including travel. When Tip O’Neill was first elected to Congress in 1953, he was allocated just \$2,500 in travel expenses.<sup>13</sup> When Boehlert was a Congressional staffer in the 1960s, members were reimbursed for the

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<sup>12</sup> John Tanner, interview by Evan Philipson, (February 4, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> O’Neill, 143.



expense of three round-trip tickets back to their district per year.<sup>14</sup> Although members did find time to go home, many brought their families to Washington due to a limited travel allowance.

At the same time that monetary allocation rules were changed in the 1970s, improvements to the jet airplane enabled cross-country flights from Washington to a member's state. As a result of these advancements, members could now go home more easily on weekends than they could have before. The jet airplane, argued John Tanner, was one of the things that significantly altered the nature of personal relationships among members because it led to fewer members living in Washington.<sup>15</sup>

Another reason that members no longer move to Washington has to do with the changing nature of the American family and the changing look of members of Congress. First, over time, more and more women have entered the workplace. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the percentage of women employed in the workforce has increased from 37.7% in 1970 to 47.3% in 2009.<sup>16</sup> This has been no different for the wives of members of Congress. Therefore, when their husbands are elected to office, Congressional wives are more likely to have a job at home in the district and less likely to move their family to Washington. Furthermore, this factor has also held true as more female members of Congress have been elected in recent years. The following chart shows the increase in the number of female members of the House since the beginning of the 99<sup>th</sup> Congress in 1985:

*Figure B: Number of Women in the House, 99<sup>th</sup>-112<sup>th</sup> Congress<sup>17</sup>*

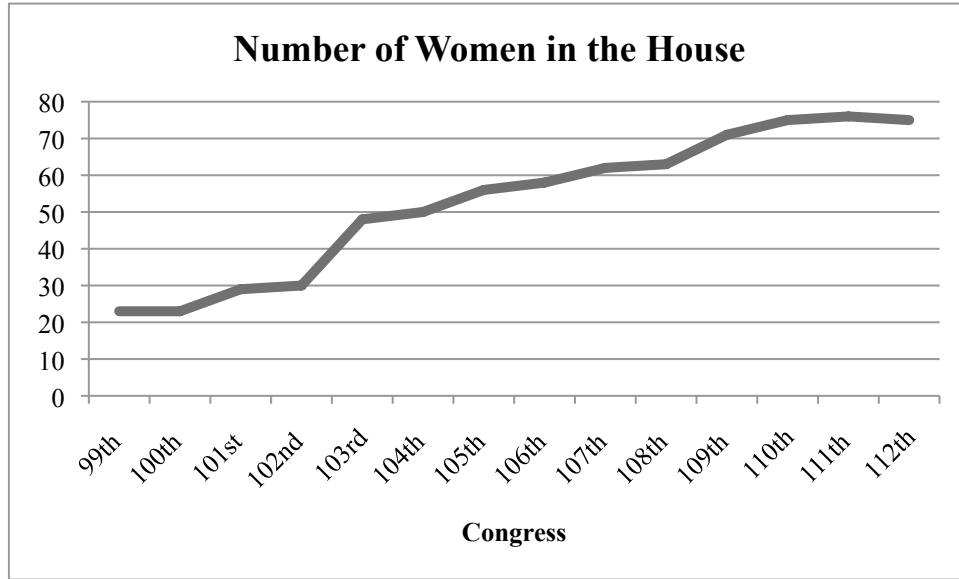
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<sup>14</sup> Boehlert interview.

<sup>15</sup> Tanner interview.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Women in the Labor Force: A Databook*, Report 1026 (Washington: U.S. Department of Labor, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Women in the United States Congress: 1917-2011*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 110, p. 106-107.



There has been more than a 300% increase in the number of women serving in the House since 1985. These women, most of whom are married and whose husbands have jobs back in the district, are very unlikely to move to Washington with their families.

Yet another factor that has led to fewer members living in Washington is the increase in housing prices in Washington, DC. The high-cost of living in the Washington area makes it “virtually impossible” to maintain a home in the district and in Washington, said Boehlert.<sup>18</sup> When Charlie Stenholm was first elected to Congress in 1978, he moved his family to the Washington suburbs but had to sell his house in Texas to afford it.<sup>19</sup> Even today, many members choose to have roommates in Washington or sleep in their office to save money. In fact, the watchdog group *Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington* says “40 or 50 members”

<sup>18</sup> Boehlert interview.

<sup>19</sup> Stenholm interview.

are currently sleeping in their offices.<sup>20</sup> A January 2011 article in Newsweek found that only 1 out of 46 freshman members interviewed planned on moving his or her family to Washington.<sup>21</sup>

Under Tip O’Neill’s speakership, members were encouraged to bring their families to Washington. O’Neill chose not to bring his to the District when he was elected in 1953, and as Speaker he told freshman members not to make the same mistake. “I urged them to move their families to Washington as soon as possible.”<sup>22</sup> But Gingrich changed that message. He told the Republican freshman in 1994 not to bring their families, arguing that Washington was a bad place and they should spend as little time as possible inside the Beltway. For the Class of 1995, sleeping in their offices was “the ultimate I’m-not-a-professional-politician statement.”<sup>23</sup>

But what effect does this have on the personal relationships among members of Congress? A big one. The number one factor that leads to the formation of relationships is proximity. So as fewer and fewer members move to DC, there are fewer opportunities to see colleagues outside of the workplace. There used to be a “Hill community that transcended party lines,” said Tanner.<sup>24</sup> Members and their wives often had other members and spouses over for dinner or carpooled their kids to soccer practice. “It led to intimate socializing,” said Frenzel.<sup>25</sup> Former Rep. David Skaggs, a Colorado Democrat and member of the Appropriations

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<sup>20</sup> Natasha Lennard, "Wake-up Call on the Hill," *Politico*, February 15, 2011, [http://www.politico.com/click/stories/1102/wakeup\\_call\\_on\\_the\\_hill.html](http://www.politico.com/click/stories/1102/wakeup_call_on_the_hill.html) (accessed February 15, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Lisa Miller, "The Commuter Congress: Families don't move to Washington anymore, and lawmakers live on the road. Is this any way to govern?," *Newsweek*, January 3, 2011, <http://www.newsweek.com/2011/01/03/no-more-washington-wives-and-it-s-our-loss.html> (accessed January 5, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> O’Neill, 142.

<sup>23</sup> Michael M. Phillips and Danny Yadron, "Pajama Party: New to Congress, Many Members Plan to Sleep Over," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 2010, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703559504575630661395762460.html> (accessed January 18, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Tanner interview.

<sup>25</sup> Frenzel interview.

Committee, told me that he was friendly with Rep. Bob Livingston (R-LA), then chairman of that committee. Living in Washington, their wives also had a relationship that served as a “moderating influence” on how Skaggs and Livingston treated each other.<sup>26</sup> Although he and Skaggs did not agree on a lot of policy issues, they had a positive working relationship because of their spouses’ friendship. Relationships between spouses create “additional and significant relationships between members,” said Skaggs.<sup>27</sup>

On a political level, the lack of relationships makes it easier for members to use harsher and more virulent rhetoric. “When you live in the same neighborhood” as another member, “it is hard to be mad at each other,” said Stenholm. Lisa Miller echoes Stenholm’s sentiment in a January 2011 Newsweek article entitled “The Commuter Congress”:

If you live across the street from your political opponent, if you know his kids, if you've been to dinner at his house, “it's impossible to go up on the floor of the Senate or in the media and blast him the next day,” says Trent Lott, former Senate leader from Mississippi. If, on the other hand, you live on the road and your spouse is back home, raising the kids and running the family business by herself, bipartisan socializing might not be your first priority.<sup>28</sup>

Today, Stenholm said there is “little effort to make friends.”<sup>29</sup> According to Tanner, there is “no chance to get to know other members of Congress.”<sup>30</sup> The way the House operates now, members do not hang around Washington any longer than they have to. They simply “finish their votes and go home,” said Arcuri.<sup>31</sup>

## **II. Changing Nature of Campaigns and Fundraising**

Another key factor that has led to increased polarization – and in turn a decline in personal relationships – is the changing nature of Congressional campaigns and fundraising that

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<sup>26</sup> Skaggs interview.

<sup>27</sup> Skaggs interview.

<sup>28</sup> Miller, “The Commuter Congress.”

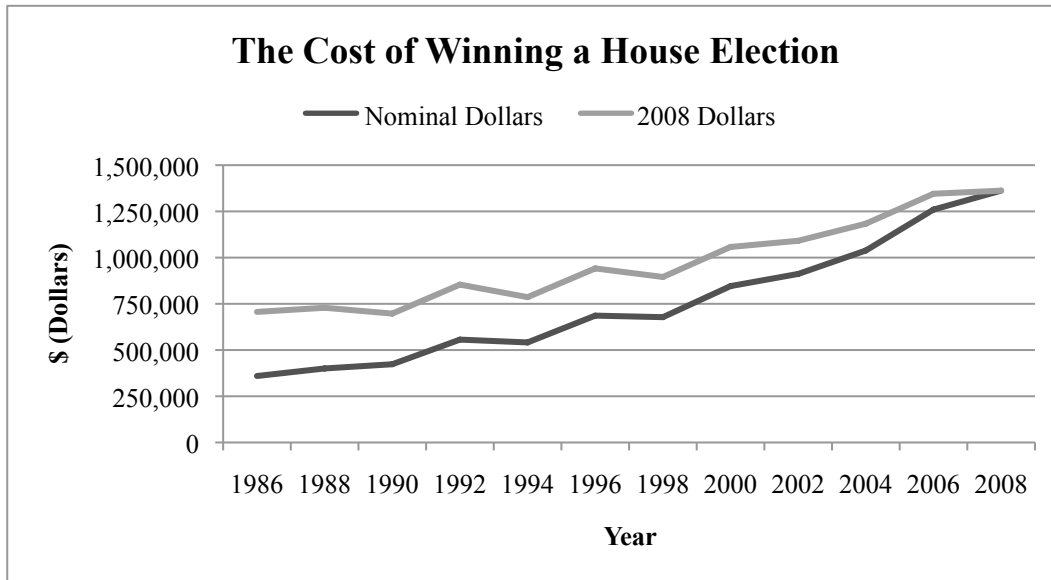
<sup>29</sup> Stenholm interview.

<sup>30</sup> Tanner interview.

<sup>31</sup> Arcuri interview.

has occurred over the past several decades. Over that time period, it has become incredibly expensive to run for federal office. The following chart, using data from *The Campaign Finance Institute* with data from the Federal Election Commission, illustrates this point:

Figure C: *The Cost of Winning a House Election, 1986-2008*<sup>32</sup>



The average cost of winning a House election has *increased by almost 400%* in real dollars between 1986 and 2008. There is a similar story for both the Senate and Presidency.

What is the reason for this huge increase in spending on Congressional elections? The Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA), passed in 1971 and amended in 1974, paved the way for the creation of the modern political action committee (PAC), organizations that could raise and spend money on political races. Following the passage of FECA, subsequent decisions affected future PAC spending in elections. A 1975 Federal Election Commission (FEC) opinion for Sun Oil Company authorized PACs to spend all money collected from donors on election

<sup>32</sup> The Campaign Finance Institute, "Vital Statistics on Congress," *The Campaign Finance Institute*, 2008, <http://www.cfinst.org/data/VitalStats.aspx> (accessed February 25, 2011).

activity, and the 1976 Supreme Court case *Buckley v. Valeo* held that PACs could “make unlimited independent expenditures...in federal elections.”<sup>33</sup>

As a result of FECA, Sun Oil, and *Buckley*, the number of PACs and their level of activity skyrocketed. Between 1974 and 2006, the number of PACs grew from 600 to 5,094.<sup>34</sup> More importantly, however, was not the sheer increase in number of PACs, but their increase in campaign activity. “PAC contributions to Congressional candidates grew from \$12.5 million in 1974 to approximately \$348.5 million in 2006,” according to Paul Herrnson.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, there has also been an increase in a specific type of PAC – leadership PACs – in recent years. Members of Congress create leadership PACs to support candidates running for office. These PACs are used to aid vulnerable incumbents, help upstart challengers, and, of course, donate to party organizations. In the 2006 election cycle, Republican leadership PACs contributed more than \$37 million to national, state, and local party organizations; Democratic leadership PACs contributed \$51.2 million in that same cycle to help their party take control of both the House and Senate.<sup>36</sup>

While PACs generally represent for-profit entities, there has been an increase in non-profit organizations in the political arena, as well. There are several ways that non-profits can raise and spend money on elections. This money has to be “soft money,” meaning that it does not advocate specifically for or against any particular candidate. As with other types of PACs, non-profits have also rapidly increased their election activity in recent years.

