Legislative Pursuits: An Analysis of the Effects of the Political Environment and Presidential Strategies on Domestic Policy Objectives during the George W. Bush Administration.

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ABSTRACT

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The rise of the dynamic presidency represents a trademark of modern American politics. This thesis investigates the significance of presidential influence upon the legislative process by measuring the effects of political context and presidential agency on legislative outcomes, further exploring the cumulative effect of these components upon a president's attempt to influence the legislative process. More specifically, public opinion and partisan balance in Congress operationalize the political environment while bargaining and campaigning function as strategies which help explain presidential behaviour. Together, they form the basis for an analysis of four case studies of domestic policy pursuits during the George W. Bush administration. Ultimately, this examination reveals that public opinion is a more influential variable in determining legislative outcomes than partisan balance in Congress and the president's choice of strategies.

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Research Question

Presidents have developed an active role in the legislative process with varying outcomes. The president's ability to influence the legislative process raises important questions.

For instance, what effect does the political environment have on the president's role in the legislative process? From the president's standpoint, how can he pursue his policy agenda? Once implemented, how successful are these strategies at facilitating the passage of legislation? Most importantly, as the president intervenes in legislative affairs, how can we reconcile his strategic choices with the contextual and institutional forces that exist at the time? How can we further understand this unceasing tension between context and agency?

Puzzle

The conventional wisdom in the literature on presidential leadership suggests that a combination of the political environment and the president's strategic intervention determines legislative success. However, through an examination of four legislative case studies during the George W. Bush administration, this thesis finds that public opinion emerges as a more influential variable than presidential strategies or partisan balance in Congress. Ultimately, in the cases studied, the strategies a president employs as well as the partisan balance in Congress appear irrelevant in determining legislative outcomes. Therefore, this thesis challenges conventional theory and seeks to explore the inconsistency which surfaces throughout this analysis.

Hypothesis

While the president engages the legislative process to advance his policy objectives, the American political system prevents him from exerting unilateral control. The president benefits from various strategies to choose from but public and institutional forces also play a role in determining legislative outcomes. As the president attempts to influence the legislative process, he must contend with mitigating factors before settling on a strategic approach. Therefore, this thesis posits that the political environment, operationalized by public opinion and partisan balance in Congress, causes the president to select either bargaining or campaigning as a strategy, which subsequently leads to legislative success or failure.

Independent Variable and Dependent Variable

The independent variable consists of the political environment (public opinion and partisan balance in Congress), which causes the president to choose a particular strategy (bargaining or campaigning). Here, the ensuing legislative outcome (success or failure) is considered as the dependent variable.

Case Selections

Bush exhibited common traits of the modern presidency by assuming an active role in legislative affairs. Modern presidents depart from the traditionalist view of the presidential role due to its emphasis on constitutional limitations, which constrain the president's powers and participation in the legislative process (Stack 264). During Bush's presidency, he stretched the limits and boundaries of presidential power with regard to foreign and domestic policy (Campbell and Steinberg 141-42). Therefore, analyzing Bush's active role in pursuing his domestic policy objectives adds to the discussion of modern presidential agency in the legislative

process. Furthermore, prior to the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001, Bush sought to define his presidency through a domestic agenda (Nye Jr. 142). Rather than react to events as he did with foreign policy, Bush established concrete proposals for education, tax, immigration, and social security reform. Bush remained closely associated to all four areas due to his ideological views on taxes and social security (Cohen 167), his experience with education reform as Governor of Texas (Wayne 67), and his personal desire to tackle immigration reform (Kwong 257). In seeking to push through his legislative agenda, Bush actively engaged the legislative process.

Bush's legislative pursuits of four domestic policies (education reform, tax reform, immigration reform, and social security reform) represent the case studies explored in this thesis. More specifically, this thesis accounts for legislation pursued across his entire presidency given that he sought education and tax reform during his first term, and immigration and social security reform during his second term. The policy areas selected for this examination represent the most significant (Reedy and Johnson 7), and in some instances the most controversial (Peele 34), policy battles of Bush's domestic agenda.

Two factors account for the emphasis on domestic policy. Despite the administration's wartime focus, Bush retained a clear vision concerning domestic policy objectives (Waddan 166). Furthermore, Miroslav Nincic's research suggests that as a result of the public's familiarity with major domestic policies and their tangible effects on society, Americans worry about domestic affairs to a greater extent than foreign policy in their daily lives (Nincic 128). As a result, domestic policy represents an important topic for analysis due to its impact upon society and Bush's focus on domestic affairs during his presidency.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The United States Constitution, America's chief governing law, divides three branches of government and delineates their respective powers, prerogatives, and institutional boundaries. While the president represents a third of the constitutional framework, he remains restricted from matters of legislation. The United States Congress reserves the power to legislate, as "all legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives" (*U.S. Constitution*).

The president's position as head of the executive branch excludes him from direct participation in the passage of legislation. The president's sole constitutional link to matters of legislation rests with a veto, which when deliberating the proposed bill "shall be approved by him, or being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by two thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives, according to the rules and limitations prescribed in the case of a bill" (*U.S. Constitution*). While a president may object to a bill sent to him by Congress, Congress can still overrule his veto. Despite Congress' ability to override vetoes, presidents employ them as political statements (Spitzer 145). As an example, George W. Bush vetoed twelve bills during his presidency, and while the House of Representatives and the Senate overruled four of them ("Vetoes by President George W. Bush"), Bush issued vetoes despite Congress' power to reverse them. Notwithstanding Congress' prerogative to legislate, the president possesses considerable influence due to his vetoing power and the mere threat of its issuance (Rosati and Scott 59). The simple suggestion of issuing a veto may help tailor a proposed bill to suit the president's interests as the executive branch exploits diverse opportunities in order to influence the legislative process (Whitford and Yates 4). The president seeks to shape the behaviour of Congress by strategically

threatening a veto and issuing one. Both actions speak to the president's ability to sway the legislative process in his favor through tactical maneuvres.

Despite the president's limited constitutional role in the legislative process, he remains effective. While Congress passes legislation, the president enhances his presence and imposes his political will prior to the final vote. The veto provides the president with the means to slow or halt a bill originating from Congress (Rosati and Scott 59). However, in addition to the veto, the president maintains an active role in promoting policy as he can publically approve or oppose different legislative proposals and introduce his own policy initiatives (Whitford and Yates 4). The legislative president began exemplifying the modern presidency during Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency (Greenstein, "The Qualities" 178-79). Specifically, the 1930s represented a period of transition for the roles of government institutions as the president became more powerful at the expense of Congress (Greenstein, "The Person of the President" 218). The changes during Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency highlighted the president's evolving role in initiating and shaping policy as well as his increasingly active role in the legislative process (Greenstein, "The Qualities" 178-79). While the president possesses a constitutional right to a veto, those who occupied the oval office subsequent to Roosevelt felt bestowed with a sense of purpose and an augmented ability to participate in the foundation and development of legislation (Pfiffner, "The President's Legislative" 23).

The president's position in relation to Congress initially appears narrow but presidents in the modern era maintain a more active and influential role in the legislative process (Greenstein, "The Qualities" 179). Nevertheless, prior to the 1930s, scholars viewed Edward S. Corwin as the principal figure who interpreted the relationship between the different branches of government, particularly emphasizing the role of the president. Corwin's work centered on

constitutional and jurisdictional definitions of presidential powers (Edwards, Kessel, and

Rockman 3-4). He presided over the American Political Science Association and "was

considered the leading expositor of the intent and meaning of the Constitution" ("Corwin,

Edward S"). As such, Corwin's extensive constitutional background guided his understanding of

the interactions between the different branches of the American political system. Corwin's

approach focused on jurisprudence and remained narrow due to the limited role the Constitution

imposed on the president (Whitford and Yates 3).

In addition to his scholarly contributions, Corwin's work experience included public

service and consultative work for high-ranking government officials ("Corwin, Edward S").

From a practical standpoint, William Howard Taft, the 27th president, appreciated the limitations

the Constitution imposed on the presidency, providing a genuine example of what Corwin

perceived as the institutional and constitutional nature of the presidency (Tatalovich, Cook, and

Yenor 95). Corwin adhered to the Constitution and held a firm belief in the separation of

powers, clearly defining roles for all federal institutions (Tatalovich, Cook, and Yenor 96).

Corwin's successors, particularly those who later observed and examined the modern presidency,

increasingly challenged and reshaped his conceptualizations. Importantly, the actions of future

presidents influenced scholars who followed Corwin, promoting a different outlook concerning

the president's behavior and relationship with Congress.

Corwin's analysis sidestepped presidential personalities, focusing more on their

delineated obligations (Tatalovich, Cook, and Yenor 96). The emphasis on the president's

character and political skill appeared later with political scientists such as James David Barber

and Fred Greenstein. Such scholars expanded Corwin's assessments, exploring the presidency

beyond his narrower focus. However, while certainly a traditionalist, Corwin neither ignored nor

denied the potential for a malleable presidency (Tatalovich, Cook, and Yenor 96),

acknowledging that presidents and their choices mattered (Genovese, *The Encyclopedia* 122).

Additionally, while his interpretation of the presidency remained focused on constitutional

parameters, Corwin also accepted the notion of a living Constitution, rejecting the interpretation

of the Constitution based on intent alone (Loss 63). While Corwin remained committed to the

constitutional framework, he acknowledged the ensuing political battles between the presidency

and the remaining branches, accepting the inevitability of confrontation (Jamison 93). However,

Corwin remained fearful of presidents adopting a leading role that went beyond their

constitutional boundaries, and consequently he rarely deviated from his approach to the

presidency (Tatalovich, Cook, and Yenor 105).

