

Legislative Coalitions and Agenda Control

The Mexican Chamber of Deputies during The Calderón *sexenio*

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Abstract

The two congresses of the Calderón Administration were modestly more successful in passing reforms than the congresses under Vicente Fox. Still the legislative record fell far short of what most analysts believe is necessary to create the structural conditions for vigorous and sustained economic growth and greater economic equality. Analyzing roll-call data using W-NOMINATE statistics, this paper argues that despite Calderón's more adept leadership skills compared to Fox, a multi-dimensional issue environment and institutions that favor high levels of floor-voting party unity inhibited the formation of legislative coalitions capable of passing major reforms. Given these conditions, party leaders chose to use their agenda setting powers to keep divisive proposals from reaching the floor. The paper concludes with a discussion of the potential for passing major reforms under the new Peña Nieto Administration, which will still need the support of legislative coalitions to achieve its legislative agenda.

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Introduction

Divided government came to Mexico in 1997 after sixty-eight years of PRI (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*) hegemony. With the election of Vicente Fox as Mexico's president in 2000, citizen expectations for economic and social progress rose substantially. Those expectations were disappointed as legislative immobilism and institutional gridlock set in, at least in respect to structural reforms needed to spur strong and sustained economic growth. Under divided governments that have existed since 1997, the enactment of reforms required legislative coalitions. Given the failure to enact substantial structural reforms, some scholars have called for governmental and political reforms, viewing Mexico's current institutions as inherently inefficacious. Despite legislative efforts to achieve major institutional reforms, they have not been instituted. Why has the Mexican government failed to enact substantial structural and institutional reforms since the transition to democratic government that culminated with the election of Vicente Fox in 2000?

There are various explanations for this failure. This paper offers a partial explanation for this case of legislative immobilism. While most analysts have looked for answers outside of the intra-chamber legislative process (see Knight 2009 for a review of this literature), this paper will focus on how legislative coalitions are formed and agendas controlled *within* the legislature. More specifically, I will analyze legislative behavior in the Chamber of Deputies for the LX (2006-2009) and LXI (2009-2012) congresses during the Calderón *sexenio* (six-year presidential term) to explain the absence of major structural and institutional reforms since democratization. In previous research on the congresses of the Fox administration, I found that a bi-dimensional legislative issue environment would lead to divisions within the PRI's legislative faction in the Chamber of Deputies if such proposals were allowed to reach the floor for a plenary vote (Knight 2011). Given the PRI's ability to control the agenda in

coordination with its legislative partners, the party' leadership exercised its negative agenda control powers to prevent this from happening. Structural reforms proposed by the Fox administration, while attractive to the "modernizing" faction of the PRI, were anathema to the PRI's traditionalist faction, derisively referred to as the "*dinosaurios*." Fox's proposals for reform to the energy sector, labor laws, and fiscal policy would divide the PRI in a floor vote, and in fact did in respect to the latter policy area. Since the IVA (value added tax) debacle of 2003 in which a PRI leadership fight resulted in a divided floor vote by the party and failure of the initiative (Langston 2010), PRI leaders have kept such issues off the agenda.

This pattern of negative agenda control during the congresses of the Calderón *sexenio* (2006-2012) has continued. However, the types and frequencies of intra-chamber coalitions changed as the voting strength of each party was altered by congressional elections. Despite the changing electoral fortunes of the PRI and other parties, the PRI leadership was able to exercise negative agenda control throughout both the LX (2006-2009) and the LXI (2009-2012) congresses. However, the dimensionality of the issue environment in the Chamber changed during these years. During the LX (2006-2009) and LXI (2009-2012) congresses, the first issue dimension continues to be the same as before, a broad array of socio-economic issues. However, the second dimension changed from "PRI-support" issues to an array of issues that led the PRI to form floor-voting coalitions with the center-left PRD (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*) rather than the PRI's typical coalition partner, the center-right PAN (*Partido Acción Nacional*). Seemingly bi-dimensional votes did come to the floor during the LXI Congress, but the PRI was able to maintain its high levels of floor-voting party unity nevertheless. This fact appears to contradict the central argument of this paper that reforms were not passed due to the success of the PRI's leadership in keeping bi-dimensional issues from reaching the floor. The answer to this puzzle is found in the greater coalitional flexibility for the PRI in the LXI Congress given the increase in potential coalition partners compared to previous congresses under Fox and Calderón.

After reviewing the relevant literature and discussing the methods employed in this research, we will analyze the types, frequencies, and dimensionality of the floor-voting coalitions formed during the LX and LXI Congresses (2006-2012). How these coalitions relate to levels of party unity will also be examined. To further understand how legislative behavior in the Chamber inhibited the enactment of structural and institutional reforms, we will test the proposition that legislative party leaders were able to exercise negative agenda control. In conclusion, the prospects for structural and institutional reforms during the current Peña Nieto administration will be explored.

Literature Review

We will survey the literature that attempts to explain the failure of congresses during the Fox and Calderón *sexenios* (2000-2012) to enact major structural reforms before briefly reviewing the theory of agenda control that provides the analytical framework employed in this paper to explain the absence of major structural and institutional reforms during this period. The failure of the Mexican Congress to pass such reforms was in part the consequence of a legislative politics that enabled the PRI to manage divisions within its legislative faction while promoting its brand through the use of its agenda setting powers. But first, a review of the literature particular to this case of legislative immobilism and the resulting institutional gridlock in Mexico is in order.