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<sup>33</sup> Paul S. Herrnson, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, Fifth Edition (Washington: CQ Press, 2008), 134.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

In order to deal with the growing influence of money in campaigns, in 2002 Congress passed the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), also known as the McCain-Feingold Act. This legislation amended FECA to prohibit soft money contributions to national political party organizations, require stricter disclosure information, and prevent corporations and labor unions from engaging in “electioneering” activity within a certain timeframe before an election.<sup>37</sup> McCain-Feingold was moderately successful in changing the nature of campaign finance in the 2004, 2006, and 2008 election cycles, but it also led to the rise of more independent expenditures, which fell outside of the legislation’s jurisdiction.

However, the 2010 landmark Supreme Court case *Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission* struck down parts of BCRA as unconstitutional, most notably holding that it was an infringement on First Amendment rights to limit campaign activity in any form. In the Court’s majority opinion, Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote that

The Government may regulate corporate political speech through disclaimer and disclosure requirements, but it may not suppress that speech altogether... If the First Amendment has any force, it prohibits Congress from fining or jailing citizens, or associations of citizens, for simply engaging in political speech.<sup>38</sup>

As a result, “groups of all stripes are allowed to collect unlimited contributions from individuals, corporations and unions to fuel overt political messages supporting and opposing federal candidates,” according to the watchdog group *Open Secrets*.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Michael J. Malbin, *The Election After Reform: Money, Politics, and the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act*, ed. Michael J. Malbin (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 4.

<sup>38</sup> Anthony M. Kennedy, "Majority Opinion," *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, 130 S. Ct. 876 (2010).

<sup>39</sup> Michael Beckel, "Conservative Juggernaut American Crossroads Finished Election With Fund-Raising Flourish," *Open Secrets*, December 2, 2010, <http://www.opensecrets.org/news/2010/12/american-crossroads-finished-electi.html> (accessed February 25, 2011).

The changing nature of campaign finance laws over the past few years and the huge increase in the cost of running for Congress has had a detrimental effect on personal relationships. The first and foremost reason for this is fundraising. Fundraising is critical for one reason: in 2008, in 93% of House races and in 94% of Senate races, “the candidate who spent the most money won.”<sup>40</sup> Therefore, members simply do not have the time to forge relationships in Washington when they have to raise money year-round. “All you do is fundraise,” said Michel, referring to today’s members.<sup>41</sup> Added Skaggs: “fundraising takes too much time away from doing things members should be doing.”<sup>42</sup>

In order to run a successful campaign, money is essential. “Every tactic employable for effective message delivery requires money in varying, and ever increasing, amounts,” wrote Norman Cummings and Grace Cummings.<sup>43</sup> And in order to raise money, candidates need to be both viable and partisan enough to garner support from party-led organizations. Herrnson wrote, “The campaign for resources begins earlier than the campaign for votes.”<sup>44</sup> Added Jeffrey Birnbaum: “Anyone who wanted to be taken seriously by the voters...had to be taken seriously” by fundraisers first.<sup>45</sup>

Since these fundraisers are often very wealthy and very partisan, members seeking their fundraising shun both bipartisanship and a moderate voting record. This means that candidates fight for every dollar, especially from powerful interest groups, who will only give money to

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<sup>40</sup> Marian Currinder, "Campaign Finance: Fundraising and Spending in the 2008 Elections," in *The Elections of 2008*, ed. Michael Nelson, 163-186 (Washington: CQ Press, 2009), 178.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Michel, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 11, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Skaggs interview.

<sup>43</sup> Norman Cummings and Grace Cummings, "Strategy and Tactics for Campaign Fundraising," in *Campaigns and Elections American Style*, ed. James A. Thurber and Candice J. Nelson, 67-82 (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 67.

<sup>44</sup> Herrnson, 166.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, *The Money Men: The Real Story of Fund-raising's Influence on Political Power in America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), 64.



candidates that pass its “purity test.” Candidates are, for example, fearful of bucking the NRA to vote for gun-control legislation or spurning the Sierra Club by voting for off-shore drilling and losing both their endorsement and financial help. This makes bipartisanship difficult when legislative relationships play second fiddle to relationships based on fundraising contributions.

But fundraising was not always this partisan. Sam Rayburn was once asked to go to Massachusetts to campaign against his friend Joe Martin. In response to the query, Rayburn said, “Speak against Joe? Hell, if I lived up there, I’d vote for him.”<sup>46</sup> Evan Bayh recalled a similar story from his father’s days in the Senate: “In 1968, when my father was running for re-election, Everett Dirksen, the Republican leader, approached him on the Senate floor, put his arm around my dad’s shoulder, and asked what he could do to help.”<sup>47</sup> For years, Rep. Boehlert would host an annual event in Cooperstown, NY, in July during the Baseball Hall of Fame Weekend to thank his supporters. Both Democrats and Republicans loved coming to Upstate New York for the weekend to mingle with other members and baseball Hall of Famers. “Bob Borski, Tip O’Neill, and Bill Richardson came to Cooperstown,” Boehlert told me. “Party affiliation was not a factor for the invitation – a shared passion for the game was.”<sup>48</sup> Lobbyists Chuck Merin and Jim Healey, former Democratic staffers, told me about members of Democratic leadership in the 1980s imploring Democratic lobbyists to raise money for vulnerable Republicans.<sup>49</sup> When a lobbyist asked why he should raise money for a Republican, the Democratic member emphatically said, “Because he’s our friend!”<sup>50</sup> In 2008, Democratic Senator Daniel Inouye of

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<sup>46</sup> “Massachusetts: The Gentleman from Martin, Mr. North Attleboro,” *Time*, March 15, 1968, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,838009,00.html> (accessed March 22, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Bayh, “Why I’m Leaving the Senate.”

<sup>48</sup> Boehlert interview.

<sup>49</sup> Jim Healey, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 2011, 2011). Charles Merin, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 11, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> Healey interview.

Hawaii campaigned for, and donated \$10,000 to, Republican Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, much to the chagrin of Senate Democrats. Said Inouye of his campaign activity, “There are things that are more important than political considerations. And that's friendship.”<sup>51</sup>

Today, those instances are few and far between. Members are required to pay “dues” to their respective party campaign committees and will frequently campaign against colleagues, even from the same state. In the era of the constant campaign, where the only goal is to win the next election, it is both difficult and politically tenuous to stray too far from party’s organization or ideology.

### **III. Washington Becomes a Dirty Word**

A third external reason for this decline of personal relationships is the connotation of Washington as a “dirty word,” a concept that started to take hold in the 1976 presidential election. “Traditionally, aspirants to public office have viewed political experience as an asset. In the wake of Watergate, politics became a dirty word, and an experienced politician was presumed to have been soiled,” argued Kathleen Hall Jamieson as a key reason for the election of Jimmy Carter that year.<sup>52</sup> Both Ronald Reagan in 1980 and Bill Clinton in 1992 were also able to capitalize on this “outsider” image, but it did not truly trickle down to Congressional candidates until 1994.

Many of the Republican candidates running for office in 1994 were political neophytes who “came in believing that government is a bad thing,” said Arcuri.<sup>53</sup> During their campaigns – taking instructions from Gingrich – they trashed Congress, lambasted Washington, and maliciously criticized the Democrats’ rule on Capitol Hill. Their signature platform for the

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Simon, "When friendship trumps politics," *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/sep/21/nation/na-inouye21> (accessed December 10, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Packaging the Presidency: A History and Criticism of Presidential Campaign Advertising*, 3rd Edition (New York: Oxford, 1996), 340.

<sup>53</sup> Arcuri interview.

election, the “Contract with America,” had eight planks that Republicans argued would “restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected representatives” and “bring to the House a new majority that will transform the way Congress works.”<sup>54</sup> In fact, it may have done just the opposite.

The rhetoric used in the 1994 election not only criticized Washington as a whole, but also Congressional Democrats. Frenzel and Boehlert, both Republicans, said that when they were first elected to the House, in 1971 and 1983 respectively, they were told, half-jokingly, “the Democrats are not the enemy, the Senate is the enemy.”<sup>55</sup> That was not the case after 1994, when Republicans made no secret that Democrats were the enemy and they would do everything they could to treat them as such. This mentality obviously does not lay proper groundwork for the creation of personal relationships.

The other fallout from defining Washington as a dirty word is that the American people now believe it. Although an absurd belief to many longtime members of Congress and Beltway insiders, this belief has permeated American political culture and has affected Congress since Watergate. The following chart, from Gallup poll numbers, shows the percentage of Americans who had a “great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in Congress from 1973 to 2010:

*Figure D: Confidence in Congress, 1973-2010, Gallup*<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “Contract with America,” 1994, <http://www.house.gov/house/Contract/CONTRACT.html> (accessed March 24, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Boehlert interview and Frenzel interview.

<sup>56</sup> Lydia Saad, “Congress Ranks Last in Confidence in Institutions,” *Gallup*, July 22, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/141512/Congress-Ranks-Last-Confidence-Institutions.aspx> (accessed April 3, 2011).



John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse’s 1995 book *Congress as Public Enemy* also addresses some of the causes that led to the creation of Washington as a dirty word. They wrote, “The public’s negativity toward the political system and Congress has reached the saturation point.”<sup>57</sup> And that was in 1995.

More recently, despite the huge Republican gains in the 2010 midterm elections, the American people’s opinion of Washington did not change much. A November 7-10, 2010, CBS News Poll found that only 3% of Americans were “enthusiastic” about the government in Washington, statistically equal to 2% the month before. Even after the election results were in, three-quarters of Americans remained dissatisfied or angry. The following table compares the results of the same question from this poll from before and after the 2010 midterms:

Table 2: *Feelings about Government in D.C., CBS News*<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Congress as Public Enemy: Public attitudes toward American political institutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1.

<sup>58</sup> CBS News Poll, "Looking Ahead to the 112th Congress, November 7-10, 2010," *CBS News*, November 11, 2010, <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/11/11/politics/main7045964.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody> (accessed March 24, 2011).

	October 2010	November 2010
<b>Enthusiastic</b>	2%	3%
<b>Satisfied</b>	23%	21%
<b>Dissatisfied</b>	51%	56%
<b>Angry</b>	23%	18%

This extreme lack of confidence in Congress and dissatisfaction with its work mean that members want to distance themselves from all of the negatives associated with Congress. It's why members no longer move their families to Washington. It's why freshmen choose to sleep in their offices. It's why congressmen are so quick to rush home on the weekends. However, doing all of those things might still not be enough. Rep. Arcuri told me that even though he slept in his office and "never spent a single weekend in DC in four years unless there were votes," he was still attacked in both 2008 and 2010 as being a "Washington insider."<sup>59</sup> Added Skaggs: "There is an 'anti-Washington' stigma that has become part of the culture. People don't want to get sucked into the Beltway."<sup>60</sup>

Eric Uslaner, on the other hand, argued, "Washington is not the problem. Government is the problem. People who do not like the federal government do not like their state governments either."<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the perception exists that Washington *is* the problem. In today's political environment, it is nearly impossible to get elected unless a candidate runs as an outsider. The freshman class that came into office in 1995 was of a different breed, but one that has become more commonplace over the past 15 years. Those freshmen were, wrote Linda Killian,

Extremely skeptical, even downright hostile toward the East Coast cultural elite. They not only represented the average people in their districts; they claimed to be just like them. You wouldn't catch these guys at a party in Georgetown or taking

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<sup>59</sup> Arcuri interview.

<sup>60</sup> Skaggs interview.

<sup>61</sup> Eric M. Uslaner, "Is Washington Really the Problem?," in *What is it About Government that Americans Dislike?*, ed. John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, 118-133 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 133.

in a symphony performance at the Kennedy Center. No time for that hoity-toity thing.<sup>62</sup>

Congressional scholar Norm Ornstein wrote that the Class of 1995 viewed Potomac Fever “as more dangerous than Ebola or swine flu.”<sup>63</sup> Even longtime politicians are forced to run as outsiders and ignore legislative accomplishments that could be viewed as too “establishment.” None of this helps Congress function when its members are tearing colleagues down, are punished for working across the aisle, and openly denounce the city in which they chose to work.

#### **IV. Redistricting**

Yet another factor that has resulted in a decline of personal relationships is redistricting. Redistricting is the process by which Congressional districts are re-drawn every ten years following the U.S. Census. In most states, legislatures have final say over the drawing of the lines, and over the past several decades the redistricting process has become incredibly political. Of the 43 states that redistrict (seven states have one at-large district and thus cannot redistrict), 36 of them redistrict by a political process; that is, the state legislature has the main responsibility for drawing these lines. The other seven states use a bipartisan or independent commission.<sup>64</sup> The majority party in state Houses does its best to create safe seats for its party while making the opposing party struggle to retain theirs. As a result, “redistricting has transformed American politics...most of the four hundred and thirty-five members of Congress

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<sup>62</sup> Killian, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Norman Ornstein, "Congress Needs a Five-Day Workweek (Most of the Time," *Roll Call*, May 26, 2009, [http://www.rollcall.com/issues/54\\_136/-35207-1.html](http://www.rollcall.com/issues/54_136/-35207-1.html) (accessed March 22, 2011).