Nevertheless, Corwin's acceptance of a post-constitutional president forecast the

evolving nature of presidential scholarship. The dynamic presidency developed a theoretical

following and established itself in the academic literature, overshadowing traditionalists like

Corwin. Clinton Rossiter, another notable commentator on the presidency, promoted Corwin's

constitutional understanding but also questioned the rigidity of the political system (Ragsdale

32). As a contemporary of Corwin, Rossiter refrained from deviating too far from constitutional

parameters but acknowledged the rise of the dynamic presidency (Ragsdale 32). While Rossiter

certainly endorsed facets of Corwin's perspective, such as highlighting a president restrained by

delineated roles and responsibilities (Edwards 5), he also observed presidents who engaged in the

political process beyond what traditionalists previously recognized (Edwards, Kessel, and

Rockman 4). Although his primary focus remained an exploration of the scope of powers

granted by the Constitution (Tatalovich and Engeman 113), Rossiter acknowledged that

presidents pushed the boundaries of constitutional and institutional limitations (Healy 82-83).

Ultimately, Rossiter and Corwin's observations steered new perspectives on the study of the presidency as the constitutionally centered notion, while not abandoned, began to unravel with the Neustadt revolution (Watts 82).

In *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, Richard E. Neustadt championed the transition from constitutionally based interpretations of the American presidency to one that re-assessed the role of the president and his potential for influencing political events (Kessel 22). Particularly, Neustadt did not view the president through the same lens as Corwin or Rossiter, preferring a less traditional interpretation of presidential powers (Tatalovich, Cook, and Yenor 95). The rise of the modern presidency marked a conceptual shift as Neustadt developed a new perspective of presidential roles and power, establishing a theoretical following and overshadowing past traditionalists. More specifically, building upon his multifaceted role in political science and the breadth of his experience, Neustadt offered a number of important academic contributions, working directly with presidents in a consultative capacity (May 104). Furthermore, Neustadt's conception allowed for an interpretation of a president who expanded his powers and extended his influence beyond the limitations set forth in previous frameworks. The constrained president bound by constitutional limitations gave way to a liberated and dynamic political force (Pfiffner, *The Modern Presidency* 131). For decades, Neustadt's contributions served as a benchmark for presidential scholars and to this day his observations and conceptualizations continue to provoke considerable debate (Skowronek, "Mission Accomplished" 799-800).

Neustadt's interpretation focused not on the president's limitations, but on his concrete actions (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 5). Neustadt observed that all political branches participate in the political scene rather than engage in a power struggle (Neustadt 29) and he saw

the president as a powerful and strategic participant (Neustadt 30). Here, the president's formal

powers remain less significant than his chosen strategies, which function to augment his

effectiveness (Mayer and Weko 178). The president's ability to persuade represents Neustadt's

central argument (Cronin 382). Furthermore, the nature of the shared political environment

contributes to the president's persuasive qualities, as political actors from different ends of the

spectrum engage in negotiations to maintain their shared power (Neustadt 30). As such,

presidents must convince members of Congress to make certain decisions while members of

Congress must believe they make choices for themselves instead of for the president's benefit

(Neustadt 30). Thus, persuasion provides the president with the opportunity to impact the

legislative process. Congress represents the arena in which this interaction unfolds as the

president's ability to persuade inevitably culminates in "that great game, much like collective

bargaining, in which each seeks to profit from the other's needs and fears. It is a game played

catch-as-catch-can, case by case" (Neustadt 32).

Neustadt's concept of bargaining clarifies the interactions between the central actors

involved in the political context. The president and members of Congress bargain with one

another, tactically omitting and infusing aspects of their own policy preferences. While the

president's strategic mechanism lies with his ability to persuade, the struggles in dealing with

Congress limit his impact. Neustadt emphasizes that the clash between the executive and the

legislative branches quickly becomes an environment defined by negotiations and political

maneuvring. The president does not act unopposed but must engage his opponents and their

competing interests (Neustadt 31). The president persuades members of Congress into accepting

his legislative proposals but must recognize the inevitable conciliatory practices that define his

relationship with the legislative branch. If properly implemented, the president may increase his chances of success in the legislative process.

Another fundamental component of Neustadt's persuasion theory requires the president to possess certain political skills and qualities. In order to advance his legislative objectives, the president must engage on a personal level to compensate for his lack of a formal and constitutional role in the legislative process (Preston 5). If the president elects to persuade, he undertakes an arduous process within a challenging and highly politicized environment. Therefore, presidents must appear as skilled, poised, and passionate political figures (Preston 6). Given the extent of the president's involvement in his endeavors to influence the legislative process, he must remain capable of maneuvring through a complex environment with an "[a]bility in bargaining, dealing with adversaries, and choosing priorities" (Janda, Berry, and Goldman 241). Above all else, successfully achieving legislative outcomes depends upon the president's political abilities (Hargrove, "Presidential Power and Political Science" 251).

Samuel Kernell modernized the conceptual understanding of presidential influence in the legislative process. Prior to Kernell, Neustadt's theory of persuasion placed the president within the confines of an environment characterized by extensive bargaining (Tatalovich and Schier 113-14). However, given the sixty years since Neustadt's observations, a contemporary interpretation of the president's role in the legislative process offers valuable insight into the modern presidency. As a strategy, the public-centered approach carried little historical precedent (Cunion 302). Technological innovation made the public more accessible and sparked a notable shift in the study of the presidency (Morris 97). Presidents took advantage of their newfound access to the public realm, to the point that "[g]oing public has become routine" (Kernell 302), increasing the president's influential reach. However, debate over how often presidents use the

strategy exists; Edwards agrees that presidents frequently utilize the public campaigning method (Edwards, "Building Coalitions" 47-48) while Andrew Barnett's research suggests presidents employ the strategy selectively (Barrett 9). Nevertheless, Barnett acknowledges that "going public is a weapon in the chief executive's legislative arsenal" (Barrett 9) as the strategy helps define presidents in the modern era (Edwards, "Building Coalitions" 47-48).

Kernell suggests contextual changes may explain the shift from previous conceptualizations. Going public became an attractive option as the president avoided Congress and still pushed forward with his legislative agenda (Kernell 301). As a result, Kernell's theory of presidential behavior stands in contrast to Neustadt's, as the president's primary role lies with the public rather than with Congress. Rather than engage in negotiations, the president makes public appeals to stimulate a reaction from Congress (Kernell 303).

Presidents must take a number of actions to ensure their public campaigns remain effective. Kernell offers specific examples of presidential behavior to clarify key characteristics of his theory. For instance, "going public is likely to take the form of an election campaign" (Kernell 304). Much like an election campaign, strategic public appearances take presidents across the country (Rottinghaus and Lang 159). A president further compliments public appearances with media events, infusing them with campaign-like discourse in order to promote his policies (C. Jones 141).

Conversely, not all scholars agree with Neustadt and Kernell's theories of presidential influence. George Edwards states that while separation of powers renders negotiations between Congress and the president inevitable (Edwards, "Building Coalitions" 71), he does not believe in the president's capacity to successfully persuade either the public or Congress to agree with

his policy objectives (Edwards, "Building Coalitions" 73). However, Edwards confirms that presidents appeal to the public and Congress to advance their policy objectives regardless (Edwards, "Building Coalitions" 73). Additionally, Erwin C. Hargrove accepts the importance of Neustadt's theory but acknowledges that presidents lack effectiveness in influencing legislative success (Hargrove, "Presidential Power and Political Science" 259-60).

Relative to traditional interpretations fostered by constitutionalists, the modern presidency signifies a shift in the political behavior of presidents. The changes center on presidents' increased use of power to influence the legislative process. While commentary on presidential behavior offers valuable insight into presidential leadership, political activity outside the president's control occupies a crucial place in the literature. The political environment, or political context, represents an important arbiter between the president and his objectives. Given the complex American political system, a president who seeks to influence the legislative process likely contends with the effects of the political environment. Scholars such as George Edwards, Stephen Skowronek, Edwin C. Hargrove, and Charles O. Jones highlight the political environment as an essential component of the study of presidential leadership.

Defining the political environment clarifies the relationship between political actors and institutions (Shull 215), distinguishing the president from his contextual surroundings. The president does not act in isolation as "even the executive branch, is not monolithic" (Shull 215). The political environment mitigates the president's ability to influence the legislative process as the president represents one of many political actors in a charged political environment (C. Jones 140). The acknowledgement that context somewhat controls the president's ability to institute policies challenges the notion that presidents shape their surroundings (C. Jones 199).

Accordingly, presidential leadership becomes measured within "the historical context of opportunities and constrains" (Hargrove, *Jimmy Carter* 162).

Furthermore, George C. Edwards and Stephen Skowronek offer their perspectives concerning the importance of the political environment in the study of presidential leadership theory. Both Edwards and Skowronek agree that contextual factors overshadow presidential influence (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 32). Context defines the gap between Neustadt and Skowronek, and Skowronek suggests that presidential skill alone cannot function as the only determining factor of presidential success and leadership (Hargrove, "Presidential Power and Political Science" 251-52). While Skowronek does not oppose the notion that a president exerts influence (Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* 28), "[s]kill and context are both complementary and in tension" (Hargrove, "Presidential Power and Political Science" 252). The duality between context and agency steadily emerges as a vital component of the study of presidential leadership.