Some scholars of Mexican politics have argued that Mexico's constitution system of separation of powers with checks and balances has been the main problem, especially in light of the country's multiparty democracy. Other analysts see the failure to enact major structural reforms as rooted in Mexico's socio-economic context. Causation is primarily ascribed to the legacy of Mexico's corporatist past. Corporate interests still exercise enough influence within the PRI to block major reforms. The legacy-of-corporatism explanation includes the legacy of its legitimization, an economic, nationalistic populism under the banner of "revolutionary nationalism." The last type of explanation for the lack of

structural reforms assigns responsibility to the failure of leadership following Mexico's democratic transition (Loaeza 2006). For the purposes of this study, corporatist and institutional explanations are most pertinent. Therefore, this review will be limited only to those explanations.

The most swiping institutional critiques of Mexico's failure to pass major reforms during the Fox and Calderón *sexenios* are grounded in the argument by Juan Linz (1990; Linz and Valenzuela 1994) concerning the "perils of presidentialism." Without the incentive of rewarding potential coalition partners with cabinet positions, legislative coalitions become extremely difficult to achieve. Castañeda and Morales (Castañeda and Morales 2007) argue that economic growth and equality will not be achieved unless Mexico adopts a new political system. Specifically they call for Mexico to adopt France's semi-presidential system of government. Lawson (2004: 148) observes that "Mexico's constitutional architecture seriously impedes effective governance." However, Cheibub (2002; 2007; Cheibub, Przeworski, and Saiegh 2004) makes an effective argument that legislative coalitions are just as likely in multiparty presidential systems as they are in multiparty parliamentary systems of government. Only when the majority of the legislature and the president have opposing preferences are ad hoc, issue-based coalitions not feasible. When policy-preferences align, as they do in the case of Mexico for structural reforms, coalitions are feasible.¹

Other analysts call for institutional reform to improve legislative decisiveness without changing the regime. These critiques focus on electoral reforms and institutional capacity. Most importantly, calls for reform include the prohibition against consecutive reelection and lessening the control that party leaders have over access to the ballot and campaign resources. Closely associated with the latter is the ability of party leaders to utilize resources for party discipline, resulting in exceptionally high levels of party unity. Rubio (2004: 22) argues, "Legislators benefit little from catering to the voters, so they don't. [They] are accountable to their party leaders" who have little incentive to compromise. Permitting consecutive reelection among other reforms would increase accountability. It is not clear

that greater accountability would facilitate intra-chamber coalition formation, however. Lawson (2004) notes that the resulting lower levels of party unity might instead make coalition formation more difficult and inter-branch gridlock more likely. Coalition making requires credible commitments among its members.

Mexico's highly centralized political parties are also blamed for the lack of structural and institutional reforms. Nacif (2002) describes governance in Mexico as the "centralized party model." The prohibition against consecutive reelection and a system that gives party leaders control over access to the ballot and campaign funds results in almost perfect party unity in the Congress. But despite very high levels of party unity in floor votes, Mexican political parties are in fact very fractious. Pastor and Wise (2003:207) observe that "all three [major] parties have been wrought with internal strife since the 2000 transition, and the lack of a voting bloc in Congress is one manifestation of this maelstrom." Rubio (2004: 29) argues that while the PRI has maintained "a semblance of unity, particularly when voting in Congress, the party has now become a collection of groupings, usually fighting for power with the others." Crespo (2004b) argues that a governability problem has emerged from the greater distribution of power in the political parties and the political system in general.

Underlying the factious nature of the parties are deep ideological divisions. This is especially true for the PRI. Crespo (2004a) identifies a "traditionalist current" and "neoliberal current" within the PRI. In 2003, Gordillo led the latter current as the PRI's party leader in the Chamber in support of Fox's fiscal reform that would have added food and medicines to the Mexico's value added tax (IVA). Opposed by her rival for the party's nomination as presidential candidate, Madrazo, as chair of the party's central committee (CEN), aligned himself with the traditionalists. The PRI divided in the Chamber's floor vote on this reform, resulting in the reform's defeat. While electoral considerations obviously play a part in this failed attempt at fiscal reform, real ideological cleavages between the traditionalist or "*dinosaurios*" and the "neoliberal" modernizers provided the grounds for exploiting

these divisions. Rubio (2006: 30) argues that many in the PRI's legislative faction opposed Fox's reforms "not only because they affected their political interests, but also because they were contrary to their ideological conceptions."² This ideology is rooted in nationalism and populism, which, as Rubio (2004) describes, reemerged after the 1997 election in which the PRI lost its majority in the Chamber, and after major liberalizing reforms of recent PRI presidents. As noted by Crespo (2004a: 77), in 2001 the national assembly of the PRI explicitly rejected neoliberal policies and "reaffirmed the party's traditional ideology of revolutionary nationalism." But "neoliberalism" has remained an important part of the party, especially among the leadership. As Dresser (2003: 335) observed, "The future of Fox's legislative agenda is in the hands of a disorganized organization [the PRI] with no direction, no leadership, no ideology, and no clear course."