<sup>64</sup> Thomas B. Hofeller, "The Looming Redistricting Storm: How will the Republican Party Fare?," *Politico*, May 2010, [http://www.politico.com/static/PPM116\\_rnc.html](http://www.politico.com/static/PPM116_rnc.html) (accessed April 3, 2011).

never face seriously contested general elections,” wrote Jeffrey Toobin following the 2001 redistricting process.<sup>65</sup>

Over the years, states have become better and better at drawing these lines, in part due to micro-targeting and sophisticated mapping software. Today, “mapmakers can get detailed information about an area’s political makeup – down to the voting history of an individual block – and plug it into a computer, allowing them to carve up neighborhoods with precision,” explained Juliet Eilperin.<sup>66</sup> Often times, members of state legislatures draw lines that enable him or her to win a particular seat. For example, following the 2000 census, Republicans controlled both chambers of the Michigan Legislature, as well as the governor’s mansion. Republican State Senator Thaddeus McCotter was elected to the House of Representatives the following year in a district that he helped create as chairman of the State Senate Redistricting Committee.<sup>67</sup> “In a real sense,” added Toobin, “the voters no longer select the members of the House of Representatives, the state legislatures who design the districts do.”<sup>68</sup>

But what does redistricting have to do with the decline of personal relationships? Most of these safe districts have an unbalanced amount of either Democrats or Republicans. These voters make up most of the primary electorate, who in turn nominate and elect ideological members to Congress. These newly elected members, knowing full well the make-up of the voters in their district are afraid of crossing the aisle and working with the other party, fearful of a primary challenge from their right or left flank.

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<sup>65</sup> Jeffrey Toobin, "The Great Election Grab," *The New Yorker*, December 3, 2003: 63-66, 75-76, 78, 80, p. 64.

<sup>66</sup> Juliet Eilperin, *Fight Club Politics: How Partisanship is Poisoning the House of Representatives* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 92.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>68</sup> Toobin, 78.

As a result, these members from safe districts tend to be very partisan and against all forms of compromise with the other party. Members run and win by calling the other party their enemy. That rhetoric does not enable relationships to form. Former Republican House Minority Leader Bob Michel told me that the other party is “not your enemy, but your political adversary.”<sup>69</sup> That has changed today.

This process has created fewer and fewer competitive districts, which in turn elect fewer and fewer moderate members. Ideological members – conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats – are less willing to form relationships, both within their party and across the aisle. It’s hard enough to get to know other members, Skaggs said, especially when parties “tend to nominate and elect people from their fringe.”<sup>70</sup> New members “come to Washington devoid of going to the middle...it creates a disincentive to work across the aisle,” Tanner told me.<sup>71</sup> When simply working with the opposite party is enough to attract a primary challenger, it is obvious that members from safe districts are afraid of being called too moderate or out of touch with voters.

Rep. Tom DeLay’s (R-TX) 2003 redistricting effort in Texas also had a “corrosive” effect on civility, said Merin.<sup>72</sup> DeLay led the fight for a controversial mid-decade redistricting plan to benefit Republicans and target several longtime Democratic incumbents in the Lone Star State, including Charlie Stenholm. Of the seven Democratic-held seats that DeLay targeted in the redistricting plan, six switched into the Republican column following the 2004 election.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Michel interview.

<sup>70</sup> Skaggs interview.

<sup>71</sup> Tanner interview.

<sup>72</sup> Merin interview.

<sup>73</sup> Mann and Ornstein, 182.



Stenholm was one such casualty. This action, clearly, did not engender civility between the two parties.

It is important to remember that redistricting is a key difference between the House and Senate. Obviously, the Senate cannot redistrict; it does not re-draw state boundaries every ten years. To that end, there is existing literature in political science that makes the case that partisanship has risen in the House and Senate due to similar causes, of which redistricting is not one.<sup>74</sup> That the Senate is just as polarized as the House means that redistricting is not a factor that has increased polarization or partisanship, or decreased civility.

However, redistricting is just one of many differences between the House and Senate. The other major difference is in regard to their parliamentary structure, specifically the Senate's cloture rule and use of the filibuster. While in the House the majority party can rule the chamber with an iron fist, in the Senate, it takes 60 votes to simply debate a piece of legislation. The cloture rule has an impact on polarization, partisanship, and relationships, as well, although further study is needed to determine the extent. Just as redistricting is a unique characteristic in the House, so too are cloture and the filibuster to the Senate.

Despite the literature that says otherwise, the members that I interviewed all pointed to redistricting as a major cause of the decline of personal relationships in the House. The political nature of drawing the lines and the drive to create "safe" districts both contribute significantly to the reduction of comity in the House.

## **V. Media Proliferation**

A final factor that has led to a decline of personal relationships is the proliferation of electronic media. From McCarthy to Vietnam, from Watergate to Monica, the political press and

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<sup>74</sup> For more on the issue of polarization and redistricting, see: Nolan M. McCarty, Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

“journalists have become the adversaries of the government.”<sup>75</sup> And as cable news has expanded over the last 20 years, each network needs to do more and more to fill airtime and attract viewership. Many members of Congress, most of whom are fairly unknown to voters outside of their home district or state, see this need to fill airtime as a way to get access to national media. According to James Q. Wilson and John J. DiIulio, Jr., “to obtain the advantages of electronic media coverage, public officials must do something sufficiently bold or colorful.”<sup>76</sup>

Often, this “bold or colorful” action that gets a member on the Sunday talk shows involves him or her raising the level of rhetoric to unprecedented levels. This language allows politicians to garner free media, which in turn allows them to go on television and repeat whatever statements got them there in the first place. When Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) yelled, “You lie!” during President Barack Obama’s September 9, 2009, speech on healthcare to a joint session of Congress, it was not only a breach of Congressional decorum, but it propelled Wilson to national prominence. Wilson was a guest on *Fox News Sunday* the weekend after the outburst.<sup>77</sup> Three weeks later, liberal Democratic Rep. Alan Grayson of Florida went on the floor of the House during the healthcare care debate and said “Republicans want you to die quickly.”<sup>78</sup> He, too, made the rounds on television after this speech.

In recent years, the Internet has also been a forum that has increased the level of rhetoric. Just as the 1990s saw a huge expansion of cable news with more airtime to fill, the 2000s have seen an explosion of the number of political news websites, each of which need to fill content

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<sup>75</sup> James Q. Wilson and Jr., John J. DiIulio, *American Government: Institutions and Policies*, Tenth Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 311.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>77</sup> "This Week on Fox News Sunday (9/13/09)," *Fox News Sunday*, September 13, 2009, <http://fns.blogs.foxnews.com/2009/09/10/this-week-on-fox-news-sunday/> (accessed February 28, 2011).

<sup>78</sup> Jonathan Allen, "Grayson: GOP wants 'you to die'," *Politico*, September 29, 2009, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0909/27726.html> (accessed March 29, 2011).

and break news. “Media follows the decibel level” of the content that it covers, noted Skaggs.<sup>79</sup> In today’s digital age, many elected officials see the value of online media coverage, and use it as a forum to attack and criticize the opposing political party.

What effect does this rise of the media have on the personal relationships of members of Congress? Based on my interviews, the results were overwhelmingly that electronic media has a negative effect on personal relationships. It’s a “poisonous atmosphere,” said Frenzel.<sup>80</sup> “The press hurts,” added Michel.<sup>81</sup> “The media is to blame,” argued Murphy.<sup>82</sup> This new form of media makes life more difficult for members. News that may have been covered only by a member’s local newspaper 20 years ago is now picked up by national outlets and spread across the country. Even the unimportant or non-controversial can be spun in a way to create a controversy out of nothing.

That is especially true as there has been a seismic shift to partisan news outlets like Fox News and MSNBC over the past several years. Both networks are often criticized – or praised, depending on your opinion – for their partisan tilt and drive to score political points. During the 2008 presidential campaign, John McCain’s campaign strategist Steve Schmidt called MSNBC “an organ of the Democratic National Committee.”<sup>83</sup> Ed Rendell, then the Governor of Pennsylvania, a loyal Democrat, and a staunch supporter of Hillary Clinton during the 2008 Democratic primaries, agreed with Schmidt’s sentiment to a degree. Rendell said that the

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<sup>79</sup> Skaggs interview.

<sup>80</sup> Frenzel interview.

<sup>81</sup> Michel interview.

<sup>82</sup> Patrick Murphy, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 31, 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Howard Kurtz, "MSNBC, Leaning Left and Getting Flak From Both Sides," *The Washington Post*, May 28, 2008, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/27/AR2008052703047\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/27/AR2008052703047_pf.html) (accessed March 22, 2011).

coverage of Obama on MSNBC was “embarrassing.”<sup>84</sup> The Obama White House has no love lost for Fox News, either. “We’re going to treat them the way we would treat an opponent,” said Anita Dunn, the then-White House communications director in October 2009. “As they are undertaking a war against Barack Obama and the White House, we don’t need to pretend that this is the way that legitimate news organizations behave.”<sup>85</sup>

Senator Jay Rockefeller, the veteran Democrat from West Virginia, believes both MSNBC and Fox News are harmful to our nation’s political discourse. In a November 2010 Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet hearing, Sen. Rockefeller said,

I hunger for quality news. I’m tired of the right and the left. There’s a little bug inside of me which wants the FCC to say to Fox and to MSNBC, ‘Out. Off. End. Good-bye.’ It’d be a big favor to political discourse, our ability to do our work here in Congress and to the American people to be able to talk with each other and have some faith in their government and more importantly in their future.<sup>86</sup>

Despite these misgivings, it does not appear that Fox News or MSNBC will be going off the air anytime soon. The real problem, according to Bob Borski, is the changing role of the media. The media, he said, “should be the umpire or referee” in political discourse, not actively engaged in the debate itself. “In politics today, the referees are absent,” which poses a serious threat to our democracy and the relationships of our public officials within it.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Michael Calderone, “Rendell: Obama coverage was embarrassing,” *Politico*, August 24, 2008, [http://www.politico.com/blogs/michaelcalderone/0808/Rendell\\_Obama\\_coverage\\_was\\_embarrassing.html](http://www.politico.com/blogs/michaelcalderone/0808/Rendell_Obama_coverage_was_embarrassing.html) (accessed March 22, 2011).

<sup>85</sup> Brian Stelter, “Fox’s Volley With Obama Intensifying,” *The New York Times*, October 11, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/12/business/media/12fox.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/12/business/media/12fox.html?_r=1) (accessed March 22, 2011).

<sup>86</sup> Keach Hagey, “Sen. Rockefeller slams MSNBC, Fox,” *Politico*, November 17, 2010, [http://www.politico.com/blogs/onmedia/1110/Sen\\_Rockefeller\\_slams\\_MSNBC\\_Fox.html](http://www.politico.com/blogs/onmedia/1110/Sen_Rockefeller_slams_MSNBC_Fox.html) (accessed March 23, 2011).

<sup>87</sup> Robert Borski, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 24, 2011).

### ***Internal Factors***

Now this paper will analyze several internal factors within the House that have also affected the decline of personal relationships. These are also listed in order of most important to least important. Like the external factors, it is difficult to separate them and thus also need to be viewed collectively, rather than individually, to ascertain their full effect on relationships and collegiality in the House.

#### **I. Centralization of Power in Leadership**

A major change that occurred internally in the House at the outset of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress was the centralization of power in the leadership and away from committee chairmen. Going back decades, committee chairmen in the House wielded powerful gavels, and they had autonomy to control their committee's agenda. Democratic speakers in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gave considerable power to their committee chairmen. That changed when Gingrich took the Speaker's gavel in 1995. No longer would committee hearings or mark-ups be held until Gingrich and the leadership gave approval. Bills that were voted out of committee did not reach the House floor without Gingrich's blessing. Often, bills that were not conservative enough were re-written in the Speaker's office, despite protests from the committee's chairman. The speaker also shook up the process of selecting chairmen in the 104<sup>th</sup>. Normally, seniority dictates committee status and – for the most part – when a party switch occurs, the ranking member becomes the chairman. That was not the case in 1995. Gingrich bypassed more senior members on both the Appropriations and Judiciary Committees and instead selected younger, more conservative members as chairmen. “Gingrich made it clear from the outset that committee chairs answered to the leadership,” wrote Eilperin.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Eilperin, 16.