George Edwards suggests that the political environment supersedes the president himself (Edwards, *At the Margins* 3-4). Edwards sees a detached president, one who may engage in limited negotiations or persuasion in particular circumstances to ensure a slight advantage in order to pass legislation (Hargrove, "Presidential Power and Political Science" 256). The president possesses a limited role and should grasp the political context before taking action (Hargrove, "Presidential Power and Political Science" 256). Edwards argues that Neustadt's interpretation limits the understanding of presidential leadership (Edwards, "Neustadt's Power Approach" 14). Moreover, Hargrove asserts that to effectively analyze presidential leadership requires a consideration of variables such as presidential strategies and political institutions, in order to account for presidential agency and the political environment (Hargrove, "History,

Political Science" 583). Ultimately, scholars acknowledge that presidents do not act alone or unfettered by external forces.

The preceding viewpoints accentuate the political environment in the study of presidential leadership. Importantly, while the president's actions remain significant, context develops an equivalent importance. Tension exists between what the president seeks to achieve and how the environment shapes his objectives. The dynamic between context and agency influences the president's intervention in matters of policy due to the fusion between presidential behavior and contextual factors, which defines the broader political landscape.

The political environment affects the president's actions in a number of ways. Observers contend that the political environment generates opportunities (Genovese, *The Presidency* 24) for the president but also confines his behavior and objectives (Rose 14). Despite the prominence Edwards attributes to the political environment, he accepts that a determined president obtains leverage from contextual forces through opportunism (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 188-89). A president achieves success by seizing the moment (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 221) as "context, not charisma, and opportunities, not individuals, drive presidential leadership" (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 33). Therefore, the environment simultaneously creates and limits opportunities for the president to exploit.

The elements consistently underscored as the most effective upon a president's policy pursuits "includ[e] public opinion, the political parties, and the composition of Congress" (Johnson 134). Public opinion plays a crucial role as presidents pursue policy objectives (Gerber and Cohen 58), and rather than remain dependent, the president may harness public opinion (Heith 380). More specifically, "[p]residents and legislators carefully track public opinion in

order to identify the words, arguments, and symbols that are most likely to be effective in […]

[obtaining] public support for their desired policies" (Jacobs and Shapiro 7). Additionally,

Congress represents an important element of the political environment, due in part to its

constitutional authority to offset presidential action (Bond 13). Constituents hold their

representatives accountable, and as their policy preferences may differ from the president's,

tensions arise between Congress and the executive branch (Bond 13). Therefore, after an

election, the makeup of Congress affects the president's future policy objectives (Shull and Shaw

63).

     Furthermore, internal divisions within political parties add an additional layer of

complexity to the political environment. Intra-party conflict in the United States refers to sub-

divisions in both the Republican and Democrat parties due to political divergence on matters of

policy (Bond 83) and often results in policy disputes despite traditional party platforms. As a

result, the various factions within both parties complicate the rudimentary party balance in

Congress and affect the ability of a president to successfully pass legislation (Bond 83).

Ultimately, public opinion and partisan balance in Congress represent vital components of the

political environment.

Methodology and Research

The president, while growing more powerful, contends with institutional and social forces as he pursues policy objectives. Consequently, an analysis of the modern presidency must include the political environment as well as presidential behavior. The literature's increasing emphasis on political context amplifies its consideration in the study of the expansive reach of power exercised by modern presidents. Skowronek's observations of presidential leadership remain too general while Neustadt's conceptual framework remains too narrow (Lieberman 276). Given the disparity, bridging the gap between both perspectives emerges as the primary objective of this thesis. A study of presidential leadership benefits from the consideration that an environment defined by institutional and political forces inevitably confronts presidential action (Hargrove and Owens 4-5).

With respect to presidential action, both Neustadt and Kernell offer compelling observations that benefit an examination of presidential leadership. Neustadt proposed that presidents bargain with Congress to advance policy goals while Kernell maintains that public campaigns best serve the president. In a discussion of the Bush presidency, Edwards observed that Bush deliberately isolated Congress and the public before going forward with his legislative agenda (Edwards, "Strategic Choices" 42). Kernell's theory of going public and Neustadt's theory of presidential persuasion both remain highly relevant in presidential scholarship. As a result, this thesis examines both context and agency by assessing the effects of the political environment and the president's behavior throughout the legislative process, specifically building upon Edward's claim concerning Bush's strategic approaches to achieving legislation.

The first part of this examination consists of an assessment of the effect of the political environment on the president's choice of strategy prior to initiating a legislative pursuit. This thesis takes into account two sets of measurements in order to capture the political environment in each case study. Public opinion represents the first unit of measurement, further divided by the president's approval rating, public opinion surrounding his proposed policy reforms, and public opinion on the need for reform. Gallup provides the survey results despite their questionable track record over the past few years (Silver "Which Polls Fared"). Partisan balance in Congress represents the second unit of measurement, documented by the party division within both the House of Representatives and the Senate during the four policy areas under review. Bargaining and public campaigning represent the second part of this examination and define the president's strategic behavior.

The variables may affect the president's choice of strategy in a number of ways. For example, if approval of the president remains high, his political capital and reputation increase, which may provide the necessary leverage to bargain and persuade members of Congress. High approval ratings may also give the president incentive to campaign for a policy proposal that the public feels unsure of, attempting to transform support for his presidency into support for his proposal. If approval of the policy proposal remains high, the president may decide to harness the public's support in order to pressure wavering members of Congress to accept his proposed legislation. Conversely, if approval of the president remains low, then his political capital and reputation diminish which may make bargaining with Congress more difficult. If approval of the policy proposal remains low, the president may need to campaign on behalf of his proposal in order to increase support for legislation, or he may possess no other option than to work directly with Congress. With respect to partisan balance in Congress, members of the same party likely

share similar positions on policy issues. Therefore, if a president's political party holds

majorities in either or both Chambers, then he may find turning implicit support for a policy

proposal into actual votes much easier. Overall, the value of both public opinion and partisan

balance in Congress shape the president's choice of strategy.

Case 1: Education Reform

The Political Environment:

For a newly elected president, Bush exhibited somewhat of a weak approval rating prior to his attempt at education reform. As reported by Gallup, between February 2001 and September 10th, 2001, Bush's approval rating reached a high of 63%, never fell below 51%, and averaged 56.4% ("Gallup Presidential Poll"). After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Bush's approval ratings rose steeply and as Gallup indicates, between September 11th, 2001 and January 2002 (when NCLB became law) Bush's approval rating reached a high of 90%, never fell below 84%, and averaged 87% ("Gallup Presidential Poll").

Public opinion on the need for education reform proved favorable. According to a Gallup study released on July 12, 2000, Frank Newport reported that **'**Education' received the highest percentage among sixteen different issues (12%) on a question about the most important issue the new President should focus on (Newport "Americans Want"). 'Education' also received the highest percentage from likely Bush voters and likely Gore voters (Newport "Americans Want"). The enthusiasm for education reform continued to grow and on July 31st, 2000, Gallup released the results of further polling which indicated strong support for reform (Newport "Education, Republicans' Monday") and for its prioritization (Newport "Education, Republicans' Monday").

Finally, public opinion on Bush's proposal for education reform also proved favorable. On January 23rd, 2001, Gallup polling indicated that Americans generally felt confident about Bush's ability to bring positive changes to the nation's education system (Newport "Americans Think Bush"). Additional polling indicated the public approved of Bush's approach to education and other policy initiatives (Newport "Americans Think Bush"). More specifically, education

reform represented one out of six objectives that over 50% of Americans felt Bush would achieve (Newport "Americans Think Bush").

Prior to Bush undertaking education reform, Republicans had slim majorities in both houses. The partisan balance in the House of Representatives during the 107th Congress (2001-2003) had 221 Republicans and 212 Democrats ("Party Division HOR"). The partisan balance in the Senate during the 107th Congress (January 20th – June 6th 2001) had 50 Republicans and 50 Democrats with Vice-President Dick Cheney (Republican) holding the decisive tie-breaking vote ("Party Division Senate"). The balance in the Senate from (June 6th, 2001 – November 12th, 2002) had 50 Democrats, 49 Republicans, and 1 Independent ("Party Division Senate"). The balance in the Senate from (November 12th, 2002 – January 3rd, 2003) had 50 Republicans, 48 Democrats, and 2 Independents ("Party Division Senate").

Preliminary Assessment:

Bush's approval ratings reveal two main observations: (1) prior to the legislative battle for education reform, Bush's approval rating varied between moderate and very-high, but steadily remained above 50% and (2) after the events on September 11th, 2001 Bush's enjoyed a record high approval (Roberts 1). Bush's popularity placed him in a comfortable position with the public which affected how members of Congress interpreted his popularity (Bennister 10). Furthermore, the public considered education reform a pressing concern and felt confident in Bush's ability to achieve legislation. Overall, Bush's popularity remained strong prior to the introduction of his proposal. The public required no persuasion as their support became a tool if needed. Therefore, bargaining with Congress represented an appealing option.

The partisan balance in Congress indicates a rather unique situation. While Republicans held a thin majority in the House of Representatives, the Senate posed a challenge. After Bush assumed office, Vice-President Cheney, as President of the Senate, held the deciding vote in the event of a tie between the Republicans and the Democrats. However, an unexpected party switch cost the Republicans their majority in the Senate (Den Hartog and Monroe 63). Furthermore, Bush modeled his vision for education policy to appear less partisan and more appealing to Democrats (Fortier and Ornstein 146). Advocating for a federal role in education seemed a promising strategy (Hayes 10) even though the Republicans required convincing (Hayes 11). Bush's experience with Democrats while Governor of Texas served as the benchmark for his legislative efforts as President (Wayne 67). As a result of the partisan balance in Congress and given his less-than partisan views on education, Bush reached out to Democrats indiscriminately to promote his policy (Hess and Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind* 18). The partisan balance in Congress made a purely partisan approach difficult and heightened the likelihood of negotiations. Moreover, his controversial election undermined Bush's standing and provided little political capital to spend (Roper 132-33). To maximize his chances of achieving policy goals meant appealing to the broader political spectrum.