These ideological divisions within the PRI that exist despite extremely high levels of floor-voting party unity are important to understanding the role of agenda control in coalition formation in this study. Similarly, it is important to understand how the legacy of corporatism influences agenda control and coalition formation. The PRI's historical links to organized labor, state-sponsored or operated service organizations, and private and public monopolistic economic players have continued to provide support for PRI politicians. Elizondo Mayer-Serra (2007: 21) argues that Mexico's political parties "require support from the large entrepreneurs as well as the principle labor unions..."³ For structural reforms to pass, the remnants of the old corporatist past must be broken. Espinoza Toledo (2004: 39) argues that the legacy of corporatism "impoverishes the meaning and content of political deliberation, diminishes the performance of the state and hinders the construction of agreements."⁴ Jaime (2006: 62) observes that if structural reforms were enacted, they would undermine the "vestiges of the protectionist model and the corporatist past."⁵ Grayson (2000) writes that there is a fundamental tension between Mexico's corporatist past and its new pluralism that challenges political stability and affects government performance. In a World Bank report, Barquera (2007: pp xi-xii) concludes that "the

core of the governance problems in Mexico... has its roots in the country's socio-political reality rather than in its institutional arrangements.”

Mexico's corporatist legacy undermines the ability of politicians to garner public support for reforms. This difficulty makes fending off challenges to structural reforms within the PRI more difficult, perhaps explaining the emphasis on maintaining floor-voting party unity. This is apparent in the case of fiscal reform. Lehoucq, et al. (2008: 326) argue that “by exchanging particularistic goods for support from narrowly based corporatist sectors, *presidencialismo* relinquished the right to tax society and thus build a modern, professional state with the rule of law.” Solórzano (2004: 154) notes that fiscal policy is based in the corporatism of the PRI, ... in which the social pact includes low taxes for the poor.” According to Loaeza (2007), the weakness of civil society and the appeal of populism have resulted in a weak state. Elizondo (2007) argues that “society is not sufficiently organized from below.” Rubio (2004: 6) points to the continued power of non-institutional actors. “These groups... threaten to undermine Mexican democracy... [as the] vested interests within the PRI and the [PRD]... often intermingle with those of the non-institutional players...” To the extent that the influence of these groups continues, the potential to mobilize citizen support behind reforms is limited. In turn, deterring defections within the PRI for structural reforms initiatives becomes more challenging, thus encouraging legislative party leaders to keep such measures off the agenda.

Given the preceding review of the literature explaining the failure to enact major structural and institutional reforms during the Fox and Calderón sexenios, it is important to explain how these influences play out within the Chamber of Deputies. To do so, the theory of agenda control developed by Cox and McCubbins (2005) in their study of the U.S. Congress is used. Negative agenda control is an essential factor in their “procedural cartel” theory of legislative behavior in the House of Representatives. A “cartel” does not exist in the Chamber of Deputies in Mexico because coalitions are ad hoc alliances depending on the issues before the Chamber. Nevertheless, I argue in this paper that

party leaders employ their agenda-setting powers to prevent “rolls” as they do in other legislatures in which legislative leaders have the power to do so, and they do so for similar reasons. Cox and McCubbins operationalize the concept of a roll as follows: “the party has been *rolled* on a given final passage vote if a majority of its members vote against the bill, but the bill nonetheless passes” (p. 12, emphasis in original). As the authors observe, “the only crime is using those powers to *push* bills that then pass despite the opposition of most of the governing coalition” (p. 11, emphasis in original). To do otherwise would damage the party’s brand. As in Cox and McCubbins’ study of the U.S. Congress, the expectation is that there will be *no* rolls in the Chamber of Deputies. If a coalition is never rolled, we have a strong confirmation that they control the agenda. In the Chamber of Deputies, there are shifting majority coalitions, but the theory of agenda control is still the same.

The literature on the organization and procedures of the Chamber of Deputies is also relevant to this inquiry. We can expect zero rolls only if a majority coalition has the tools at their disposal to potentially control the agenda. The principle of strict proportionality in the distribution of committee and leadership organizations within the Chamber was established by the 1999 *Ley Organica del Congreso*. Committee membership must reflect the plenary seat share of all parties, and the chairs of those committees are distributed proportionally among the parties (Alarcón Olguín 2009). Likewise, two principle leadership organizations within the Chamber, the *Conferencia* and the *Junta*,⁶ proportionally represent each party in the Chamber. Voting in the *Junta* is weighted by the vote share of each factional leader’s party (González 2007). The *Conferencia* selects the *Mesa Directiva*, which in turn selects the Chamber’s president. This office rotates among the three major parties, with its three vice-presidents representing each of those parties (Nacif 2002). Despite the appearances that all parties have an equal say in the legislative process, these rules enable any two or more parties that can form a majority to control the decisions of the *Conferencia* and the *Junta*, given that procedures are decided by majority rule.

Formally, the agenda is controlled by the *Conferencia*. However, each of the party leaders that compose the *Junta* sit in the *Conferencia* where voting is again proportional to party seat share (González 2007). Thus, the party *coordinadores* (legislative party leaders) are able to exercise agenda control through the *Conferencia* and its permanent body, the *Mesa Directiva*. The *comisiones ordinarias* (standing committees) are also agenda setters. They write and mark-up the bills and amendments that will be submitted to the floor, subject to the discharge powers exercised by the *Junta and the Mesa*. The *Conferencia* sets the deadlines for reporting *dictámenes* to the floor (González 2007). Given that committee chairs are distributed among the parties proportionally, how do the coalition gatekeepers control the agenda? First, *dictámenes*⁷ (bills with proposed amendments) are reported to the floor by majority vote in committees that consist of the same coalitional majority that is represented in the *Conferencia* and the *Junta*. Second, the majority coalition of *coordinadores* on the *Junta* appoints its own party members to the most important committees. These committees are most likely to report contentious *dictámenes*. Since contentious votes result in lower levels of floor-voting party unity, coalitional control of these committees is important. Third, the *coordinadores* that sit on the *Junta* have the power to remove and replace committee members, including chairs, without constraints as long as the *coordinadores* hold their leadership positions (Lehoucq, Negretto, and Benton 2008).⁸