This new structure altered the way in which committees had worked for years, and had a detrimental effect on personal relationships. Before 1995, members used to spend a significant amount of time in committee, marking up bills, offering amendments, and holding hearings. Bill Frenzel, who rose to become ranking member of the House Budget Committee and the Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee, told me that he formed some of his closest relationships with his colleagues on those committees – regardless of party. “Bills used to be put together in a cooperative manner. That stopped in 1995 with Gingrich,” he said.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, there used to be a fairly open amendment process in committees, where if a member wanted his or her amendment to pass, he or she had to whip the amendment by talking to other members on the committee. Today, for the most part, without leadership approval of the amendment, it is not even worth whipping.

When committee hearings and mark-ups take on less importance, members are less willing to compromise or work across the aisle if they know the bill will be re-written behind closed doors. When Republican chairmen were under strict orders not to compromise with their Democratic counterparts, it hurts not only the relationship between committee members, but it also impacts the quality of the legislation that the committee produces. “The committee system is broken,” noted Tanner, who served as Chairman of the Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee.<sup>90</sup> Both parties are equally guilty. For example, when Democratic Blue Dog Rep. Patrick Murphy was whipping a bipartisan cost-cutting bill in 2010, the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act, he still needed the “leadership okay” before moving forward.<sup>91</sup> When the Democrats were putting together the economic stimulus package in 2009, Appropriations

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<sup>89</sup> Frenzel interview.

<sup>90</sup> Tanner interview.

<sup>91</sup> Murphy interview.

Committee Chairman David Obey (D-WI) reached out to committee Ranking Member Jerry Lewis (R-CA) to ask what the GOP wanted to see in the final bill. Lewis' response was terse: "Dave, I'm sorry, but I've simply got my instructions. We [Republicans] can't play. Period."<sup>92</sup>

So as members spend less time in committees that do not have true autonomy, relationships suffer. It used to be commonplace to get an amendment passed during a mark-up or hold a hearing without the leadership's consent. Not anymore. While some committees are less partisan than others, on a whole the entire committee system has faltered under the weight of the leadership, for which both parties are to blame.

## II. Shorter Workweek, Voting, and Rules Changes

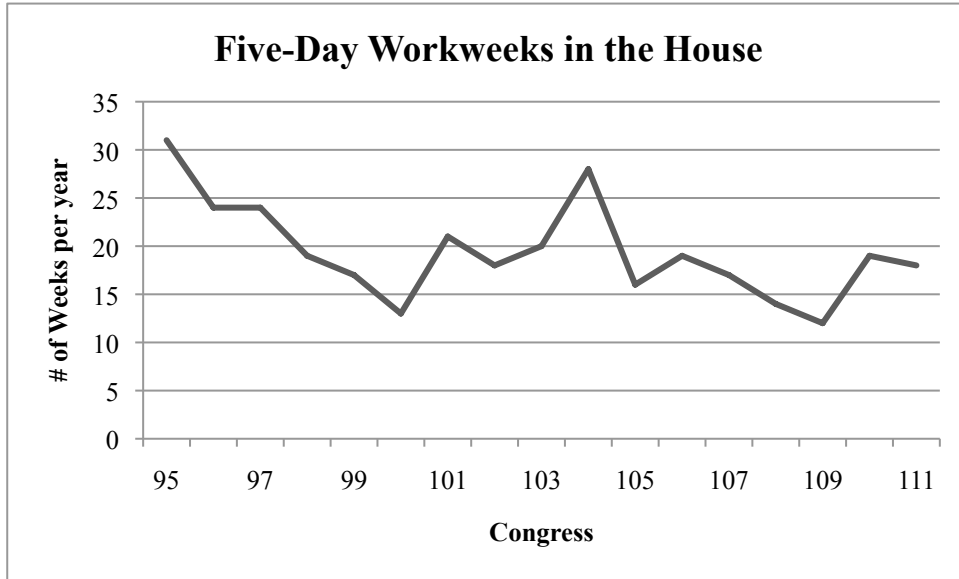
Another internal reason for decline has to do with the shorter Congressional workweek and fewer days in session overall. Congress used to work a five-day week, adjourning on Friday afternoon to allow members to get home. That soon dropped to four days a week, but by 1995 when the Republicans took over, it became three, a practice that has continued until today. Most Congressional weeks start Tuesday morning and finish Thursday afternoon. The following chart shows the decline of five-day workweeks in the House over the past several decades:

*Figure E: Number of five-day workweeks in the U.S. House of Representatives, 95<sup>th</sup>-111<sup>th</sup> Congress<sup>93</sup>*

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<sup>92</sup> Susan Davis, "Polarized Congress May Be Here to Stay," *National Journal Magazine*, October 16, 2010, <http://services.nationaljournal.com/njmagazine/coverstory.php> (accessed October 19, 2010).

<sup>93</sup> "Days in Session Calendars," *Library of Congress: Thomas*, March 2011, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/ds/index.html> (accessed March 24, 2011). For both *Figure E* and *Figure F*, I built the data myself using the Library of Congress index of Congressional days in session over the past 30 years. Surprisingly, my research yielded no pre-analyzed data for these charts. So I used the calendars to count the number of days in session myself for the appropriate Congresses.



On average, there has been a 50% decline in the number of full weeks worked between the 95<sup>th</sup> Congress and the 111<sup>th</sup>. Years ago, “the moniker ‘Tuesday to Thursday congressman’ was an insult that implied the person in question was not a serious legislator. But [Dick] Armey [the Republican Majority Leader] and Gingrich turned in into a badge of honor.”<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, not only is Congress in session for fewer full weeks, it is in session for fewer days per year overall:

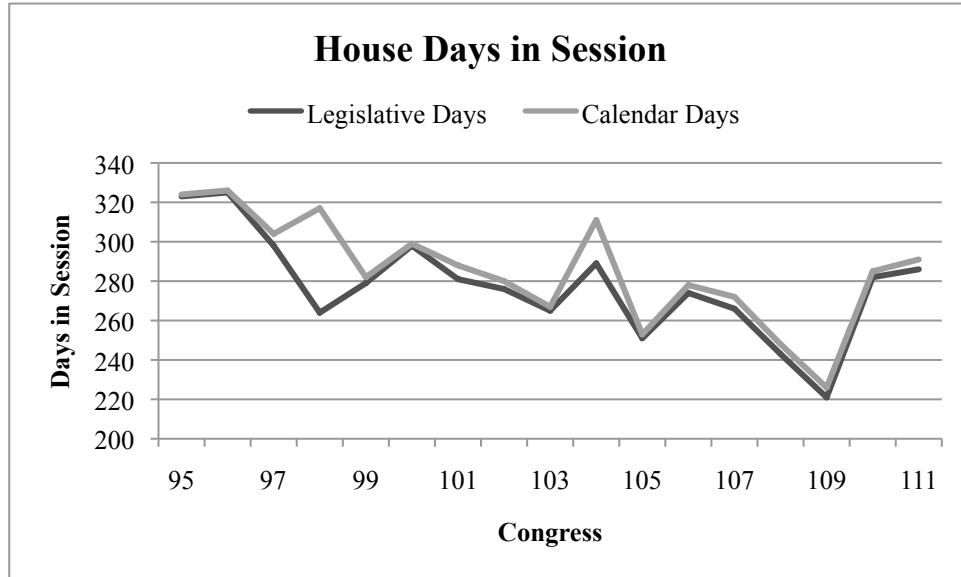
*Figure F: Number of Legislative and Calendar Days in Session, U.S. House of Representatives, 95<sup>th</sup>-111<sup>th</sup> Congress*<sup>95,96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Eilperin, 32.

<sup>95</sup> "Days in Session Calendars," *Library of Congress: Thomas*.

<sup>96</sup> Legislative and calendar days are often not exactly the same because legislative days can span over more than one calendar day. For example, if the House “recesses” rather than “adjourns” at the end of the day, the legislative day did not officially end, thus it will span over more than one day, leading to the discrepancy between the two numbers.





The decline is evident over the past 35 years. The two spikes in the graph are the 104<sup>th</sup> and 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, both of which resulted in a majority-party switch. The increase in number of days during those Congresses was due to a campaign pledge to be in session more days and enact campaign promises. However, there was an eventual decline after the 104<sup>th</sup>. Only time will tell if the new Republican majority in the 112<sup>th</sup> follows a similar path.

The shorter workweek has also had an effect on committees, floor debate, and voting. In the 1970s, members had five days to hold committee hearings, mark-up bills, whip amendments, attend fundraisers, meet with constituents and lobbyists, take part in floor debate, and vote on pieces of legislation. Now they have less than three days to do all of those same things. Simple math yields that while members are in Washington, they are extremely busy. “You had two extra days...you didn’t have to vote all the time,” said Frenzel.<sup>97</sup> Arcuri said that while he was in Congress, he was “being pulled in many different directions.”<sup>98</sup> Members spend less time in Washington, and thus, there are fewer opportunities to create personal relationships with others.

<sup>97</sup> Frenzel interview.

<sup>98</sup> Arcuri interview.

Parliamentary rules changes have also led to an increase in polarization, which have led to a decline in relationships. Before a bill is considered on the floor, the House Rules Committee must decide under what conditions the bill will be brought up for debate. Under *open rules*, any member can offer an amendment germane to the bill under consideration. Under *closed rules*, the Rules Committee can limit the number of amendments, or restrict them all together.

The practice of using open rules is an easy way to give the minority party a chance to have their policies adopted and was used regularly under Democratic Speakers Carl Albert and Tip O’Neill. Closed rules were used more frequently beginning in the 1990s and have only increased in number since then. According to the January 2009 *Brookings Institution* report, “Assessing the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, Anticipating the 111<sup>th</sup>,” there has been a marked increase in the percentage of restrictive rules over the past 20 years. The following chart shows this increase since the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress:

Table 3: Rules in the House: 103<sup>rd</sup>, 104<sup>th</sup>, 109<sup>th</sup>, and 110<sup>th</sup> Congress<sup>99</sup>

	103 <sup>rd</sup>	104 <sup>th</sup>	109 <sup>th</sup>	110 <sup>th</sup>
<i>Open</i>	48	69	22	12
<i>Modified Open</i>	16	18	2	11
<i>Structured</i>	36	23	49	62
<i>Modified Closed</i>	17	23	15	21
<i>Closed</i>	18	25	54	87
<i>Self-Executing</i>	20	19	36	49
<b><i>Restrictive Rules as Percentage of all Rules</i></b>	<b>52.6%</b>	<b>44.9%</b>	<b>83.1%</b>	<b>88.1%</b>

<sup>99</sup> Sarah A. Binder, Thomas E. Mann, Norman J. Ornstein and Molly Reynolds, "Assessing the 110th Congress, Anticipating the 111th," *Mending the Broken Branch* (Brookings Institution) 3 (January 2009): 1-41, p. 39.

While just over half of all rules were restricted in the 103<sup>rd</sup>, nearly nine of ten were in the 110<sup>th</sup>. Although there was a slight drop in the percentage of restrictive rules in the 104<sup>th</sup>, Brookings scholar Sarah Binder explained this decrease as a reflection of

Republicans' effort to follow through on their campaign commitment to open up the legislative process on the floor. It is hard to know whether Republicans truly believed in the value of participation or whether they felt compelled politically to live up to their electoral promises. Probably both. Regardless, the party's enthusiasm for full and open debate lasted just a short while. Soon thereafter, with shrunken majorities and rising partisanship, House Republicans reverted to the restrictive practices of their Democratic predecessors. Matters did not improve when Democrats regained control of the House. Although Speaker Pelosi pledged an open and fair House floor upon taking up the Speaker's gavel in 2007, Democrats brought all of their "Six for '06" priority issues to the House floor under restrictive rules.<sup>100</sup>

As a result of the shorter workweek, fewer members move their families to Washington because they can spend less time in DC. In terms of fundraising, as campaigns have become more and more expensive, members need to be raising money as much as possible. And, as with many other factors, this also circles back to Gingrich. He started the modern three-day workweek. And he was also successful in creating the anti-Washington culture that encouraged less time spent inside the Beltway.

Another consequence of the shorter workweek was the end of the traditional roll call voting procedure in the House. Electronic voting was first used in the House on January 23, 1973 to speed up the process of voting.<sup>101</sup> But even after electronic voting was introduced, votes provided a great time for members to mingle on the floor until the final gavel. Frenzel recalled talking to other members while waiting for your name to be called. Over time, as members

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<sup>100</sup> Sarah A. Binder, "Will John Boehner Reform the House?," *Brookings Institution*, November 10, 2010, [http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/1119\\_boehner\\_binder.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/1119_boehner_binder.aspx) (accessed March 29, 2011).