Implementation

Effective bargaining requires certain personal qualities that range from political skill to individual character. On Bush's political personality, he remains described as a passionate and personable politician (Kirtley 24) and successful at bipartisan politics (Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference* 203). Bush also aimed to distance himself from his father's lack of a policy vision, paying close attention to policy issues while Governor of Texas (Greenstein,

"Bush and the Ghosts" 79). Bush's experience with ensuring education reform at the state level served as the basis for his proposals at the federal level (Hayes 11).

During the early stages of Bush's presidency, Cheney's influence (long considered a proponent of negotiating with members of Congress) coupled with Bush's own shortcomings with respect to public speaking meant a strategy based primarily on bargaining represented Bush's best option for future policy battles (Cook 756). Bush understood that achieving his legislative objectives required engaging with his opponents directly (Renshon 589). Bush openly communicated his policy intentions to Congress (Hess and Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind* 16-17) as he undertook active steps towards reform before assuming office and openly discussed his policy agenda with legislators (Mycoff and Pika 42). With future policy objectives in mind, Bush aimed to establish a healthy line of communication with Congress early in his presidency (Cook 757). To maximize potential collaboration on his policy objectives, Bush engaged with Democrats after assuming office (Greenstein, "Changing Leadership" 393).

Bush's outlook on education policy facilitated the potential for compromise with Democrats. For example, he refrained from insisting on the school voucher program (a traditionally conservative benchmark for education policy, and one Democrats opposed) as a necessary pre-requisite for further debate (Rudalevige 66). He believed the federal government had an important role in education but insisted on implementing accountability measures if schools desired funding (Bush, "Gov. George W. Bush's Plans" 125). While Bush's position on federal regulations in education distanced some party colleagues (Rudalevige 65), his proposal avoided immediate gridlock between the Republicans and the Democrats (Rudalevige 66).

Democrats seemed supportive of Bush's ideas on education (Hess and Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind* 18), which encouraged Bush to engage more directly with Edward M. Kennedy and George Miller (Hess and Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind* 18). In his autobiography, Bush explains the active role he took in influencing the legislative process by appealing directly to Kennedy to support his proposal (Bush, *Decision Points* 275). He adds that his past experience working with Democrats as Governor pushed him to seek out similar support for education (Bush, *Decision Points* 275). With the growing relationship Bush forged with Democrats, discussions on Bush's education proposal moved forward without hindrance (Hess and Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind* 18).

Furthermore, despite their reservations, Bush convinced fellow Republicans of the benefits of education reform (Mycoff and Pika 59). Republican criticism of the proposal stemmed from the conservative base that long opposed federal education policy, but party loyalty and reluctance from conservatives to oppose the new president helped Bush overcome opposition from within his own party (Hess and Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind* 19). Bush succeeded in convincing high-ranking Republicans to participate in his undertaking. He took advantage of his status as the first Republican president in eight years as John Boehner joined him in embracing national standards for education, despite his prior aversion (Rudalevige 67).

Bush's initial proposal focused on prioritizing academic performance as an incentive for additional federal money (Rudalevige 66). The proposal obligated schools to disclose test scores and other similar data to the federal government and to demonstrate their ability to foster an environment characterized by academic achievement (Rudalevige 66). Democrats confirmed their intention to find a compromise when Kennedy accepted the inclusion of a "block-grant" program (Rudalevige 66). The program proposed allowing state governments to employ federal

money at their discretion, and although Democrats traditionally rejected the notion (Rudalevige 64), they ultimately compromised on the issue (Rudalevige 66). Further negotiations and compromises between the House and the Senate led sub-programs and spending from the House bill to the Senate bill to almost double (Rudalevige 67).

Despite bipartisan efforts and Bush's willingness to forego traditional party views on education, the negotiations faced obstacles as members from both parties tried to tailor the bill to their own liking. Kennedy and Joe Lieberman blocked an attempt by fellow Democrat Paul Wellstone to add even more spending to the bill (Rudalevige 67). In turn, despite Bush's initial stance on vouchers, Republicans tried to re-introduce the program to no avail while Bush risked losing out on the block-grant program, despite the Democrats' initial acceptance of the idea (Rudalevige 67). Further opposition towards the proposal stemmed "from local officials who didn't want national norms; from teacher unions that didn't want mandatory testing; and from conservatives who thought that with vouchers dead the rest of the bill might as well be" (Rudalevige 67). While Bush accepted to cut school vouchers out of the negotiations, he insisted on strong and uniform accountability mechanisms (Rudalevige 68). He placed pressure on the bipartisan coalition to ensure that both the block grant program and accountability mechanisms remained central parts of the bill (Rudalevige 68). Ultimately, No Child Left Behind represented, "a splendid piece of bipartisan sausage-making" (Hess and Petrilli, "The Politics of" 18) which fused proposals from both sides of the aisle (Hess and Petrilli, *No Child Left Behind* 18-19).

Outcome

Bush's belief in a federal role in education set him apart from the conservative wing of his party and welcomed support from the Democrats. The decision to forgo the voucher program represented a turning point in the negotiations (Edwards, "Strategic Choices" 45). However, Bush succeeded in convincing some Republicans to join his effort, such as Boehner whose support for the proposal ensured Republican backing for a bill that lacked conservative provisions. Additional persuasion from Bush led to Kennedy's endorsement which ensured Democratic support, increasing the likelihood for a final bill. The culmination of the coalition's efforts led to a number of compromises such as the acceptance of the block-grant proposal, elimination of the school voucher program, increased overall funding for public schools, and a strong emphasis on accountability. Bush succeeded in persuading both Republicans and Democrats to join in his reform efforts, offering compromises on contentious issues and pushing the coalition along at crucial roadblocks. The moderate tone of Bush's education proposal appealed to Democrats, but his willingness to negotiate revealed an awareness of the political context and the necessity to adjust to his environment (Skowronek, "Leadership by Definition" 819-20). Bush's ability to communicate and work with politicians from both parties solidified relationships with key lawmakers and helped ensure that his education proposal became law (Greenstein, "Changing Leadership" 394). His decision-making facilitated legislative passage (Edwards, "Strategic Choices" 45) as "the president chose to negotiate in private rather than to go public" (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 180).

The final vote tally in the House of Representatives for 'House Resolution 1' had 186 Republican Yeas, 197 Democrat Yeas, 1 Independent Yay, 34 Republican Nays, 10 Democrat Nays, and 1 Independent Nay, for a total of 384 Yeas and 45 Nays ("Final Vote Results - 145.").

The final vote tally in the Senate for 'House Resolution 1' had 91 Yeas, 8 Nays, and 1 Not

Voting ("U.S. Senate Roll Call - H.R. 1").

Case 2: Tax Reform

Political Environment:

Prior to his attempt to pass the Economic Growth and Tax Reform Reconciliation Act of

200, Bush enjoyed high approval ratings which increased after September 11th, 2001. Between

February of 2001 and June 7th, 2001 (when EGTRR became law), Bush's approval rating

reached a high of 63%, never fell below 53%, and averaged 57.6% ("Gallup Presidential Poll").

Public opinion on the need for tax reform remained low. According to a Gallup report

released on December 21st, 2000, **'Tax reduction'** ranked fifth behind 'Uniting the country,'

those who had 'No Opinion,' 'Education,' and the 'Economy' on the public's list of priorities for

the new administration ("Priorities"). On January 24th, 2001, Wendy Simmons of Gallup

reported that 'Cutting Federal Income Taxes' ranked thirteenth out of fourteen areas the public

believed needed prioritizing (Simmons "Public Mixed Feelings"). Adding to the moderate level

of interest for tax reform, Gallup reported on February 5th, 2001, that respondents put 'Taxes'

(5%) behind 'Ethics,' 'Education,' 'Crime,' 'Dissatisfaction with Government,' 'Drugs,' 'Health

Care,' and the 'Economy in General' on a list of existing problems in need of attention (Newport

"Morality, Education, Crime"). As such, the public did not consider tax cuts as a pressing issue

in need of consideration.

Finally, public opinion on Bush's proposal for tax reform remained inconsistent. On

January 24th, 2001, according to Gallup, a slight majority of respondents approved of the

proposed cuts but just over a third of respondents believed in the likelihood of legislation

(Simmons "Public Mixed Feelings"). On February 14, 2001, Gallup polling continued to suggest the public's mixed feelings about the Bush administration's proposed tax reform. Just over half of respondents still approved of the cuts but a majority remained doubtful over the likelihood of a final bill (Simmons "Americans Support"). Finally, respondents also seemed wary of how the potential tax cuts negatively affected federal funding of other government responsibilities (Simmons "Americans Support").

Prior to Bush's efforts on tax reform the partisan balance in Congress had the Republicans with a slim majority in the House of Representatives while they maintained both a temporary minority and majority in the Senate at different times. In the House of Representatives the 107th Congress (2001-2003) had 221 Republicans and 212 Democrats ("Party Division HOR"). The Senate during the 107th Congress (2001-2003) had 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans, with the Democrats holding the tie-breaking vote from January 3rd, 2001 to January 20th, 2001 and the Republicans holding the tie-breaking vote from January 20th, 2001 to June 6th, 2001 ("Party Division Senate").