Despite these formal procedures that facilitate agenda control by the majority coalition, informality is still an essential part of the Chamber's processes. Accordingly to Alarcón Olguín (2009: 202), the *comisiones* lack autonomy in part because the formal rules are bypassed and have been made "inoperable many of the articles of the *Reglamento* and its *Ley Orgánica*." He argues that the current process is "preoccupied with obtaining consensus prior to achieving agreements in the committees and the internal governing bodies of the chambers before arriving at an uncertain vote on the floor."⁹

Coalition leaders clearly have rules, norms and incentives that help them control the agenda. But to do so, they must maintain their leadership positions. Formally, the party *coordinador* is selected by the party's legislative faction and subject to replacement by the same. However, the party's National Executive Committee (CEN) has considerable influence over the selection of party leaders, despite the practice of holding elections for factional leaders since 1997 (Camp 2007). Lehoucq et al. (2008) argue that the party's CEN selects the party's *coordinador* prior to caucus elections. Nacif (2002) concurs and notes that the PRI legislative contingent sometimes dispenses with the ritual of elections. Béjar Algazi (2006) argues that democratic rules and values do not exist within the legislative factions in the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁰

Methods

The following section will employ several statistical techniques to analyze roll-call data from the Mexican Chamber of Deputies during the LX and LXI Congresses (2006-2012).¹¹ Every floor-vote in the Chamber is published in the *Gaceta Parlamentaria*.¹² All of these floor-votes are included in the database for this study. In the Chamber of Deputies, bills reported from Committee are initially voted on "in general," typically, but not always, followed by amendments to the bill as permitted by the Chamber's governing bodies. Amendments to the bill reported by a committee or jointly by committees do not precede the initial vote on the bill. Therefore, there is no vote on the final bill as in the U.S. House of Representatives. Only occasionally is the floor-vote on the committee's reported bill contentious. The contentious votes, which are the focus of this inquiry, are the amendments to those bills that are first approved in general on the floor. Since the Chamber floor does not vote on procedural matters, which are decided by the *Mesa Directiva*, the roll-call-votes database includes substantive roll-call votes only.¹³ In addition to the statistics used to analyze the roll-call data, the

congressional record (*Diario de Debates*)¹⁴ is analyzed to determine the substantive nature of votes as they relate to the dimensionality of voting patterns identified.

Levels of party unity are important to the analysis that follows because the potential for disunity within the party's legislative faction is an important consideration for party leaders when exercising their agenda control powers. WRice and Rice are used in this study to determine levels of party unity. Rice is calculated by summing the absolute value of the percentage differential in a floor-vote for a particular party or coalition of parties ($\sum |\% yeas - \% nays|$). When all party members vote in the same direction, Rice equals one. If half of the party's members vote one way, and the other half vote in the opposite direction Rice equals zero. If the 75 percent of party members vote with their party's direction, but 25 percent defect, Rice equals point-fifty (.50) on the scale of 0 to 1. Rice is used to determine party unity for a series of floor-votes related to a particular issue or issues that come before a plenary session of the Chamber. To estimate levels of party unity for all votes, and for all contentious votes, I employ John Carey's (2007b) WRice statistic that weights each floor-vote by the closeness of that vote; i.e., the vote margin by which the motion was passed or rejected.¹⁵ The logic of this approach is that one would expect party unity to be higher on floor-votes in which defections are more likely to defeat or roll the party. Below is the formula for calculating WRice:

$$WRICE_i = \sum RICE_{ij} * CLOSE_j / \sum CLOSE_j$$

(where i = the i th party, j = the j th vote, and where
 $CLOSE_j = 1 - (1/THRESHOLD * |THRESHOLD - \% YEA|)$)

In this study, we are interested in the types of minimum-winning coalitions that form in the Chamber of Deputies. When voting is universal, with all three major parties (PRI, PAN, PRD) voting in the same direction, votes are not considered contentious. When one of the major parties opposes the other two, or when one of these parties fails to establish a party direction on the floor-vote, that vote is

classified as contentious. A party's direction is established when 60 percent or more of legislative party members vote in one direction, either Aye or Nay. In the Chamber of Deputies, legislators have four choices: Aye, Nay, Abstain, or present but not voting (a quorum vote). Quorum votes are not counted for the purposes of this study since they are not counted as part of the vote total. However, abstentions are counted for the purposes of determining the outcome of a floor-vote. Therefore, an abstention has the same impact on the outcome as a nay vote since a floor-vote passes only if it receives 50 percent plus 1 vote of the total that includes both nays and abstentions. If a party member abstains when his or her party's vote direction is aye, that deputy has essentially defected. On the other hand, if that deputy abstains when his or her party direction is nay, the effect is to support the deputy's party. An abstention under these circumstances is essentially a way to make a statement contrary to the party's position without undermining the party's effort to defeat the bill or amendment. For these reasons, I recode abstentions as nay votes when calculating unity scores if the party direction is aye. If the party's direction is nay, however, abstentions are not recoded.