<sup>101</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Electronic Voting System in the House of Representatives: History and Evolution*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2008), 25, p. 6.

became busier and weeks became shorter, they simply cast their vote without hanging around. “During roll call votes, members were on the floor talking to other members about baseball, their families. Now they wait until the last minute to vote. They don’t spend any time on the floor,” said Boehlert, another way in which members no longer form relationships.<sup>102</sup>

In terms of the closed rule process, it makes the minority even less willing to participate in debate when their voices and opinions are quickly dismissed. “You don’t need an open rule to get a good bill, but allowing the minority party any opportunity to offer relevant amendments can only improve the final product,” noted Sam Marchio, Arcuri’s former chief of staff.<sup>103</sup> It was only recently, however, that the minority party has been both unwilling and unable to participate in floor debate. In 1953, when Democrats lost control of the House, Democratic Leader Sam Rayburn told his caucus not to frustrate the new majority or obstruct the chamber: “We’re in the minority now. But we’re still going to be helpful and constructive. Remember, any jackass can kick over a barn door. It takes a carpenter to build one.”<sup>104</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, Democrats and Republicans worked together on a host of issues and passed many bills under open rules. That changed beginning in the early 1990s with the increased use of closed rules that shut out the minority from the entire legislative process. The minority feels helpless and is unwilling to participate. It is a problem when members of Congress describe being in the minority as the “lowest form of life there is,” which is exactly what Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (D-FL) told the new freshman class in February 2011.<sup>105</sup> When the minority feels shut out and like they

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<sup>102</sup> Boehlert interview.

<sup>103</sup> Sam Marchio, interview by Evan Philipson, (January 11, 2011).

<sup>104</sup> O’Neill, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Bob Cusack, "Advice to freshman: Don't be a jerk," *The Hill*, February 17, 2011, <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/144911-advice-to-freshmen-dont-be-a-jerk> (accessed February 17, 2011).

do not matter, according to Congressional scholar Norm Ornstein, “you end up with bad legislation.”<sup>106</sup>

### **III. House Demographics**

A third internal factor that has affected camaraderie in the House is the demographic make-up of House members. From Watergate (and earlier) through the 1990s, both the Democratic and Republican parties had a significant amount of geographic diversity. There were sizeable numbers of Southern Democrats and New England Republicans. These members were often more moderate, more bipartisan, and more willing to work across the aisle. These members also were able to – for the most part – moderate their leadership and prevent their respective parties away from staking out extremely unpopular positions.

Today, however, Democrats and Republicans have become more homogenous in both the geographic and ideological make-up of their members. As a result, there are a dwindling number of moderates in both parties. Over the years, Democrats have generally been more accepting of moderates in their ranks, while Republicans have not. Following the 1994 election when many Democrats lost their seats, Charlie Stenholm, John Tanner, and others joined forces to form the Blue Dog Coalition, a group of moderate Democrats united by a more moderate ideology than their liberal leadership. Many Blue Dogs, even today, come from Congressional districts where Republicans outnumber Democrats or where the Republican presidential candidate gets more votes than the Democrat. Republicans have similar moderate caucuses, such as the Tuesday Group, but none are equal in prominence or power to that of the Blue Dogs. One reason for this is that Republicans have been more able and willing to drive moderates out of the party; Arlen Specter is one such example.

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<sup>106</sup> Eilperin, 55.

Specter, the longtime Republican senator from Pennsylvania, switched parties and became a Democrat when the GOP no longer tolerated his moderate views. In his “Closing Argument” on the Senate floor in December 2010, he called the Republican Party’s shunning of moderate members “sophisticated cannibalism.”<sup>107</sup> But in a February 2011 interview with the *Penn Current*, he amended those remarks: “I made a mistake; I should not have called it sophisticated. It’s just raw cannibalism. The fights between the parties have descended to a level where right now it appears we are going to have two years of chaos,” said Specter.<sup>108</sup> Other examples of this Republican “cannibalism” in 2010 include Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE) and Sen. Bob Bennett (R-UT), both veteran Republicans who were unable to secure the Republican nomination in their respective re-election races, losing out to more conservative candidates.

This demographic shift has affected personal relationships on the Hill, as well. Rep. Boehlert, known as one of the most moderate Republicans in Congress, said that he “wouldn’t have been able to survive today.”<sup>109</sup> Tanner, Murphy, and Arcuri – all Blue Dogs in the 110<sup>th</sup> and 111<sup>th</sup> Congresses – told me about huge ideological arguments between the Blue Dogs and Progressives within the Democratic caucus. Issues like healthcare and cap-and-trade, for example, pitted “progressives vs. Blue Dogs. Members have to represent their district, and Blue Dogs got annoyed” with leadership, Arcuri told me.<sup>110</sup> Others recalled instances where progressive Democrats wanted to take down Blue Dogs, another example of Specter’s “cannibalism” characterization, but this time on the Democratic side of the aisle.

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<sup>107</sup> Arlen Specter, “Farewell to the Senate: Closing Argument,” *Congressional Record - 111th Congress*, December 22, 2010, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov) (accessed March 27, 2011).

<sup>108</sup> Tanya Barrientos, “Q&A with Senator Arlen Specter,” *Penn Current*, March 24, 2011, <http://www.upenn.edu/pennnews/current/interviews/030311-1.html> (accessed March 24, 2011).

<sup>109</sup> Boehlert interview.

<sup>110</sup> Arcuri interview.

Intra-party fighting is nothing new, as Congressional majorities are won with big tents. However, for years of Democratic leadership the so-called “Austin-Boston Connection” kept both factions of the Democratic Party – New England liberals and Southerners – held together. But something changed in 1994. Democratic moderates were wiped out, leaving the remaining Democrats as a fairly homogenous liberal caucus, and a large number of conservative Republicans took their place. As a result, beginning with the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress, both parties became further apart ideologically, which put moderates in a tough spot. Do you vote in lock step with party leadership or do you vote based on your district’s preference? “My constituents want me to be independent and have clout,” Arcuri complained, “but you can’t do both.”<sup>111</sup> Independence comes from bucking party leadership, while clout comes by toeing the party line. The Blue Dogs of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress are a perfect example of trying to strike this difficult balance. Both Arcuri and Murphy were Blue Dogs and ultimately defeated in the 2010 election by Republican challengers. Republicans have a significant amount of infighting, as well. There is a constant struggle between the party’s moderate and conservative wings. It makes forming relationships difficult when a former member of the GOP characterizes the party as “cannibals.” “There is a constant struggle for the center,” said Borski, “and we lost it because Democrats ostracized the Blue Dogs.”<sup>112</sup> Partisanship is on the rise, but the intra-party struggles are equally as important and destructive to the chamber and to the relationships in it.

The other demographic shift that has occurred in Congress is the make-up of the members themselves. Washington experience can be cast as a negative quality, enabling “non-politicians” to be elected to Congress. These include businessmen, doctors, professors, and other

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<sup>111</sup> Arcuri interview.

<sup>112</sup> Borski interview.

professionals that do not usually enter the political arena. Furthermore, the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress has the fewest number of veterans in Congress since World War Two.<sup>113</sup>

This personal demographic change has also lessened civility. While this is not always the case, members of Congress who are elected with prior legislative or political experience are much more willing to work across the aisle and forge relationships. “Elected officials were used to” working with the other party, said Arcuri, who was the Oneida County, NY, District Attorney and the county’s highest-ranking Democrat while in office.<sup>114</sup> But many freshmen in 1995 had no held no prior office and did not have any experience crossing the aisle. Their campaign rhetoric reflects their view of the other party as the “enemy,” and that language makes it difficult to create the necessary relationships once on the Hill. But to others, previous political experience does not make a difference in Congress. All that matters is a willingness to work across the aisle and get things done.

Besides fewer members without prior experience, there are the fewest number of veterans in Congress today since World War Two. Only 21% of the 435 current members of the House have served in the military, compared to over 70% in 1975.<sup>115</sup> This is primarily due to the end of the draft in 1973, but to Patrick Murphy, a veteran of the Iraq War, this is a problem. “Veterans put their country first,” he told me.<sup>116</sup> On the battlefield, there are no party labels. One of Murphy’s best friends in Congress is current Rep. Tom Rooney, a Republican from Florida. They met in the Army JAG Corps and have been friends ever since – party affiliation does not

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<sup>113</sup> Jennifer Rizzo, "Veterans in Congress at lowest level since World War II," *CNN*, January 21, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/US/01/20/congress.veterans/index.html> (accessed February 1, 2011).

<sup>114</sup> Arcuri interview.

<sup>115</sup> Rizzo, "Veterans in Congress at lowest level since World War II."

<sup>116</sup> Murphy interview.



matter to them. Rooney even came to the Philadelphia suburbs to campaign for Murphy during his run for Congress in 2006. “But that’s the exception, not the rule,” Murphy said.<sup>117</sup>

#### IV. CODELS

A Congressional Delegation (CODEL) trip is a taxpayer-funded trip for members of Congress to go abroad. These trips are essential for congressmen and senators to meet with world leaders, visit war zones, and build and strengthen American alliances around the world. These trips are also a great way to spend time with other members and forge personal relationships. But over the past several years, many members have shunned such trips, “fearing they could not convince their constituents that such trips helped them do their job.”<sup>118</sup>

There are two reasons why members choose to avoid CODELs. First is that the media tends to blow these trips out of proportion, characterizing the trips not as official business but as shopping sprees and golf outings. “The press, in its cynical way, loves to portray just about every Congressional trip as a junket – an elaborate foreign vacation by a group of members at public expense. I think that’s ridiculous,” wrote O’Neill in his autobiography.<sup>119</sup> For example, a July 2009 *Wall Street Journal* article did just that. The article described several trips abroad and scoured the Congressional Record for line-by-line expense reports.<sup>120</sup> A follow up article by the same authors in January 2010 was even more scathing. It discussed a December 2008 trip to Africa led by Oklahoma Republican Senator James Inhofe, in which staffers “went to a Wal-Mart and bought \$130 worth of cookies, mints and other munchies for the trip. They also spent \$250

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<sup>117</sup> Murphy interview.

<sup>118</sup> Eilperin, 33-34.

<sup>119</sup> O’Neill, 292.

<sup>120</sup> Brody Mullins and T.W. Farnam, "Congress's Travel Tab Swells," *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124650399438184235.html> (accessed March 2, 2011).

at Total Wine & More.”<sup>121</sup> The same article did a similar line-item report for a March 2008 trip led by then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi:

Before Ms. Pelosi, a California Democrat, and nine other lawmakers left for England, India and Spain in March 2008, officials from the Air Force stocked the government plane with \$438.75 worth of alcohol, including three cases of beer, 15 bottles of wine, three bottles of vodka, Crown Royal, Dewar's and other liquor, records show. Air Force officials spent another \$750 on chips, cakes and other snacks.<sup>122</sup>

Clearly, with this type of press coverage, it is easy to see why members shy away from going on these trips, even though they are important. The *Wall Street Journal*, too busy characterizing these CODELs as drunken vacations, did not discuss the actual reasons for either trip. According to a press release from Sen. Inhofe's office, the December 2008 trip to Africa was to reaffirm a “commitment to the global effort against HIV/AIDS” and meet with African leaders to discuss security policy.<sup>123</sup> Pelosi's delegation in March 2008 included a meeting with the Prime Minister of India and other leaders to strengthen U.S.-India relations on topics such as “terrorism, the climate crisis, the situation in Tibet, and the pending civilian nuclear treaty.”<sup>124</sup> The bipartisan group also met with Indian business leaders to discuss private sector economic investment, as well as the Dalai Lama.

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<sup>121</sup> T.W. Farnam and Brody Mullins, "Military Helps Fund Congressional Trips," *Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704362004575000943067824382.html> (accessed March 2, 2011).

<sup>122</sup> T.W. Farnam and Brody Mullins, "Military Helps Fund Congressional Trips.”

<sup>123</sup> "Inhofe, Aderhold Issue Statement on World AIDS Day as they depart for CODEL to Africa," *United States Senator James Inhofe: Press Room*, December 1, 2008, [http://inhofe.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressRoom.PressReleases&ContentRecord\\_id=f4be6073-802a-23ad-441f-2856200637a5&Region\\_id=&Issue\\_id=](http://inhofe.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressRoom.PressReleases&ContentRecord_id=f4be6073-802a-23ad-441f-2856200637a5&Region_id=&Issue_id=) (accessed March 2, 2011).

<sup>124</sup> "Pelosi, Bipartisan Congressional Leaders Meet with Indian Prime Minister and other Indian Leaders," *Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi: Press Releases*, March 20, 2008, <http://pelosi.house.gov/news/press-releases/2008/03/releases-March08-indian-prime-minister.shtml> (accessed March 2, 2011).