Preliminary Assessment

Polling indicates that Bush benefited from a healthy approval rating. According to Kernell, the president exploits a positive approval rating in order to influence the legislative process (Kernell 304). Public opinion on Bush's proposal as well as on the need for reform presented different scenarios. While the public accepted the idea of a tax cut, they opposed prioritizing reform and remained skeptical of Bush's proposed policy.

The partisan balance in Congress offered a possible avenue for Bush's proposed tax reform. While his party held a majority in the House, the Senate presented a challenge with a

party split (Fortier and Ornstein 147). Unlike education reform, Bush had support from his party but less so from his opponents. Bush understood that he faced opposition, but Republican enthusiasm for tax cuts helped push the proposal forward (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 170). Although Republicans supported Bush's plan, he needed to persuade select members of the opposition to accept his proposal given the congressional roadblock in the Senate. Bush indicated his willingness to negotiate if enough Democrats accepted the idea of passing a bill (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 170). In response, Democrats did not wholly reject the proposal and remained open to the possibility of negotiating (Fortier and Ornstein 148).

With public opinion generally favorable to tax cuts, the administration hoped public pressure might force wavering legislators to agree to legislation. Furthermore, due to the unwillingness of Democrats to wholly reject tax cuts, the possibility for future negotiations and compromises remained open. As a result, Bush pushed for legislation with public appearances and congressional negotiations.

Implementation

Bush looked to distinguish himself from his father by incorporating the public in his legislative pursuits (Wayne 77). Bush also surrounded himself with qualified staff to ensure the success of his public campaigns (Wayne 77). Going public avoids the complexities and confrontations often associated with congressional negotiations as the president controls where to speak and how to deliver his message (Wayne 80). To promote his tax cut proposal, Bush went public and found a comfort zone where he overcame his communication weakness (Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference* 202-03). However, willingness from Democrats to consider Bush's proposal raised the possibility of negotiations between the administration and

legislators. Therefore, Bush attempted a dualistic approach which included public campaigns in areas where Democrats remained politically vulnerable as well as bargaining in the House and Senate (Mann and Ornstein 124-25).

Having assumed the presidency in January 2001, Bush went public with his proposal a month later (Buchanan 70). In one of his first acts, Bush appealed to Congress as well as the public in the form of "a nationally televised speech" (Buchanan 71) to promote the idea. Bush's tax cut proposal focused on "$1.6 trillion over ten years" (Mann and Ornstein 124), targeting "reduction and consolidation of income tax rates, a doubling of the child tax credit, reduction of the marriage penalty, and repeal of the estate tax" (Mann and Ornstein 124). Republicans accepted the initial proposal and while Democrats recoiled at the extravagance of the dollar amount, they seemed prepared to compromise (Mann and Ornstein 125). Evidence of their interest in the tax cut became clear when an initial counter-proposal by the Democrats of a "$300 billion tax cut" (Mann and Ornstein 125) changed to over $600 billion (Mann and Ornstein 125). Democrats also seemed to accept the law's inevitability (Mann and Ornstein 125) which placed Bush in a favorable position going forward as he began employing strategic public appearances (Mann and Ornstein 125). The public's view of tax cuts varied between approval and indifference, giving Bush the incentive to launch public appeals to mitigate hesitation from the Democrats (Edwards, "Strategic Choices" 42). Bush's primary approach targeted areas of the country represented by skeptical members of Congress. He tried to rally the public in areas where tax cuts had high approval ratings in order to push indecisive legislators to support his proposal (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 78). He hoped Democrats from areas he targeted in his public appearances accepted his proposed tax cuts after some public pressure (Cook 759-60). He travelled to dozens of locations (Buchanan 72) which "included states Bush had won and that

were represented by Democratic senators, including Georgia, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, North and South Dakota, Montana, and North Carolina" (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 78). He further enlisted the assistance of administrative staff to help sell his proposal to the public (Buchanan 73).

Bush's proposal did not hinge on the House given the Republican majority, but in the Senate where party division presented an obstacle. The House unsurprisingly approved Bush's proposal and "totally eliminated the estate tax [and] was approximately the same dollar amount as the Bush proposal" (Mann and Ornstein 126). Progress up that point increased the likelihood of a final bill but Bush made concessions. Negotiations took place between Senate Democrats and Republicans on three main areas, leading to a compromise of "$1.3 billion in tax cuts over ten years [and was] less generous in lowering the rates for the highest income brackets and slower in phasing out the estate tax" (Mann and Ornstein 127). A meeting between members of both houses of Congress to settle final differences lasted only a day and the final vote saw a number of Democrats join with Republicans to ensure the tax cuts became law (Mann and Ornstein 128).

Outcome

While the final bill mirrored the agreements made through Senate negotiations, the law carried many of Bush's demands and also passed with some Democrat support (Mann and Ornstein 128). With respect to Congress, the House did not pose a problem but the Senate complicated the bill's passage (Buchanan 71). Bush's public campaigns sought to encourage wavering legislators (Buchanan 71-72) and in the end forty Democrats voted for tax cuts (Buchanan 73). While the public did not always view tax cuts as a priority, they generally

favored them, and with support from his party Bush applied enough public pressure on Democrats to ensure success. Finally, initial reluctance from Democrats to ignore tax cuts presented an opportunity for debate within Congress. The result led to a bill signed with compromises on key issues such as the total dollar figure of the tax cut, new rates, and the estate tax (Mann and Ornstein 127).

The final vote tally in the House of Representatives for 'House Resolution 1836' had 216 Republican Yeas, 13 Democrat Yeas, 1 Independent Yay, 0 Republican Nays, 196 Democrat Nays, and 1 Independent Nay, for a total of 230 Yeas and 197 Nays ("Final Vote Results - 118"). The final vote tally in the Senate for 'House Resolution 1836' had 62 Yeas and 38 Nays ("U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes - H.R. 1836").

Case 3: Immigration Reform

The Political Environment:

As the deteriorating situations in Iraq damaged his public standing, Bush's approval ratings varied from moderate to low (Eichenberg, Stoll, and Lebo 802). Between January 2005 and July 2005, Bush's approval rating reached a high of 57%, never fell below 44%, and averaged 49.1% ("Gallup Presidential Poll"). Between August 2005 and April 2006, Bush's approval rating reached a high of 46%, a low of 34%, and averaged 40.9% ("Gallup Presidential Poll"). Between June 2006 and May 2007, Bush's approval rating reached a high of 44%, a low of 32%, and averaged 36.7% ("Gallup Presidential Poll").

Public opinion on the need for immigration reform varied. On April 15th, 2004, in a poll that covered the respondents' opinions on the nation's most pressing problem, Joseph Carroll and Frank Newport of Gallup reported that immigration received the lowest percentage among

respondents, coming last in importance among sixteen issues (Carroll and Newport "A Quarter of Americans"). On April 23rd, 2004, Lydia Saad of Gallup reported that in the run-up to the 2004 presidential election, immigration ranked low on a list of issues selected for their potential to impact voters' presidential selections (Saad "Abortion Divides Public"). On December 13th, 2004, Newport reported that with respect to non-economic problems, immigration ranked tenth out of thirty-one issues; only 2% of the public ranked immigration as the nation's most important problem (Newport "Iraq, Economy"). On April 5th, 2006, Newport reported that the public had not yet decided on the approach they preferred for immigration reform (Newport "Americans Support Guest"). However, on April 20th, 2006, Gallup reported a shift in public opinion on immigration. Jeffrey Jones of Gallup reported that immigration ranked second behind the war in Iraq (J. Jones "Immigration, Gas Prices"). However, whether the change occurred as a result of a shift in public opinion or due to the framing of the polling question remains unclear. On June 22nd, 2007, Saad confirmed the shift in the public's opinion on immigration, reporting that behind the war in Iraq, immigration ranked second out of nine issues with respect to the most pressing issues of the day, accounting for 15% of respondents (Saad "Americans View").

Finally, public opinion of Bush's proposal remained unfavorable. According to a Gallup study released on March 9th, 2004, a slight majority of respondents disagreed with the immigration proposal (Carlson "Americans Value"). Moreover, Gallup released further polling which indicated that more respondents opposed Bush's proposal by a significant margin ("Issues Approval"). Between June 2006 and May 2007, Bush's approval rating for his handling of immigration reform reached a high of 38% and his disapproval rating reached a high of 70% ("Issues Approval").

During Bush's efforts for immigration reform, Republicans had majorities in both houses of Congress until 2006, when the Democrats regained full control of Congress. The partisan balance in the House of Representatives during the 108th Congress (2003-2005) had 229 Republicans, 205 Democrats, and 1 Independent ("Party Division HOR") while the partisan balance in the Senate during the 108th Congress (2003-2005) had 51 Republicans, 48 Democrats, and 1 Independent ("Party Division Senate"). The partisan balance in the House of Representatives during the 109th Congress (2005-2007) had 233 Republicans, 201 Democrats, and 1 Independent ("Party Division HOR") while the partisan balance in the Senate during the 109th Congress (2005-2007) had 55 Republicans, 44 Democrats, and 1 Independent ("Party Division Senate"). The partisan balance in the House of Representatives during the 110th Congress (2007-2009) had 232 Democrats and 203 Republicans ("Party Division HOR") and the partisan balance in the Senate during the 110th Congress (2007-2009) had 49 Democrats, 49 Republicans, 2 Independents (who both caucused with Democrats) ("Party Division Senate").