This paper employs the concept of "minimum-winning" coalitions. The concept was developed to study coalitional governments in parliamentary systems (see Laver and Norman Schofield 1998). The purpose here is somewhat different given the separation of powers system of the Mexican government. Nevertheless, the idea is essentially the same. To determine the possible minimum-winning coalitions, one asks, what is the minimum number of parties in various combinations that will constitute a majority of the seats in the Chamber? While others parties may or may not join a minimum-winning coalition, only those parties that vote in one direction and together account for the minimum number of votes needed to win on the floor are considered members of the coalition. The voting-directions of parties superfluous to the minimum-winning coalition are brought into the analysis when useful to analyzing the outcomes. The assumption is that all members of the legislative faction will vote, and they will vote in perfect unison. Of course, this is rarely the case. Thus, a minimum-

winning coalition as determined by seat count that only has a few seats over the minimum number of votes needed to constitute a majority is a risky coalition in practice. Legislative leaders will be reticent to risk losing on the floor if they must ensure that their coalition members vote in the same percentage of their faction or better relative to the opposition, and that they maintain perfect or near perfect levels of floor-voting unity.

Another statistic used in this study is frequencies of coalitional successes and rolls. Successes may occur when a coalition either favors or opposes a measure before a plenary session of the Chamber. If the coalition opposes the measure and it is defeated in a floor-vote, the coalition succeeds. Likewise, if the coalition supports the measure and it passes, the coalition succeeds. A “roll” occurs when the coalition opposes a measure (coalition nay votes are equal to or greater than 60 percent) on a floor-vote, and the measure passes anyway. In order for a minimum-winning coalition to be rolled, one of two things needs to happen. Either coalition members must have a higher level of absences or quorum votes, or there must be a lower level of party unity for the minimum-winning coalition than for parties voting in the opposite direction. As explained in the literature review above, effective agenda control exists if the roll-rate equals zero. Unlike Cox and McCubbins (2005), who establish the party direction by a simple majority of the party, we will use a more restrictive standard of 60 percent of the coalition voting in the same direction as noted above. Given the high level of party unity in the Chamber of Deputies, it is not clear that the coalition party leaders used their agenda setting powers to allow a measure to reach the floor unless they can ensure that no more than 40 percent of their party members (less one) defect. We will examine the few floor-votes in which this approach fails to establish any minimum-winning coalition that will potentially use its agenda setting powers.

The final statistical technique used in this study is W-NOMINATE (Poole 2005). This statistic is a non-parametric scaling technique that locates legislators along spatial dimensions by identifying their “ideal points” on each dimension. Deputy ideal-points are located in two-dimensional space and

displayed using coordinates plots that identify the party affiliation of each deputy. The significance of the second dimension is measured with Eigen values displayed in a Skree plot. The “wnominate” package developed for R is used to produce these statistics (Poole et al. 2011). It is important to keep in mind that deputy “ideal points” do not necessarily represent each legislator’s “true” preferences. Especially in a party system that endows party leaders with considerable resources to discipline legislators, as in the case of Mexico, vote-choice is a product of discipline and preferences, along with strategic considerations. Nevertheless, deputy ideal points enable the researcher to estimate the dimensionality of particular floor-votes. In this study, vote-choice is sequentially regressed on dimensions 1 and 2 for particular votes using Logit. The resulting pseudo-R2 values are then compared, and the absolute differentials between dimension 1 and 2 pseudo-R2 values are calculated.

Deputy “ideal points” do allow us to visually assess the relationship of party-member voting patterns to those of legislators from other parties. Given the high levels on party unity in the Chamber, they also allow us to see graphically the coalitional patterns that are influenced by the preferences of party members. The W-NOMINATE coordinates plots do not indicate the actual distances between the party members, especially given the high levels of party unity; nor can the party locations in the two-dimensional space be compared between congresses. Nevertheless, the relative spatial location of the parties within each Congress does provide useful information when analyzing coalitional patterns. W-NOMINATE also allows us to analyze the number of salient dimensions in the legislature and how those dimensions correspond to the types and frequencies of coalitions. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that dimensions represent patterns of deputies that vote together on various issues. The statistic cannot give us any information as to why groups of legislators tend to vote together on some issues but not others. That is why analyzing the content of the issues that receive a floor-vote is essential. Only through such qualitative research can one make sense of the issue content of the dimensions identified with the help of W-NOMINATE.

Results and Analysis

During the LX Congress (2006-2009), there were five types of potential minimal-winning coalitions in the Chamber of Deputies: one between the PRI and the PAN; one between the PAN and the PRD; one three-party coalition between the PRI, the PRD, and CONV (*Convergencia por la Democracia*);¹⁶ two four-party coalitions between the PRI, PRD, PVEM, and either PNA (*Partido Nueva Alianza*) or PT (*Partido del Trabajo*); and, another four-party coalition between the PRI and the PRD along with the PT and either CONV or PNA. It is worth noting that unlike the previous two congresses during the Fox *sexenio*, a coalition between the PRI and the PRD needed two minor parties to achieve the minimum necessary votes assuming perfect attendance and floor-voting party unity. It is also worth noting that despite the potential for a PAN_PRD coalition, none were formed. Perhaps this was due to the bitterness between these two parties following the disputed 2006 presidential election. Alternatively, the PAN and PRD are ideological opposites, making coalitions difficult along the principle socio-economic dimension. But this is also true for the PRI and PRD as we shall see below.