The other reason members do not go on CODELs is that their constituents view these trips as a needless taxpayer expense or as unnecessary to be an effective member of Congress. For example, Arcuri told me that one former Blue Dog member would not travel anywhere unless his “life would be in danger,” a sign that his constituents would not take kindly to a trip to London or Paris on their dime.<sup>125</sup> On the issue of spouses, most tend not to go on trips today, something that used to be the norm years ago. In fact, many freshmen in both 1995 and 2011 highlight the fact that they do not have a passport, arguing that their job is in the United States, not abroad.

This is a problem. Not simply, as Tanner put it, because “there is no way to be an effective member of Congress without a passport,” but because CODELs are great opportunities to create personal relationships.<sup>126</sup> “Travel is very important,” said Frenzel, who noted that he made his best friends in Congress on trips abroad.<sup>127</sup> He also told me that the number of trips abroad declined after Gingrich took over and fewer spouses travel now. Boehlert loved going on CODELs and tells new members of Congress to do so. He told me that an important benefit of traveling abroad is that you “get to know colleagues and their spouses, and what makes them tick. You quickly discover there are far more similarities in interests and values than there are differences. That has a profound impact on future working relationships.”<sup>128</sup> Arcuri became very friendly with conservative Republican Reps. Joe Wilson and Mike Pence on a weeklong trip to Iraq and Afghanistan. “You learn things about other members on CODELs that you can’t learn in

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<sup>125</sup> Arcuri interview.

<sup>126</sup> Tanner interview.

<sup>127</sup> Frenzel interview.

<sup>128</sup> Boehlert interview.

Congress,” Arcuri said.<sup>129</sup> Stenholm told me that he wished he had gone on more trips, saying it is “not as easy to get mad at another member” when you have spent a week abroad with him.<sup>130</sup>

According to a *Roll Call* analysis of an August 2010 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report entitled, “International Travel by Congress: Legislation in the 111th Congress, Background, and Potential Policy Options,” “the cost of Congressional overseas travel rose from about \$2.8 million in 1994 to about \$13.7 million in 2009.”<sup>131</sup> This is due, in part, to inflation and more trips to Iraq and Afghanistan, among other factors. But despite these figures, members told me that they observe that there are both fewer CODELs overall and fewer members who are willing to go on these trips. As previously argued, if members perceive that this is the case, then that is arguably more important than what is actually occurring. Nevertheless, the CRS report also found that there is limited public data on CODEL specifics. “There is no single source that identifies all international travel undertaken by the House or Senate, and no means to identify the number of trips taken, destinations visited, travelers, total costs, or costs paid for by funds appropriated to government entities other than Congress.”<sup>132</sup>

### ***Role of the President***

This paper cannot leave out an examination of how the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue affects relationships on the Hill. In general, divided government can be more beneficial for relationships than unified government. The main reason for this is that in a divided government, there *has* to be bipartisanship. Any piece of legislation that was passed between 1981 and 1993,

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<sup>129</sup> Arcuri interview.

<sup>130</sup> Stenholm interview.

<sup>131</sup> Paul Singer, “Travel Disclosure Rules Panned,” *Roll Call*, August 3, 2010, [http://www.rollcall.com/issues/56\\_16/-48943-1.html?zkPrintable=true](http://www.rollcall.com/issues/56_16/-48943-1.html?zkPrintable=true) (accessed March 16, 2011).

<sup>132</sup> Congressional Research Service, *International Travel by Congress: Legislation in the 111th Congress, Background, and Potential Policy Options*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 2010), 32, p. 13.

for example, had to be passed by a Democratic Congress and signed by a Republican president (not including overriding presidential vetoes). During the Reagan administration, there was a commitment from both the White House and Congressional leaders to work out their partisan differences, find common ground, and pass productive legislation. For Bob Michel, having an ally in the White House made his job as minority leader much easier. “President Reagan was a big part of the legislative process,” said Michel.<sup>133</sup>

Partisanship rose in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Congress, the first time the Democrats controlled both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue in 12 years. And although the Republican Revolution in 1994 led to a further increase in partisanship, President Clinton was still successful at working with Republicans on the Hill to pass many bipartisan pieces of legislation, including Welfare Reform, Defense of Marriage Act, Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, and the Water Resources Development Act.

Recently, however, it is difficult to assess the relative difference of unified vs. divided government in today’s highly politicized era. One reason for this is that since Watergate, there have been only 12.5 years of complete united government (when one party controls presidency, House, and Senate), and only 8.5 years since 1981.

*Table 4: United Government, 1977-2011*<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Michel interview.

<sup>134</sup> In the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, Republican held majorities in both the House and Senate until June 2001, when Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords left the Republican Party to caucus with the Democrats. Before Jeffords’ party-switch, the Senate was divided 50-50, with Vice President Dick Cheney casting the tie-breaking vote. Once Jeffords switched, Democrats controlled the Senate and the remainder of the 107<sup>th</sup> was a divided government.

Congress	Years	Party	President
95 <sup>th</sup>	1977-1979	Democrat	Jimmy Carter
96 <sup>th</sup>	1979-1981	Democrat	Jimmy Carter
103 <sup>rd</sup>	1993-1995	Democrat	Bill Clinton
107 <sup>th</sup>	January-June 2001	Republican	George W. Bush
108 <sup>th</sup>	2003-2005	Republican	George W. Bush
109 <sup>th</sup>	2005-2007	Republican	George W. Bush
111 <sup>th</sup>	2009-2011	Democrat	Barack Obama

Thus, there is limited data to make anything more than sweeping generalizations, but it is hard to escape the fact that in a divided government there has to be some degree of bipartisanship. When Democrats took control of Congress for the final two years of President George W. Bush's term in office, there was some bipartisanship, but not a significant amount. In fact, Patrick Murphy said that there "was not really a difference in the 110<sup>th</sup> vs. 111<sup>th</sup>." <sup>135</sup> While the 111<sup>th</sup> was highly partisan, there was some degree of bipartisanship in the lame-duck session in December 2010, showing that bipartisanship can be done. What will come of the 112<sup>th</sup> is still unknown. But according to John Tanner, "divided government is the only hope. It makes them work together." Congress is broken, he told me, and said that, "we shouldn't have to have wave elections to make the system work." <sup>136</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Murphy interview.

<sup>136</sup> Tanner interview.

## **Section III: Consequences, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

It is clear that the factors discussed in Section II all played roles in the decline of personal relationships among members of the House. Some were more important than others and many are interconnected, but each has been a part of the increasingly downward trend of fewer and less meaningful personal relationships. So what? Do these relationships really matter on Capitol Hill? Is Congress worse off because of this decline? And do relationships actually affect legislation that the chamber produces? The answer is yes.

This section will look at the effects of the decline of personal relationships on Congress as an institution, as well as offer several recommendations that, in this author's opinion, can start to reverse the trend. Finally, the paper will conclude with a prognosis for the future.

### ***Deep Impact***

Personal relationships unequivocally matter for a variety of reasons. First, Congress produces better legislation when members willingly work across the aisle with their colleagues – “better” meaning legislation that incorporates ideas from both parties, that effectively addresses the problem it aims to solve, is openly debated, and has public support. Throughout American history, landmark legislation has not been rammed through Congress using obscure parliamentary tricks or closed rules. Major legislation has been openly debated and passed with bipartisan majorities. Legislation like Tax Reform in 1986, the Brady Bill, NAFTA, Welfare Reform, and SCHIP, for example, were all passed with bipartisan majorities.<sup>1</sup> While no piece of legislation is perfect, that these laws were put together in a bipartisan manner makes them more

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<sup>1</sup> For more on bipartisanship and winning coalitions, see: Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

representative of what the American people want. It is also important to consider legislation that is *not* produced as a result of today's level of partisanship and polarization. What laws could have been passed if today's lawmakers had the same types of relationships as their predecessors?

One of my interview questions asked for examples of specific pieces of legislation in which a personal relationship actually mattered. Every member was able to give me at least one example, proving that relationships do make a difference in lawmaking. Examples included superfund reform, the Clean Air Act amendments in 1990, Sarbanes-Oxley, 1986 Tax Reform, NOAA funding, the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act, Welfare Reform in 1996, among others. These pieces of legislation range in importance, but members cite these acts as a direct result of the positive impact of a personal relationship with another member, either within the same party or not. These laws were crafted in a bipartisan fashion with input and suggestions from the minority party. As a result, they are better and stronger pieces of legislation.

In recent years, however, it has been practice for the majority party to pass major legislation without any votes from the minority. Take the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress for example: on the final vote for each bill, not a single House Republican voted for the stimulus package, not a single House Republican voted for healthcare reform, and only three voted for Wall Street Reform. These strict party-line votes became more commonplace with Gingrich, and now happen routinely. In this manner, the House has come to resemble a parliamentary system of government, where party discipline trumps all other factors. "It's the antithesis of what the founders wanted," said Tanner.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Tanner interview.



In *Federalist No. 10* written in 1787, James Madison warned the young United States against the “mischiefs of faction.”<sup>3</sup> In his 1796 Farewell Address, President George Washington echoed Madison’s sentiment. “I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the state,” wrote our first chief executive. “Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party, generally.”<sup>4</sup> Two-hundred-plus years later, it seems that Congress still has not learned its lesson. That parties are extremely powerful, ideological, and homogenous does not enable Congress to produce moderate, productive legislation. It is a problem when members do not want to reach across the aisle because they fear repercussions from party leaders, donors, and constituents. Leadership will rewrite bills that are not liberal or conservative enough, and committee chairmen have been stripped of their power to run their committee and control its agenda. Moderates – the ones most willing and able to work across the aisle – are virtually extinct, having been gerrymandered out of their seat or beaten in a primary by a more ideological candidate. The characterization of Washington as a dirty word, that the Beltway is somehow a bad, corrupt place, does not engender members to move their families to the district or spend the weekends in DC. Instead, they have to be home raising money to finance their next campaign, which promises to be more expensive than the last one.

### ***How to Fix the Problem***

So how does Congress fix this problem? There are a few answers. Four practical and realistic solutions are listed here in order of most likely to be accomplished to least likely. That is not to say that each of these is not without obstacles. If enacted, these four changes would not bring back the “good old days” on the Hill per se, but they would be a start to restoring

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<sup>3</sup> James Madison, "Federalist No. 10," in *The Federalist Papers* (1787).

<sup>4</sup> George Washington, "Farewell Address" (1796).

camaraderie, civility, and relationships that have been an integral part of Congress for over 200 years.

### **Solution 1: Redistricting Reform**

The first solution would be to change the way that states draw Congressional lines every ten years. As previously discussed, redistricting has become a highly politicized event, with parties trying to garner every possible advantage when drawing new lines. Some states, like California and Arizona, for example, have taken politics out of their redistricting processes by creating independent commissions that control the redistricting process every ten years. In November 2010, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment changing their redistricting rules. But the vast majority of states – 36 to be exact – still use a political process.

Article I, Section 4, of the U.S. Constitution states that “The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations.” That is exactly what it would take to change the way states shape their Congressional districts. Two bills have been introduced in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress to do just that. H.R. 453, the John Tanner Fairness and Independence in Redistricting Act, is a Blue Dog bill sponsored by North Carolina Democrat Rep. Heath Shuler. This bill would require “redistricting to be conducted through a plan developed by the independent redistricting commission established in the state, or if such plan is not enacted into law, the redistricting plan selected by the state's highest court or developed by a U.S. district court.”<sup>5</sup> A similar bill has been introduced in previous Congresses, but has failed to garner the necessary support. Shuler’s bill, which has 18 co-sponsors, also

Prescribes requirements for: (1) establishment of a state independent redistricting commission (including provisions for holding each of its meetings in public and maintaining a public Internet site), (2) development of a redistricting plan

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<sup>5</sup> "H.R. 453," *Library of Congress: Thomas*, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov).

(including soliciting and considering public comments) and its submission to the state legislature (with public notice of plans at least seven days prior to such submission), (3) selection of a plan, under specified conditions, by the state's highest court or the U.S. district court for the district in which the capital of the state is located, (4) special rules for redistricting conducted under a federal court order, and (5) Election Assistance Commission payments to states for carrying out redistricting.<sup>6</sup>

"The American people should choose their representatives—not the other way around," Rep. Shuler said in a statement announcing the bill's introduction in January 2011. "The current system of gerrymandered districts has left a patchwork of highly-partisan, ideologically skewed Congressional districts, where Representatives are more beholden to their political party than the constituents they were elected to serve."<sup>7</sup>

The other bill, H.R. 590, the Redistricting Reform Act of 2011, is similar to Shuler's bill. Sponsored by Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), H.R. 590 would "prohibit States from carrying out more than one Congressional redistricting after a decennial census and apportionment, to require States to conduct such redistricting through independent commissions, and for other purposes."<sup>8</sup> Both bills have been referred to the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution for review. To date, there are no hearings or mark-ups scheduled for either bill.