Preliminary Assessment

During his second term, Bush's popularity decreased significantly. In fact, near the end of his presidency, Bush's approval rating hovered in the 30% range which represented a significant change from the particularly high approval he held immediately following the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (Roberts 1). John Burke notes that "Bush's 53 percent approval rating right after re-election was the lowest of any re-elected president since Gallup began polling" (Burke 13). As his second term progressed, his numbers continued to decline. Poor approval ratings forced him into a vulnerable position given that immigration reform went through multiple phases and spanned over three years. Bush became the first president in the modern era with such a consistently low approval rating (Fullam and Gitelson 255).

As the years wore on, Bush's public standing weakened and the advantage he held with the public during his first-term legislative pursuits vanished. Public opinion of Bush's policy proposal did not help an already unstable position with the public. As the polling indicates, two years from the start of Bush's second term passed before immigration reform became a salient issue with the public. Prior to 2006, immigration ranked low as an issue on the public's list of concerns, and yet Bush highlighted reform as a priority for his second term policy agenda (Kwong 257). Furthermore, while the public gave immigration reform more consideration during the last few years of his presidency, the rise in interest corresponded with both a consistently low presidential approval rating and skepticism of Bush's ability to deal with the issue effectively. Additionally, Gallup polling indicated that the president experienced his lowest approval ratings during last few years of his presidency.

Ultimately, Bush's declining approval ratings and the public's consistent skepticism of his actual proposals weakened the president politically (Fullam and Gitelson 255). While he enjoyed the public's approval with respect to education and tax reform, his approval rating during his second term, the lack of support for his immigration proposal, and the public's fluctuating views on the need for a solution to the nation's immigration problem forced Bush to write off the public as a possible ally in his legislative effort.

The partisan balance in Congress had Republican majorities in both the House and the Senate. However, Bush met resistance from the base of his party due to the perception that his immigration proposal offered amnesty ahead of a secure border (LeMay 46). Bush framed the proposal in such a way that increased the possibility for support from both parties (Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center* 166). Bush's proposal included border enforcement provisions to appease Republicans and a guest worker program with a path to citizenship to appease

Democrats (Replogle and Tichenor 6). As Democrats took an interest in the proposal, Bush

risked further alienating conservatives in his own party (Graham 303). Bush's attempt to appeal

to both Republicans and Democrats set the stage for future negotiations between the

administration and Congress and rendered the Republican majorities in Congress futile.

Furthermore, given the timeline of the immigration debate, the fact that the legislative process

overlapped with the 2006 Democratic takeover of Congress did not dissuade Bush given his

willingness to address opposition concerns on immigration (Wroe 200). Conservatives' fear of

amnesty and Bush's decision to propose programs that appealed to both moderate Republicans

and Democrats negated the value of the congressional majorities. Ultimately, passing

immigration reform required negotiations with legislators from both parties.

Implementation

Bush intended to define his presidency by tackling immigration reform (Kwong 257).

Politicians from both parties worked together to devise a path forward but they effectively

ignored the public and did not seek their input on the issue (Kwong 257). In fact, Bush only

"made one address on […] immigration reform in 2006" (Edwards, *The Strategic President*

107). Immigration reform efforts began in Congress and continued for three years with

numerous attempts to reach a compromise.

Bush's initial proposal offered "a new guest worker program [as] its centerpiece"

(Tichenor 99), which encompassed two provisions for undocumented immigrants. The first

offered the opportunity to work legally while the second allowed undocumented immigrants to

apply for citizenship once they gained lawful employment and subsequent work experience

(Tichenor 99). Additionally, the proposal emphasized "tighter border controls, expanded use of

technology and personnel at the border, and more stringent internal reporting requirements"

(Tichenor 99). Unions opposed the guest worker program given the challenge a new pool of

potential workers represented to their members (Ness 57). Unions wanted reform to focus on

simplifying legalization rather than a program that facilitated employment (Ness 170). A

number of union organizations adamantly refused to support Bush's proposal (Ness 170) while

the guest-worker program appealed to the business community given the potential access to a

vast pool of low-wage workers (Tichenor 100). However, support from big business pushed

some Democrats to oppose the program, including Howard Dean who feared the program

marginalized and confined future workers (Tichenor 100). Corporate interests also clashed

heavily with unions given the business community's desire to see so many non-unionized low-

wage workers at their disposal (Ness 3). Additionally, the conservative wing of the Republican

Party felt the proposal turned a blind eye to criminality (Tichenor 100) and they refused to

compromise without an emphasis on border security (Wroe 200). Bush faced the prospect of

placating Republicans and Democrats (Tichenor 100) as well as lobbyists and interest groups.

However, negotiations repeatedly stalled and in 2005, a Republican effort to push

through a proposal lined with tough law enforcement and border security measures failed in the

Senate as a result of widespread public protests from groups sympathetic to undocumented

immigrations and in favor of a path to citizenship (Gerken 1517). John Cornyn and John Kyle

tried unsuccessfully to pass a bill that evaded a path to citizenship, provided illegal immigrants

very limited visa options (Rosenblum 21) and insisted on "border and worksite immigration

enforcement" (Dunn and Junn 184). An effort from John McCain and Ted Kennedy also led

nowhere (Dunn and Junn 184). Their proposal tried to find a compromise by combining "a

"guest-worker program" (Rudolph 81), legal status for "immigrants who had been in the United

States for at least two years" (Rosenblum 32), more stringent law and immigration enforcement (Rudolph 81-82), and the facilitation for foreign workers to enter the country (Chishti and Kamasaki 167). In 2007, another proposal failed in the Senate when Kyle and Kennedy proposed a bill not unlike the proposal from McCain and Kennedy a year earlier, but they tried harder to appeal to the political right as the bill placed more emphasis on security, tightened immigration criteria, and made obtaining legal status more difficult (Chishti and Kamasaki 168).

Opposing views on Bush's proposal came from legislators, interest groups, and the public (Ilias, Fennelly, and Federico 744-45). Ilias, Fennelly, and Federico's research demonstrates that public opinion on immigration reform fluctuated depending on the specific proposal introduced, the issue the proposal intended to solve, and whether the proposal combined other policy initiatives such as border security (Ilias, Fennelly, and Federico 744-45). Despite attempts by Bush and lawmakers to avoid the public discourse on immigration reform, inconsistent public opinion mirrored the chaos in Congress and burdened the negotiations. The public's response to the McCain-Kennedy bill added to the difficulties, as they remained skeptical the proposal adequately secured the border (Replogle and Tichenor 7).

Despite the initial failure to achieve legislation, the Democrats regaining control of both the House and Senate in 2006 renewed Bush's desire to reach a consensus (Wroe 201). However, the Republican base increased their opposition and Democrats lost interest (Wroe 209) as Bush's final efforts to salvage a bill with cooperation from Harry Reid (Wroe 211) proved ineffective. Hardline Republicans' preoccupation with the border (Marshall 28) hampered negotiations, but Democratic resistance in 2007 also made potential legislation more difficult (Marshall 45).

Outcome

While Bush delegated much of the legwork to senators and House members from both parties, his personal desire to reach an agreement with lawmakers led to various bipartisan attempts to reform federal immigration policy. However, Bush failed to bridge differences on immigration (Wroe 213) notwithstanding the "arm twisting, cajoling, persuading, promising, and bargaining" (Wroe 214). Bush's struggled to deal with a process that spanned over so many years and contained several diverging interests (Burke 13). Debate over immigration reform brought out policy demands with little to no cohesion. Conservative Republicans' insistence on border security, their preoccupation with perceived amnesty, and the desire from both moderate Republicans and Democrats for a guest worker program with a path to citizenship complicated immigration reform and jeopardized the possibility for a final bill (Dunn and Junn 184). After Democrats regained control of Congress, they remained disposed to working towards a final bill, but Bush's failure to overcome Republican opposition negated further progress. Internal party divisions, public protests, fluctuating public opinion, and ideology defined the debate over immigration reform. Despite numerous proposals, a compromise never materialized.

Case 4: Social Security Reform

The Political Environment:

Prior to his attempt at social security reform Bush faced moderate approval ratings. Bush's efforts at reform began at the very beginning of his second term and his public standing remained unaffected from the political instability of his final four years in office. Between January 2005 and May 2005, Bush's approval rating reached a high of 57%, never fell below 45%, and averaged 50% ("Gallup Presidential Poll").

Public opinion on the need for social security reform remained unfavorable. On March 17th, 2004, Gallup polling indicated that social security received only 2% in a poll that asked respondents about important problems in the United States (J. Jones "Four in 10"). On October 27th, 2004, Gallup released polling with respect to the most important election issues less than a week before the election between Bush and John Kerry. Social security ranked in what Jeffrey Jones calls "second tier issues" (J. Jones "Terrorism, Economy Rank"). Additionally, only 31% of respondents ranked social security as an extremely important election issue (J. Jones "Terrorism, Economy Rank"). However, on January 5th, 2005, Gallup released polling that indicated 82% of respondents placed a high degree of importance to tackling social security reform while only 4% placed a low degree of importance (J. Jones "Public Divided").

Public opinion on Bush's proposal varied between moderate and low. On January 5th, 2005, Gallup released polling that indicated 48% of respondents approved of private individualized accounts while 48% opposed the plan (J. Jones "Public Divided"). On January 27th, 2005, Gallup released polling that indicated 40% of respondents believed in Bush's ability to successfully maintain the existing social security program (Saad "Americans Favor") while

57% remained skeptical (Saad "Americans Favor"). On March 17th, 2005, Newport and Saad

noted that Bush's proposal for social security reform struggled with the public, showing no sign

of improvement (Newport and Saad "Public Really Think"). On March 31st, 2005, Gallup

polling confirmed the negative trend as the public continued to oppose the proposal (Saad

"Majority Against"). Finally, on April 6th, 2005, Gallup released polling that asked the public's

opinion of Bush's handling of a number of issues. Bush's handling of social security received

35% approval and 57% disapproval (J. Jones "Public Sends Mixed") which reflected poorly on

his proposal for privatization.