The LXI Congress (2009-2012) had a different assortment of potential minimum-winning coalitions following the 2009 midterm elections in which the PRI made substantial gains. The LXI Congress (2009-2012) also had five types of minimum-winning coalitions: a coalition between the PRI and the PAN; one between the PRI and the PRD; one between the PRI and the PVEM; one between the PRI and the PT; one between the PAN, the PRD, the PVEM, the PT, and either the PNA or CONV. Clearly, the PRI was in a much stronger position following the 2009 midterm elections to form two-party minimum-winning coalitions with anyone of four potential partners based on its preferences. If the PAN was to form a two-party minimum winning coalition, it still had only two choices, the PRI or the PRD. Table 1 below summarizes the potential minimum-winning-coalitions for each congress.

Table 1**Potential Minimum-winning-coalitions per Congress¹⁷**

	PRI	PRI	PRI	PRI	PRI	PAN	PRI	PRI	PRI	PAN	PAN
	PAN	PRD	PRD	PRD	PRD	PRD	PRD	PVEM	PT	PRD	PRD
		CONV	PVEM	PVEM	PT					PVEM	PVEM
			PT	PNA	PNA					PT	PT
										PNA	MC
Congress											
LX	313	251	261	259	253	334					
LXI	380						307	260	252	250	251

As one can see from Table 1, the PRI had ample choices among potential coalition partners, irrespective of policy preferences during the LX Congress (2006-2009). However, given that the PRI held only 106 seats in that Congress¹⁸, and given that the second largest party, the PRD, held only 127, the PAN with its 207 seats was the strongest partner for the PRI. A PRI_PRD coalition did not have the required votes (only 233 out of 500 seats) to win floor votes and control the agenda without at least one additional minor party. As shown in Table 1, there were four such possible multi-party coalitions with the PRI, but the seat margins were slim for each. Along with the difficulty of maintaining sufficient party unity in all four parties, these margins made PRI_PRD_minor-parties coalitions unattractive. Nevertheless, several did occur during the LX Congress. A coalition of the PAN and the PRD had the greatest potential strength. However, there were no such coalitions during this Congress as noted above.

During the LXI Congress (2009-2012), a PRI_PAN coalition still was the best strategic option for the PRI, as it was for the PAN. However, the PRI also had the option of a two-party coalition with the PRD in this Congress. The PRI's seat count increased to 239 votes during the LXI Congress, while the

PAN's seat count dropped considerably to 141 seats. The PRD also lost seats, moving from 127 seats during the LX Congress (2006-2009) to only 68 seats during the LXI Congress. In addition, the PRI now had a third and a fourth two-party coalition option with the PVEM and the PT, due to the PRI's near majority of seats more than the small increase in seats for the PVEM and the PT.¹⁹ Unlike the LX Congress, the PAN and the PRD would need to enlist the PVEM, the PT, and one more small party to form a coalition. Given these numbers, it is not surprising that PRI_PAN coalitions dominated both congresses as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Coalition Frequencies and Success Rates (2006-2012)

Coalition	Quantity		Percentage of Total		Percentage Success	
	LX	LXI	LX	LXI	LX	LXI
PRI_PAN	92	91	91.1	69.5	100	100
PRI_PRD	n/a*	19		14.5		100
PRI_PVEM	n/a*	18		13.7		88.9
PRI_PT	n/a*	2		1.5		100
PRI_PRD_PVEM_CONV	9	n/a**	8.9		100	
PAN_PRD	0	n/a*	0			
PAN_PRD_PVEM_PT_MC	n/a**	1		.8	100	100
Totals	101	131	100	100		

* not a potential coalition due to insufficient seats

** not a minimum-winning coalition due to excess seats (does not indicate whether minor parties joined the coalition)

Legislative party leaders do not form coalitions based solely on voting strength, however. Policy preferences and the party brand are also important considerations. Both of these considerations require legislative success, which in turn depends on maintaining adequate levels of party unity. Party unity levels were indeed high during both the LX and LXI Congresses (2006-2012) as shown in Table 3

below. Consequently, once party leaders formed minimum-winning coalitions, success on the floor was in little doubt. As shown in Table 2, there were no coalition defeats during the LX Congress, and only two defeats during the LXI Congress that will be discussed below. Still, party unity was not perfect for coalition partners, and unity scores as measured by WRice were lower for contentious votes than for all votes. Consequently, leaders of the major parties had an incentive to form coalitions with another major party (PRI, PAN, PRD). As Table 1 illustrates, coalitions that did not include two of the major parties had small seat margins. Only a PRI_PAN coalition during both congresses, a PAN_PRD coalition during the LX Congress, and a PRI_PRD during the LXI Congress had comfortable margins to allow for more than a minuscule number of party defections. Not surprisingly, 91 percent of the coalitions formed during the LX Congress (2006-2009) were major party only coalitions. During the LXI Congress (2009-2012), 84 percent of the coalitions formed were of this type. It is also important to keep in mind that contentious votes resulted in slightly lower levels of party unity for the PRI during the LX Congress and for all three major parties during the LXI Congress, especially in the case of the PAN.