Nearly everyone I interviewed listed redistricting reform as a step in the right direction to increase camaraderie and decrease polarization in Congress. "You have to change the redistricting process," said Charlie Stenholm about an issue that hits close to home – he lost his seat when Tom DeLay dismantled his district in the 2003 redistricting effort.<sup>9</sup> Tanner, who championed the redistricting issue while in the House, said that it is critical that you have

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<sup>6</sup> "H.R. 453," *Library of Congress: Thomas*, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov).

<sup>7</sup> "Rep. Shuler Introduce Fairness and Independence in Redistricting Act," *Congressman Heath Shuler*, January 26, 2011, <http://shuler.house.gov/2011/01/rep-shuler-introduces-fairness-and-independence-in-redistricting-act.shtml> (accessed March 3, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> "H.R. 590," *Library of Congress: Thomas*, [www.thomas.gov](http://www.thomas.gov).

<sup>9</sup> Stenholm interview.

“independent commissions and transparency.”<sup>10</sup> Redistricting reform would lead to the creation of fewer safe districts, thereby increasing the number of competitive seats and election of more moderate members of Congress.

### **Solution 2: Return to a Five-Day Workweek**

Returning to a five-day workweek for members of Congress would go a long way to restoring civility in the chamber, as well.<sup>11</sup> As this paper has discussed, there has been a decrease in the overall number of days in session and the number of five-day workweeks over the past several decades. While it makes life easier for members to be in their home districts four or five nights a week, it has a detrimental effect on relationships among members and on quality legislation. Research has shown that proximity is the number one factor that leads to the formation of relationships, and being in Washington more days per week and more days per year would undoubtedly increase the proximity of members to each other.

Congress should, therefore, take the initiative and return to a five-day workweek. This would mean working, for example, three straight weeks in Washington, then taking a week or two recess. It would allow for the same number of legislative days in session, but would give members more time per week in Washington to fulfill their official duties as congressmen. Today, members of Congress are extremely busy. Their duties include going to committee hearings and mark-ups, meeting with constituents, lobbyists, and other elected officials, attending fundraisers, traveling around their district, not to mention actually addressing the numerous challenges that the United States faces – several wars in the Middle East, a rising

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<sup>10</sup> Tanner interview.

<sup>11</sup> Republicans might argue that they believe in limited government and therefore do not want to be in Washington for any additional time. But under the current schedule, there is simply not enough time for Congress to conduct its routine business. Spending less time in Washington is certainly an option, but Congress still needs to be in DC for a minimum amount of time to pass a budget, hold hearings, debate legislation, and carry out the rest of its Constitutional duties.

national debt, a huge deficit problem, energy independence, immigration, for example. Working a five-day week would enable members to spend more time in committee, more time debating and discussing legislation, and more time spent with other members forging relationships around common issues.

This paper is not the first to propose a return to a five-day workweek. In fact, observers of Congress who have seen the institutional decline of the body have discussed this proposal for years. Norm Ornstein brought this up in a March 2006 *Washington Post* op-ed, arguing that a “part-time Congress” hurt the United States:

A part-time Congress in a country with a \$13 trillion economy and federal budget near \$3 trillion, in a globalized, technologically sophisticated world, is itself a danger to the checks and balances built into American democracy, and to high-quality, careful policymaking and oversight. It's not too much to ask Congress to commit to spending at least half the year -- 26 weeks -- working full-time, five days a week, thus providing at least a measure of the deliberation and attention to detail that are so lacking now.<sup>12</sup>

Ornstein reaffirmed this call in a May 2009 piece in *Roll Call*. So did longtime Democratic Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-IN) in an August 2009 article, in which he wrote that

A longer work week in Washington would give them the chance to build the ties they need to work together, to craft legislation without constantly looking at the clock, to overcome the delaying tactics that have so frustrated policy-makers in recent years, and to make more rapid progress on the truly difficult issues that confront Congress with such regularity these days.<sup>13</sup>

This change will not be easy, especially with the availability of cross-country flights and the fact that most members' families are at home. But members run for Congress with the knowledge

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<sup>12</sup> Norman Ornstein, "Part-Time Congress," *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/06/AR2006030601611.html> (accessed January 26, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Lee Hamilton, "Congress Needs a Five-Day Work Week," *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, August 31, 2009, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=director.thing&typeid=A687F6E6-1125-AADA-EA0F1BD2F5FD8AEC&itemid=71E1188C-9839-4C90-B4A02265C3903248> (accessed March 28, 2011).

that their job is in Washington, DC. Spending more time there will only reaffirm their commitment to their constituents and to the country.

### **Solution 3: Campaign Finance Reform**

A third practical reform revolves around campaign finance. McCain-Feingold tried to rein in the out-of-control nature of campaign finance; it did not go far enough to effectively address independent expenditure groups that became powerful in the 2004, 2006, and 2008 election cycles. Nevertheless, BRCA did a relatively good job of laying the foundation for further legislation in the future. However, the entire campaign finance rulebook changed in the wake of the 2010 *Citizens United* decision. The case struck down key parts of BRCA and the 2010 election cycle saw unprecedented levels of spending. Furthermore, fundraising has taken greater and greater importance to members of Congress, so much that members are often forced to choose between fundraising and their legislative duties.

Congress can proactively pass new legislation to comply with the *Citizens United* decision and also limit the importance of money in campaigns. Public financing of campaigns is an oft-discussed solution to the issue of money in elections. While this paper will fall short of calling for complete public financing of political campaigns, legislation that puts opponents on a more equal financial playing field would benefit the American people. Rather than choosing a candidate who inundates the airwaves with campaign ads because of superior cash, voters would have the opportunity to choose the candidate with the best stance on the issues, not the one with the bigger bank account. New campaign finance legislation should also require public disclosure of all funds used in political campaigns. Undisclosed spending for political races hurts transparency and is bad for the Democratic process.

Most importantly, what serious campaign finance reform would do is lessen the burden of members to be constantly fundraising. Instead of jetting home on a Thursday afternoon to attend

several weekend fundraisers in the district, members might have the ability to spend more time in Washington, creating relationships with their colleagues and becoming better legislators. This will enable these members to both get to know their colleagues on a more personal level and allow them to debate, discuss, and improve key pieces of legislation. Passing quality and beneficial legislation, after all, ought to be significantly more important than a weekend fundraiser back home.

#### **Solution 4: Decentralize Power of the Leadership**

A final way that would restore comity to the House would be to devolve the power of the leadership. Democratic speakers in the 1970s and 1980s allowed their committee chairmen significant control of their committees and allowed for open rule debate on a number of legislative items. That changed in 1995, when Speaker Gingrich centralized power in the Speaker's office and limited power of committee chairmen. Both factors discouraged bipartisanship – in committees, bills that were not conservative enough were rewritten; on the floor, the minority party was completely left out of debate. Democrats continued both of these policies during their majority in the 110<sup>th</sup> and 111<sup>th</sup> Congresses.

Speaker John Boehner has pledged to give more power to his committee chairmen and allow open debate on more measures. Thus far in the 112<sup>th</sup> there have been some examples of this. During a February 2011 debate on a continuing resolution to fund the government, Boehner allowed complete open rule and saw hundreds of amendments offered and debated. Even Democrats praised this change. Rep. George Miller, a senior California Democrat and close ally of Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, said the debate was “rather retro. We haven't operated this

way in probably a decade. But it's encouraging."<sup>14</sup> If Boehner allows his chairmen a greater degree of autonomy than his Republican predecessor Gingrich, committee hearings and mark-ups will have more healthy debate and produce bipartisan compromises.

Like the three other solutions offered here, this change will not come easy. Boehner, along with other members of the Republican leadership, will not like their power taken away. Nor will they like when leadership-backed amendments are voted down, which actually happened during the aforementioned debate on government funding. The leadership will also be quick to rein in a chairman's power should he or she stray off message or introduce legislation contrary to the party's goals.

Despite these reservations, Speaker Boehner and his successors would be wise to have more open rules. Open rules enable both parties to offer amendments, allow for healthy discussion of the issues, and often result in better final legislation that has been debated in public by both parties. Members, especially those in the minority, will be more willing to participate in both floor debate and committee hearings, knowing that their opinions will not be immediately discarded or the bill re-written.

### ***Moving Forward***

On January 8, 2011, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was critically wounded when she was shot during a district event in Arizona. Following the attacks, many cited the decline of civil discourse as a reason for the shootings. While this was not necessarily the cause, the horrific events that resulted in six deaths led to a brief respite from the partisanship to which our nation

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<sup>14</sup> Jordan Fabian, "Pelosi confidant praises Republicans for 'retro' floor debate on spending bill," *The Hill*, February 17, 2011, <http://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/144749-leading-dem-praises-gops-open-debate-on-spending> (accessed February 17, 2011).



has grown accustomed. President Obama, speaking at memorial service in Tucson, was hopeful that the shootings could lead to more civility in the country:

If...their deaths help usher in more civility in our public discourse, let's remember that it is not because a simple lack of civility caused this tragedy, but rather because only a more civil and honest public discourse can help us face up to our challenges as a nation.<sup>15</sup>

During President Obama's State of the Union a few weeks after the shooting, members of Congress chose to sit with members of the opposite party in what many hoped would be a return to civility. The United States also saw partisanship cast aside following the September 11, 2001, attacks. While members' actions were commendable in the wake of both tragedies, it should not take a terrorist attack or an assassination attempt to make our elected officials take a step back and realize that they are Americans first, and members of their respective parties second.

In April 2010, Allegheny College's Center for Political Participation published a report about civility in politics. The report, entitled "Nastiness, Name-calling & Negativity: The Allegheny College Survey of Civility and Compromise in American Politics," sought to "get at the heart of public perceptions regarding the tone of contemporary politics."<sup>16</sup> The results showed that the American people recognize that civility is important and that Congress has a major institutional problem on its hands. The report found that more than 95% of respondents

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<sup>15</sup> Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at a Memorial Service for the Victims of the Shooting in Tucson, Arizona," *The White House*, January 12, 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/12/remarks-president-barack-obama-memorial-service-victims-shooting-tucson> (accessed March 31, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> *Nastiness, Name-calling & Negativity: The Allegheny College Survey of Civility and Compromise in American Politics*, (Center for Political Participation, Allegheny College, 2010), 48, p. 3.

agreed that civility is important in politics. Eighty-seven percent said that it is possible to respectfully disagree.<sup>17</sup>

It seems that many of today's politicians have either forgotten or ignored those two sentiments. But many former members of Congress have not. Based on my interviews and research, it is clear that things have changed since the "good old days" of yesteryear. No more weekend golf outings, no more Wednesday night poker games, no more carpools to soccer practice. But there were many that resisted and fought this downward spiral while in Congress. Following the 1994 election, Democrat Rep. David Skaggs and Republican Rep. Ray LaHood (R-IL) recognized the decrease in civility and joined forces to organize the House Bipartisan Retreat, a weekend getaway for members and their families. "We wanted to find a few days that were an antidote to the poison," said Skaggs.<sup>18</sup> Skaggs and LaHood, along with a number of other members, were eventually able to sponsor four of these retreats – 1997, 1999, 2001, and 2003. Although the weekends were generally successful – a number of members and their families attended – it became "more and more difficult over time," recalled Charlie Stenholm, who was involved with the retreat's planning process.<sup>19</sup> Following the hotly contested 2000 presidential election, the post-2000 round of redistricting, and DeLay's redistricting tactics in 2003, there was such little interest in civility and bipartisanship that the retreats ended.

Recently, there have been positive steps taken to bring back bipartisan outings. Reps. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (D-FL) and Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) are trying to bring back the weekend retreats in some form. House Judiciary Committee Chairman Lamar Smith (R-TX) held a bipartisan lunch in January when he invited Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer to address

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<sup>17</sup> *Nastiness, Name-calling & Negativity: The Allegheny College Survey of Civility and Compromise in American Politics*, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Skaggs interview.

<sup>19</sup> Stenholm interview.

his committee about how to reach common ground.<sup>20</sup> Sen. Tom Udall (D-NM) suggested a bipartisan retreat for senators, as well.<sup>21</sup> And recently, freshman Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) have skipped their weekly party lunches in favor of dining together on Thursdays. "We're starting out as a group of two but my hope is to expand this so that we recreate the place for a bipartisan lunch where senators can get together and work out problems," said Kirk.<sup>22</sup> Evan Bayh also raised the idea of a bipartisan lunch in his February 2010 op-ed.

There are other ways to foster a spirit of civility that will, in turn, lead to the formation of personal relationships among members. In October 2010, a bipartisan group of former members of Congress sent a letter to every candidate for Congress urging them to reverse the trend and restore civil discourse to a respectable level. The letter, signed by 134 former members, including Reps. Boehlert, Frenzel, Michel, and Skaggs, articulated many of the same points made in this paper:

The divisive and mean-spirited way debate often occurs inside Congress is encouraged and repeated outside: on cable news shows, in blogs and in rallies. Members who far exceed the bounds of normal and respectful discourse are not viewed with shame but are lionized, treated as celebrities, rewarded with cable television appearances, and enlisted as magnets for campaign fund-raisers.