Prior to Bush's effort for social security reform, the partisan balance in Congress had

Republican majorities in both houses of Congress. The partisan balance in the House of

Representatives during the 108th Congress (2003-2005) had 229 Republicans, 205 Democrats,

and 1 Independent ("Party Division HOR") and the partisan balance in the Senate during the

108th Congress (2003-2005) had 51 Republicans, 48 Democrats, and 1 Independent ("Party

Division Senate").

Preliminary Assessment

Bush's modest approval ratings for an incumbent president did not seem to bother him.

He felt his re-election ensured a significant amount of political capital and decided to push ahead

with reform (Bush, *Decision Points* 297). To justify his desire to seek an important legislative

achievement in his second term, Bush evidently accentuated his perceived political reputation

instead of his approval ratings.

Regarding public opinion of social security as a policy issue, the polling indicates a

notable fluctuation. In mid-to-late 2004, the public seemed relatively disinterested in social

security reform due to the importance placed on other notable policy issues, such as jobs, the

state of the economy, war in the Middle East, and terrorism (J. Jones "Four in 10"). However,

shortly before Bush's second inauguration, public interest increased significantly. Bush's public

campaign to announce his proposal for reforming social security began almost immediately after

taking the oath, which coincided with the shift in public opinion. However, in April 2005, the

public once again began to lose interest and within a month social security reform faded from

legislative consideration. Public opinion of Bush's social security proposal also seemed to

fluctuate but overall the polling indicated disapproval. However, Bush's desire to take

advantage of his re-election capital early in his second term pushed him closer towards a public

campaign, despite the public's opposition to his proposal.

  The partisan balance in Congress did not facilitate a clear path to legislation. While Bush

won re-election with congressional majorities, the slim Republican majority in the Senate

reduced the likelihood of a partisan approach succeeding. Furthermore, a bipartisan vote seemed

an impossibility given the Democrats' opposition to any form of privatization (Benavie 11)

which they communicated to the administration (Beland and Waddan 150). Democrats refused

to accept any compromise given their commitment to social security's existing framework and

Bush lamented the lack of support from the Democrats, especially in comparison to their efforts

on education reform (Bush, *Decision Points* 300). Democrats numbered highly in the House and

held an even more robust presence in the Senate despite their minority status. Democrats'

congressional authority only reinforced their opposition and Republicans hesitated to support

Bush's reform ideas given the partisan nature of the proposal (Beland and Waddan 150). The

political and institutional resistance from Democrats and the reluctance of many Republicans to

support his proposals (Mycoff and Pika 248) rendered his party's majorities in the House and

Senate ineffective. Bush understood that opposition from the Democrats made the prospect for reform difficult but without Republican support, congressional negotiations remained an unfeasible option (Bush, *Decision Points* 300). Ultimately, Republican skepticism and determined opposition from the Democrats clashed with the public's sudden interest in social security reform and Bush's own enthusiasm after his re-election. The contrast meant that the political environment excluded a Congress-centered approach, leaving the public campaign as Bush's sole option.

Implementation

As the polling from Gallup indicates, the public opposed social security reform as a priority issue and as it specifically related to Bush's proposal. As a result, Bush needed to alter the public's opinion on social security (Galvin 324) and his "approach was characterized more by confrontation than accommodation, more by a determination to realize ideological goals than by pragmatism" (Galvin 324). Bush faced public opposition to his social security proposal and in order to generate any meaningful leverage to apply to Congress, he had to reshape public opinion. Despite proclaiming his intention to work with Congress (Bush, "Bush's Remarks" 31), Bush went public in a big way (Beland 120). After his re-election, his campaigns took him across the country and included trips to dozens of states (Farrier 39). The approach seemed a mere extension of his election campaign (Edwards, *Overreach* 4) and sought to convince the public to support his proposal for social security reform (Schier and Eberly 2). Similar to Bush's efforts with tax reform, members of his administration made public and media appearances (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 5). In addition to the traditional methods of news circulation, representatives of the administration engaged directly with constituents (Edwards, *The Strategic President* 5).

Bush's proposal for social security reform focused on privatization. More specifically, the plan allowed workers to set aside part of their social security contributions for private investment (Beland 117). Bush made no secret of his desire to pursue reform given his stance on a program so antithetical to his own views on federal social assistance (Campbell and Binstock 273). He feared that bankruptcy loomed in social security's future and proposed a free-market remedy that rejected more taxes in favor of "private investment accounts" for the new generation of investors (Bush, "Bush's Remarks" 31). Bush believed that privatization represented a viable proposal for a program on the verge of financial collapse (Claude 23). Privatization symbolized the foundation of Bush's policy on social security and for the future of the program (Campbell and Binstock 273).

Opposition from multiple angles ensued, in one case before Bush's public campaign even began. A commission organized to study the proposal endorsed Bush's plan but sparked anger due to the perception that their findings represented a partisan tool to ensure privatization (Beland 119). To improve the bill's chances, the administration addressed "those over 55" (Claude 21), who received reassurance that the proposal did not jeopardize their investment (Claude 21). Despite the proposal's backing from young workers, seniors feared privatization and joined with union opposition to negate Bush's efforts (Campbell and Binstock 273). Seniors believed that the proposal threatened their investment thus compromising their financial security (Bakvis 147). Unions opposed privatization in part because they felt it jeopardized the system's financial structure (Bakvis 148). Specifically, opposition came "from Democrats in congress as well as organizations like the ALF-CIO and the American Association of Retired Persons" (Beland 120). Ultimately, Democrats defended social security's existing framework

while both senior citizens and unions alleged that privatization destabilized the program and put millions at financial risk.

As Bush set out to increase public support for his proposal, his opponents went public as well (Campbell and Binstock 273). The AARP initiated a media offensive as public opinion of the proposal became increasingly negative (Campbell and Binstock 273). Cook questions the effectiveness of the public campaign strategy, but notes that presidents still undertake them, in part to alleviate some of the pressure from political actors who also utilize the public forum to voice their concerns (Cook 763). As Bush's public campaign failed to stem the tide of growing opposition, Congress avoided the proposal altogether (Campbell and Binstock 273-74).

Outcome

Bush's inability to generate support for individual accounts demonstrated how poorly he estimated his political capital and the effect of his re-election (Edwards, *Overreach* 120). The challenge of seeking to reform such an unpopular issue clashed with Bush's perception that winning re-election ensured policy success (Fullam and Gitelson 254). Despite Bush's efforts and those of his administration, a coordinated public campaign failed to shift public opinion in favor of reform (Edwards, *Overreach* 5). The public opposed privatizing social security (Weaver 136), supporting opposition to Bush's plan rather than his own proposal (Mycoff and Pika 229). The campaign's failure to stimulate public support and the resistance from organized opposition defined Bush's effort to restructure social security. Although the Bush administration tried to convince them otherwise, seniors feared for their investment and opposed privatization (Campbell and Binstock 273). Labor unions joined seniors in opposition and with the assistance of a media campaign, the idea for private individual accounts vanished. While Bush's options

remained limited, going public proved unsuccessful (Fullam and Gitelson 254-55) and a president who fails with the public "is less likely […] to cow wavering legislators into submission" (Fullam and Gitelson 255). With staunch opposition from unions, Democrats, and senior citizen groups, Bush's failure to reverse public opinion meant an avenue for reform did not exist. When Bush failed to generate public support, the likelihood of Congress deliberating social security reform quickly evaporated. Ultimately, he failed to influence a legislative outcome.

Findings

Reform	P1	P2	P3	P. M. in HR	P.M. in SE	Strategy	Outcome
Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Bargaining	Bill Passed
Tax	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No*	Both	Bill Passed
Immigration	No	No	No	Yes**	Yes***	Bargaining	Failed
Social Security	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Public	Failed

* Republicans lost control of the Senate after Jim Jeffords became an Independent but caucused with the Democrats (Den Hartog and Monroe 63).

** Immigration reform spanned three years and in 2006, Democrats regained majority control of the House of Representatives ("Party Division HOR").

*** Immigration reform spanned three years and in 2006, Democrats regained majority control of the Senate ("Party Division Senate").

P1. – Were presidential approval ratings above 50%?

P2. – Did a majority of the public approve of the need for reform?

P3. – Did a majority of the public approve of the policy proposal?

P.M. in H. R. – Did Republicans have a majority of seats in the House of Representatives?

P.M. in SE – Did Republicans have a majority of seats in the Senate?

Strategy – Bargaining and/or Going Public

Outcome – Bill Passed or Bill Failed

The four case studies pertaining to legislative pursuits during the George W. Bush administration, while limited, reveal the prominence of public opinion as a consistent variable in influencing legislative outcomes. However, presidential strategies and partisan balance of Congress do not appear to influence legislative outcomes in any consistent or discernable way. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis that the political environment triggers the president to select a particular strategy, which then leads to legislative success or failure, cannot be confirmed.