Table 3

WRice Scores by Party and Vote Type

Congress	LX Congress		LXI Congress	
	All Votes N= 465	Contentious Votes N= 103	All Votes N= 667	Contentious Votes N= 131
Party				
PRI	.937	.925	.953	.924
PAN	.976	.980	.930	.888
PRD	.875	.871	.856	.827
PT	.966	.959	.853	.891
PVEM	.987	.991	.959	.927

Given that party unity levels are quite high, even for contentious votes, policy preferences and the party brand were likely the most important considerations for the major parties in selecting their coalition partners. This fact is best represented by the absence of any coalitions between the PAN and the PRD during the LX Congress (2006-2009) despite the voting strength of this potential coalition as

noted above. The PRI and the PRD, on the other hand, did form 15 percent of the coalitions during the LXI Congress (2009-2012). The PRI and the PVEM formed 14 percent of the coalitions during this same Congress. The PAN and the PRD formed one coalition along with the PVEM, the PT, and the MC (*Movimiento Ciudadano*) during the LXI Congress when the five-party coalition strength was only 251 seats. To understand this perplexing pattern of coalition formation, it is useful to examine the spatial location of deputies along two-dimensions as illustrated in Graph 1 below.

The WNOMINATE coordinates and skree plots in Figure 1 are instructive. There is only one significant dimension for the LX Congress (2006-2009). The coordinates plot graphically displays the overwhelming number of coalitions formed between the PRI and the PAN given the high levels of party unity. Of course, the “ideal points” shown on the graph represent actual vote choice, not necessarily true policy preferences. Party discipline and strategic considerations influence vote choice as well as ideology. It is conceivable that the PRI’s proximity to the PAN on the right of the dimension-one continuum is more a result of non-ideological factors, especially given the fact that PRI had to put together a three- or four-party coalition when it allied with the PRD as discussed above. However, the coordinates plot for the LXI Congress (2009-2012) suggests that the PRI’s strong preference for the PAN as a coalition partner was also based on policy preferences even though a PRI_PRD coalition had a comfortable margin of 56 seats. As one can see, the PRI was actually to the right of the PAN on dimension-one issues during this last Congress of the Calderón *sexenio*. These issues concern a broad array of socio-economic policies.

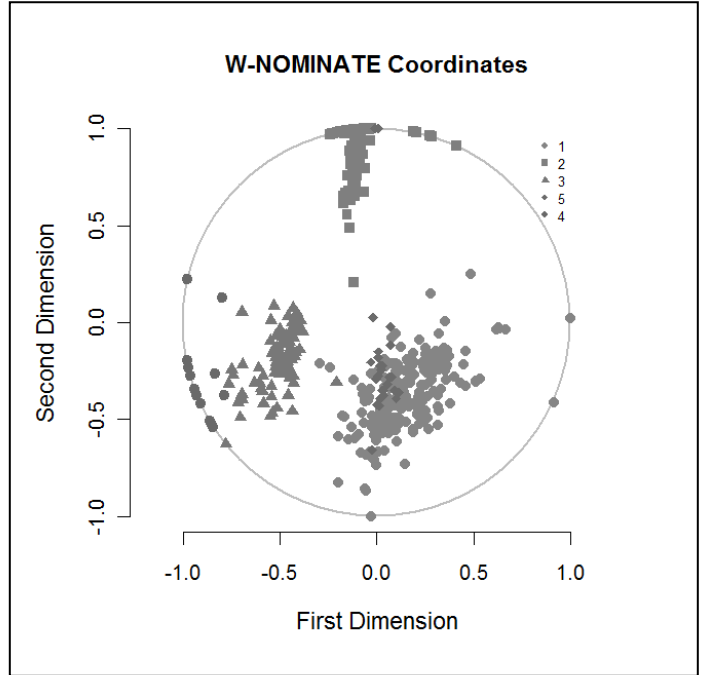
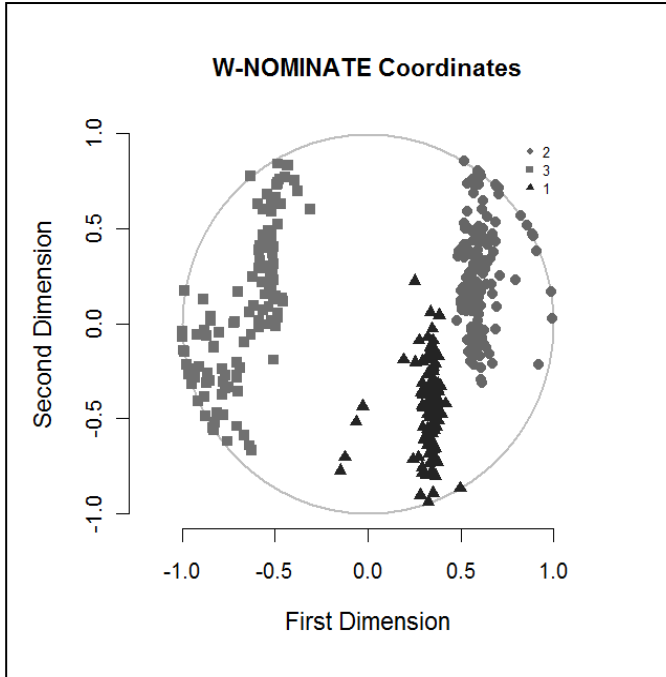
One can also observe from Graph 1 that a second dimension emerges during the LXI Congress (2009-2012). During the LVIII Congress (2000-2003), the second dimension pitted the PRI against the PAN and PRD in what I described as the “PRI-support” dimension (Knight 2011). While there were no significant second dimensions during the LIX (2003-2006) and the LX (2006-2009) Congresses, the second dimension for the LXI Congress aligns the PAN as the conservative party against the PRI, the PRD,