Meanwhile, lawmakers who try to address problems and find workable solutions across party lines find themselves denigrated by an angry fringe of partisans, people unhappy that their representatives would even deign to work with the enemy. When bipartisan ideas are advanced, they are met by partisan derision.

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<sup>20</sup> Molly K. Hooper, "House Judiciary panel seeks bipartisan touch," *The Hill*, January 18, 2011, <http://thehill.com/homenews/house/138383-house-judiciary-committee-seeks-bipartisan-touch> (accessed March 31, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Josiah Ryan, "Udall wants to use Kennedy's sailboats for bipartisan retreat," *The Hill*, January 25, 2011, <http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/senate/140047-senate-afloat-in-new-ideas-for-bipartisan-fellowship> (accessed March 25, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Shira Toeplitz, "Freshman to skip party lunch for bipartisan meal," *Politico*, March 1, 2011, [http://www.politico.com/blogs/glennthrush/0311/Freshmen\\_to\\_skip\\_party\\_lunch\\_for\\_bipartisan\\_meal.html](http://www.politico.com/blogs/glennthrush/0311/Freshmen_to_skip_party_lunch_for_bipartisan_meal.html) (accessed March 1, 2011).

In a politically diverse but ultimately centrist nation, it is axiomatic that the country's major problems are going to have to be solved through compromises worked out between the parties. That's especially the case for the problems that require tough solutions - like convincing taxpayers to endure some short-term pain for the promise of long-term fiscal stability. That will require partisans on both sides to give ground on some of their cherished beliefs, to lose some traction on a "wedge issue" that can be used in campaigns against the other side, in order to find the broad coalition necessary to make a policy work.

Both parties share in the blame for this sorry state of affairs. Still, without action by both parties to work together to address the problems that face our country through serious, respectful and civil discussion and debate, the prognosis for our politics - and with it our economic health and our security - is grim.<sup>23</sup>

In February 2011, the University of Arizona announced that it would be opening the "National Institute for Civil Discourse" to promote compromise in the political arena.<sup>24</sup> All of this helps – bipartisan retreats and lunches, letters to elected officials, and civility institutes – but even today, civility is still a problem in American politics despite efforts to remedy the situation. If the problem is not addressed in a serious way, the decline of relationships has the potential to bring down the House and cripple the institution for the foreseeable future.

### ***The 112<sup>th</sup> and Beyond: A More Perfect Union***

My last interview question asked members what their predictions were for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress in terms of restoring personal relationships. Their answers, on the whole, were not optimistic. Boehlert was "not hopeful for the next Congress."<sup>25</sup> Added Borski: "It's going to be very difficult to get things done."<sup>26</sup> Both Skaggs and Murphy cited the Tucson tragedy as a

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<sup>23</sup> Former Members of Congress for Common Ground, "Letter to Congress: change in rhetoric important for upcoming election," *Former Members of Congress for Common Ground*, October 4, 2010, <http://www.fmocforcommonground.org/> (accessed October 4, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> M. Amedeo Tumolillo, "University of Arizona Sets Up Civility Institute," *The New York Times*, February 21, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/21/us/politics/21civility.html> (accessed February 21, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Boehlert interview.

<sup>26</sup> Borski interview.

potential turning point; Murphy hopes it will be a “wake-up call” for members.<sup>27</sup> “It’s probably going to get worse, but it depends on the ability of the president and the speaker to work together,” said Marlowe.<sup>28</sup> Stenholm and Tanner, the longtime Blue Dogs, were equally cynical of what is to come. “Congress is totally ineffective,” said Tanner. “We are going to reach a tipping point soon. We need to compromise.”<sup>29</sup>

The jury on the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress is still out when it comes to personal relationships, but if it follows in the footsteps of previous Congresses then the situation will not improve. The 111<sup>th</sup> Congress was one of the most partisan in history. It was also one of the most prolific. But that does not mean that the model used in the previous Congress is the best one moving forward. In order to tackle the serious problems that our country faces, Congress needs to look to its past, to a time when party labels were less important and personal relationships carried the day. Maybe that means sponsoring weekend golf outings, restarting Wednesday night poker at the University Club, or doing more to encourage members to move their families to Washington. Whether or not that happens, the 112<sup>th</sup> or 113<sup>th</sup> or 125<sup>th</sup> Congress needs to solve this problem before it can attempt to deal with the others that America currently faces.

At the end of the day, however, the United States Congress is still an awesome and remarkable institution. Conceived in Philadelphia in 1787, our system of government has endured for over 200 years, and Congress has been an important part of our nation’s success. And despite all of America’s problems, the United States is still the greatest, most powerful nation on Earth. The United States is the economic, social, cultural, and military epicenter of the world; America truly is the “city upon a hill” that John Winthrop envisioned in 1630. That did

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<sup>27</sup> Murphy interview.

<sup>28</sup> Marlowe interview.

<sup>29</sup> Tanner interview.

not happen by accident. It resulted from our government, especially our Congress, recognizing important issues and dealing with them effectively to make America great.

In the face of partisanship and polarization, the disagreements and the arguments, members of Congress genuinely believe they are working to make this country a better place. It is commendable. But in order to solve all of the problems that our nation currently faces, both foreign and domestic, Congress needs to be not just involved in the process, but an active stakeholder. That will only happen when the body functions as it should, when members are able to work together, cross the aisle, and form lasting personal bonds that will result in positive legislation for the country. That is how Congress will address our nation's problems and continue to strive to make our union even more perfect in the future.

## **Section IV: Appendix**

### ***Further Interview Description***

The following section will further describe the methodology and process applied to my interviews. It includes selection analysis, demographics, and my question list.

I will briefly discuss why I interviewed the members that I did for this paper. I also mention the date of my interview and whether it was in person or via phone. All of my interviews were conducted between January 7, 2011, and February 4, 2011. I also exchanged follow-up emails with several of my interviewees. These emails were used to clarify quotations used in this paper or for suggestions for further research. This correspondence is noted where appropriate.

### **Member Interviews**

Rep. Sherwood Boehlert was the congressman from my home district of Utica, NY. My mother worked on several of his re-election campaigns in the early 2000s, as was able to put me in touch with former staffers who were able to put me in contact with the congressman. I conducted a phone interview with Rep. Boehlert on January 7, 2011. We exchanged a follow-up email on March 27, 2011.

Rep. Michael Arcuri was Rep. Boehlert's successor in my home district. I know Rep. Arcuri's chief of staff, and he was able to put me in touch with the congressman. I conducted a phone interview with Rep. Arcuri on January 14, 2011. We exchanged a follow-up email on March 28, 2011.

Rep. Robert Borski was a guest speaker in a class that I took in Fall 2010 at the University of Pennsylvania. Through the professor, I was able to contact Rep. Borski and I conducted a phone interview with him on January 24, 2011.

Rep. Bill Frenzel is currently a scholar at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. A Penn professor suggested that I contact Rep. Frenzel regarding my paper. I conducted an in-person interview with Rep. Frenzel on January 11, 2011, in Washington, DC. We exchanged a follow-up email on April 5, 2011.

During my interview with Rep. Frenzel, he suggested that I also reach out to Rep. David Skaggs to discuss my thesis. I conducted a phone interview with Rep. Skaggs on January 25, 2011. We exchanged a follow-up email on March 28, 2011.

During my interview with Rep. Skaggs, he listed a number of former members that he worked with during his time in Congress, including Rep. Charlie Stenholm. I conducted a phone interview with Rep. Stenholm on February 1, 2011.

Rep. John Tanner was recently hired at the government relations firm where I worked as an intern in summer 2010, and through the firm's staff, I was able to set up a meeting with the congressman. I conducted an in-person interview with Rep. Tanner on February 4, 2011, in Washington, DC. We exchanged a follow-up email on March 28, 2011.

I reached out to Rep. Michel and Rep. Murphy, as I knew both would lend valuable insight to my paper. I conducted an in-person interview with Rep. Michel on January 11, 2011, in Washington, DC, and we exchanged a follow-up email on April 4, 2011. I conducted an in-person interview with Rep. Murphy on January 31, 2011, in Philadelphia, PA.

### **Factors considered**

I would like to highlight several of the factors that were important to my interview selection in my search for a balanced and representative sample of former members of Congress.

*Party identification* – Of the nine interviewees, six are Democrats and three are Republicans. Despite this discrepancy in party identification, the interviews did not yield different answers based on party. In fact, the answers to my questions were remarkably similar



among all of my interviews. Members of both parties largely agreed with each other in response to questions about the decline of personal relationships, the factors that caused this decline, and its consequences.

*Ideology* – Most of the members that I interviewed were generally politically moderate throughout their Congressional careers. Many of the interviewees were lauded for being moderates and bucking their party leadership on a number of votes. In fact, Reps. Arcuri, Tanner, Stenholm, and Murphy were all members of the Blue Dog Coalition during their time in Congress. Rep. Boehlert was a leader of the environmental movement in the Republican Party. Several, including Rep. Michel, served in their party's leadership, and tend to be more ideological than their moderate colleagues, thereby giving me a representative sample.

*Time of service* – Three members – Reps. Arcuri, Murphy, and Tanner – served in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, and six of nine served during the 2000s. Seven of nine served in the 101<sup>st</sup> Congress (1989-1991), and two – Reps. Michel and Frenzel – served before 1979. Therefore, I am confident that I have a representative sample of Congress since the late 1950s, and a thorough account of Congress from the past three decades.

*Personality* – Of the members that I interviewed, many have a reputation for being moderate and willing to work across the aisle. Rep. Boehlert was consistently ranked as one of the most liberal Republicans, while Reps. Stenholm and Tanner were some of the most conservative Democrats. Rep. Michel served in an era when he would play golf and cards with Democratic Speaker Tip O'Neill. Staffers and observers of Congress told me that some of the members that I interviewed are some of the friendliest and most reasonable people to serve the institution. Therefore, these members would have a unique perspective on the role of personal relationships in the House.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that this paper is based on a variety of sources. These nine interviews comprise only a portion of the research that I relied upon. Interviews with former staffers, as well as numerous books, articles, and reports also formed the necessary foundation for the data and conclusions in this paper.

### **Staff Interviews**

In addition to nine interviews with former members of Congress, I conducted four interviews with former Congressional staffers. I conducted an in-person interview with Sam Marchio, Rep. Arcuri's former chief of staff and a former Congressional staffer for Rep. Boehlert, on January 11, 2011. We exchanged a follow-up email on March 29, 2011. I also conducted in-person interviews with Chuck Merin and Jim Healey on January 11, 2011. Both Mr. Merin and Mr. Healey previously worked on Capitol Hill and are currently staffers at Prime Policy Group, a Washington-based government relations firm where I interned in summer 2010. Mr. Merin and I exchanged a follow-up email on March 28, 2011. I conducted a phone interview with Howard Marlowe on January 19, 2011. Mr. Marlowe is the president of Marlowe & Company, a Washington-based government relations firm where I interned in summer 2009. We exchanged a follow-up email on April 5, 2011.

## **Interview Question List**

Below is the list of questions that I used in my interviews. Not every question was asked in each interview (sometimes people answered more than one question in one response), but these questions provide an excellent sense of what information I was trying to get out of each interview.

Thesis Interview Questions  
Spring 2011

1. How would you define a “personal relationship” among members of Congress?
2. How would you measure personal relationships among members? Is there a way to do this?
3. Have the nature of these relationships changed over time? If so, how? Have they gotten worse? How do you know? How were they different from the beginning of your Congressional service to the end?
4. Do fewer members play golf together, move their families to DC, and make bipartisan friendships today?
5. What factors led to these changes?
6. Was there a noticeable shift at the start of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress? Were changes happening in the years before? What about more recently?
7. Do personal relationships actually affect pieces of legislation? If so, how? In both positive and negative ways? Do you have specific examples?
8. Do these relationships actually matter to the legislative process? Do they produce more legislation or just different legislation? Do you have any specific examples?
9. Are these relationships more important at the committee and sub-committee level than on the floor?
10. What about the relationships between leaders in both parties? Have these also changed over time?
11. How is Congress affected by this decline of relationships? Is the institution less productive as a result?
12. If bipartisan relationships have declined, what about intra-party relationships? Is party homogeneity a positive or negative thing?
13. Although relationships have declined over time, the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, for example, was very prolific. How would you explain this in terms of the change in personal relationships? Despite the increased partisanship, does it actually have a negative effect on the body?
14. What is the current state of affairs in terms of personal relationships? What are your predictions for the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress on this front?

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