With respect to the strategies, they remain relevant as mechanisms for the president to engage in the legislative process but their influence over the outcomes remains questionable. The case studies fail to demonstrate consistency as Bush's use of bargaining and public campaigning led to both success and failure. With respect to presidential agency, Gleiber and Shull offer analyses, suggesting a degree of uncertainty surrounding presidential influence over the legislative process as they fail to determine a strategy that best explains both the nature of a president's influential abilities or his success rate (Gleiber and Shull 464). The uncertainty demonstrated in their analysis challenges theories from scholars such as Neustadt and Edwards, questioning the president's role in the legislative process (Gleiber and Shull 464).

The findings with respect to the effects of partisan balance in Congress also reveal very little. An initial overview suggests a correlation between partisan balance and the passage of legislation given the Republican majorities in both the House and the Senate during the attempts at education and tax reform. However, the case study on social security reform demonstrates Bush's inability to achieve legislation despite his party's majority in Congress. The case studies on education and tax reform also demonstrate support from some Democrats, diminishing the relevance of party majorities.

With respect to education and immigration reform, the case studies complicate the very notion of partisan balance. During education reform, Bush had the support of his own party as well as members of the opposition. During immigration reform, the president lacked support from conservatives, yet he found approval from members of the opposition as well as moderate members of his party. While the end result on education reform saw the administration and Congress compromise on a final bill, legislation failed to materialize with respect to immigration reform. Partisan balance in Congress means very little if the president finds commonalities with the opposition and tries to utilize their support in order to achieve legislation. Perhaps at a minimum, the findings suggest the need for the president to retain support from the base of his party. However, while the conservative base supported Bush's tax proposal, he also required support from the moderate wing of the party to achieve legislation. The inconsistency reveals very little as to the effect of partisan balance in Congress on legislative outcomes.

Public opinion emerges as the only significant variable in influencing legislative outcomes. With respect to education reform, public opinion favored Bush's proposal to such an extent that he harnessed that support in order to mount pressure on Congress to act. On tax reform, the public generally favored tax cuts but did not view them as a priority and lacked enthusiasm towards Bush's proposal. Bush went public to solidify established Republican enthusiasm and to generate enough support with specific Democratic constituents. However, without the public's general acceptance of tax cuts, whether Bush would have otherwise succeeded in achieving legislation remains unclear. Additionally, both of Bush's legislative successes considered in this thesis occurred during his first term, a term primarily highlighted by strong presidential approval ratings. Broadly speaking, the terrorist attacks on 9/11 triggered

Bush's popularity to soar. His popularity peaked during his first two years in office which coincided with the successful passage of education and tax reform.

In both instances of legislative failure considered in this thesis, public opinion as a whole complicated Bush's legislative attempts given the public's refusal to support his immigration and social security proposals. Furthermore, in stark contrast to his first four years in office, low approval ratings plagued Bush's second term. Ultimately, notwithstanding the limited number of case studies, the findings imply that if the president's approval ratings remain above 50% and a majority of the public support the policy in question, then the president's chances of achieving legislation increase. With respect to education and tax reform, Bush had above 50% approval ratings and public opinion of his reform ideas remained favorable. Both efforts led to final legislation. However, with respect to immigration and social security reform, Bush had below 50% approval ratings and the public did not favor either of the two policy proposals. In both instances, legislation failed to materialize.

The analysis of public opinion reveals notable findings in the context of a recent study completed by Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page. Gilens and Page note, "[w]hen the preferences of economic elites and the stands of organized interest groups are controlled for, the preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy" (Gilens and Page 575). However, as the authors stress in their analysis, their results do not wholly negate the public's involvement in legislative outcomes (Gilens and Page 572). Gilens and Page note that when the public opposes a proposal in favor of an existing policy, the reform under consideration often fails to become law (Gilens and Page 573). They conclude that any perceived correlation between the policy desires of the

general public and policy outcomes stems from the overlap between the policy desires of economic elites (Gilens and Page 576).

The four case studies add to the discussion of the public's role in legislative outcomes. Brief overviews of fiscal interests in the four policy areas demonstrate both the presence and absence of an overlap between public interest and economic elites. For example, with respect to education reform, the overlap between favorable public opinion of the policy proposal and the existence of economic interests seems prominent. The Bush administration's attempt at reform highlights the relationship between government and business in education policy (Berlak 263). The rapport, also prominent during the Clinton presidency, strengthened "the corporate educational agenda" (Beralk 277-78). Economic forces demonstrated strong interest for Bush's planned education reform and as evidenced by the case study, the public also supported the proposal. As a result, overlap exists between both favorable public opinion and interest from economic elites with respect to education reform, thus confirming Gilens and Page's conclusions.

Furthermore, the business community consistently favors a reduction in taxes and as Jill Abramson from The New York Times explained in March of 2001, the business community enthusiastically supported Bush's proposal (Abramson "The Nation"). Many in the community eagerly awaited benefits once the proposal became law (Abramson "The Nation"). Bush succeeded in getting tax cuts passed, which again seems to complement Gilens and Page's observation of economic elites driving legislative results. Furthermore, while the public did not approve of tax reform to the extent that they approved of education reform, the public viewed the possibility of tax cuts positively, thereby confirming some overlap between both variables.

With respect to social security reform, the business community supported the Bush administration's efforts to privatize social security because of the possible benefits from the redirection of funds to private accounts (Latour 252). Interest for social security reform from major economic forces existed, but their interest did not correlate with the successful passage of legislation. Furthermore, the interest from economic forces did not coincide with favorable public opinion of the proposal, as the general public remained opposed to privatization. The public ultimately opposed Bush's proposal and supported the existing social security program instead. As a result, the case study on social security confirms Gilens and Page's assertion on the likelihood of a proposal failing if the public opposes reform and in favor of existing law.

Additionally, Bush's inability to ensure the passage of immigration reform further confirms Gilens and Page's conclusion on the relationship between public interest and new policy proposals. Notably, the case of immigration reform demonstrates unfavorable public opinion of the various bills proposed during Bush's second term. Therefore, the public's opposition to immigration reform as well as the failure to achieve legislation confirm Gilens and Page's observation. However, the parameters of this examination did not match those of Gilens and Page's analysis, exhibiting the contrasts rudimentary at best. Nevertheless, the consistency between both findings provides incentive for additional exploration and comparison.

Overall, this examination presents findings concerning presidential strategies, the legislative process, and the effects of the surrounding political environment, with a particular emphasis on the pre-eminent role of public opinion. This examination confirms that while the president may try to engage the legislative process, low approval ratings and the absence of favorable public opinion of his proposals may render the road to legislation difficult or even impossible. The strategies presidents implement represent an important step to achieving

legislation but the extent of their effectiveness seem procedural rather than deterministic. With respect to influencing legislation, the case studies reveal public opinion as a prominent variable while the president's strategic interventions and partisan balance in Congress demonstrate no discernable correlation. Thus, the findings challenge conventional wisdom and disconfirm the hypothesis of this thesis.

Limitations

The attempt to provide a thorough analysis of a very broad and complex process represents one of the fundamental limitations of the examination. In so doing, this thesis considered numerous factors within a fairly confined framework. Furthermore, many of the components represent complex areas of political theory, often analyzed exclusively rather than part of such a broad undertaking.

Moreover, the examination consisted of only four case studies and although each overview provided insight into the legislative process, undertaking a more comprehensive examination in the future may help confirm or deny the findings of this thesis. An extended examination might include multiple case studies and a comparative analysis across presidencies. Additional case studies and a comparative analysis would add to the present framework and provide further information, leading to more conclusive findings.

Furthermore, this thesis did not consider how the framing of a policy proposal and the motivation behind the pursuit of legislation affect the legislative process. As an example, an exploration of the motivations behind Bush's bipartisan framing of education and immigration reform and his partisan framing of tax and social security reform would add substance to the

examination. This information may have helped clarify how Bush's framing affected the implementation of his strategies as well as his ability to influence the legislative process.

An additional limitation concerns the polling from Gallup. Despite their longstanding presence as a polling organization, their questionable performance during the last presidential election in 2012 raised doubts about their accuracy. Nate Silver from The New York Times detailed Gallup's polling in the lead up to Barack Obama's re-election, noting their poor performance (Silver "Which Polls Fared"). Furthermore, Gallup's showing in 2012 represented another setback in a poor track record (Silver "Which Polls Fared"). Costas Panagopoulos highlights Gallup's troubles and indicates that in the 2008 Presidential Election, Gallup finished seventeenth out of twenty polling firms based on polling performance (Panagopoulos "Poll Accuracy"). Finally, Alan Abramowitz confirms the observations made by Silver and Panagopoulos, noting Gallup's serious accuracy trouble during the 2010-midterm elections (Abramowitz "Bad Night"). In order to mitigate Gallup's recent accuracy trouble, this analysis requires further polling from other groups to cross reference the numbers gathered from Gallup, as well as an integration of both horse-race polling and approval ratings.

Overall, the following limitations represent shortcomings to this examination and affect the overall quality of the analysis. While the examination certainly led to some compelling findings, they require further exploration and analysis.

Conclusion

This thesis examined George W. Bush's attempts to influence the legislative process in four domestic policy areas within the parameters of political context and presidential agency. Specifically, the thesis hypothesized that the political environment, operationalized by public opinion and partisan control of Congress, influences the president's selection of either bargaining or campaigning as a strategy, which subsequently leads to legislative success or failure. The case studies underscore public opinion as a chief variable in influencing legislative outcomes, while Bush's strategic interventions as well as partisan control of Congress presented insufficient correlation. While the implemented strategy acts as a mechanism, guiding the president's policy agenda through the legislative process, the broader influence of public opinion overshadows the capacity for the strategy to determine legislative outcomes in these cases.

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