Graph 1

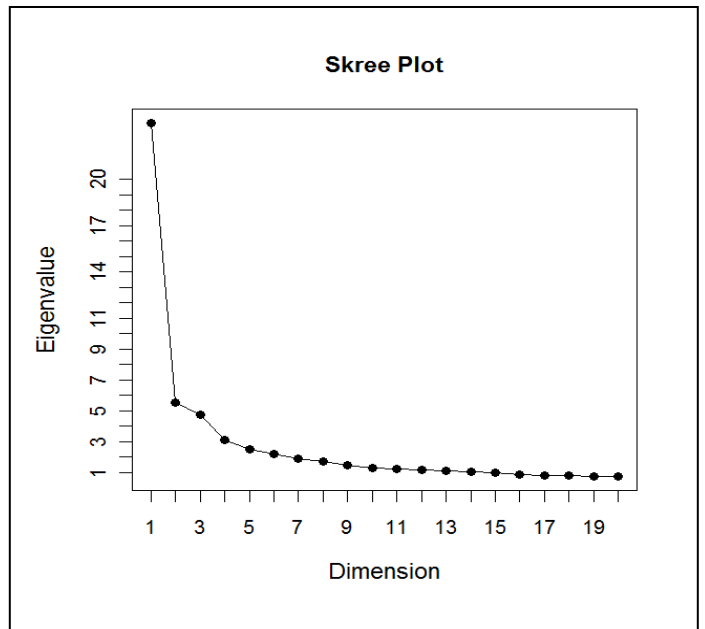
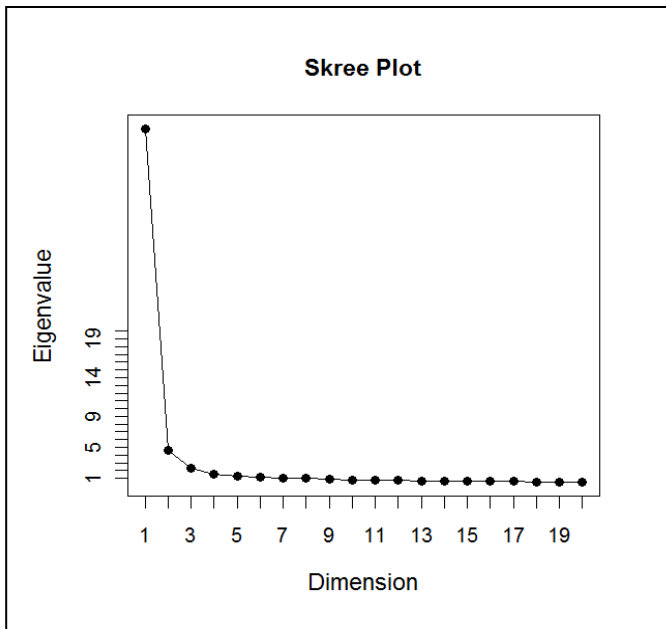
WNOMINATE Coordinates and Skree Plots

LX Congress

LXI Congress



1=PRI 2=PAN 3=PRD 4=PT 5=PVEM



LX: predicted Yeas (98.9%), predicted Nays (95.8%); APRE: .889, .902; GMP .929, .942
 LXI: predicted Yeas (98.4%), predicted Nays (92.5%); APRE: .635, .793; GMP .86, .917

and the three largest minor parties. All 19 floor-voting PRI_PRD coalitions were strongly associated with dimension-two. Of the 17 floor votes most strongly associated with dimension-two, all but one was a PRI_PRD coalition.²⁰ To understand the issue content of this second dimension, and thus the PRI_PRD coalitions during the LXI Congress, it is necessary to review the 19 votes in which the PRI and PRD opposed the PAN.

These second dimension, PRI_PRD minimum-winning coalition votes incorporated many different issues. There were four floor-votes on proposals concerning Chamber audits to reconcile the executive branches expenditures with federal budgets, specifically the 2007, 2008, and 2009 budget years. The April 29th, 2010 floor-vote on auditing the 2007 budget was a PRI_PVEM coalition since the PRD divided on this vote, failing to establish a party direction. However, the next vote that day saw a PRI_PRD coalition that passed an amendment to strengthen the Chamber's authority to audit presidential expenditures. During the last session of the LXI Congress (2009-2012), PRI_PRD coalitions passed two bills that made corrections to the executive branch's accounting of the 2008 and 2009 expenditures.²¹ Not surprisingly given the proximity of the presidential election, the floor debate record evinced much criticism of the President's mismanagement of the budgets for those years.²²

Other PRI_PRD coalition floor-votes concerned the allocation of funds in various programs that would appear to benefit more the constituencies of the PRI and PRD than the PAN. On April 29th, 2011, the PRI and PRD were able to pass a livestock bill providing assistance to organizations assisting ranchers.²³ During the fall session of that year, another bill passed by a PRI_PRD coalition funded economic and social cooperatives. A disaster relief bill supported by the PRI and the PRD against the opposition of the PAN, benefited mainly communities in southern Mexico where the coalition partners have greater electoral strength than the PAN.²⁴ Other floor votes concerned environmental and indigenous rights legislation. A vote during the fall session of 2010 expanded funding for the Habitat program, which spends funds in poor, rural communities;²⁵ not where the PAN's base of support is

located. There was also a sustainable energy bill passed by a PRI_PRD coalition in February of 2011.²⁶ In the spring of that year, another PRI_PRD coalition amended the Constitution despite PAN opposition to guarantee the right to clean drinking water for all Mexicans.²⁷ The indigenous rights legislation passed by a PRI_PRD coalition occurred in February of 2012.²⁸

Another dimension-two floor vote concerned the regulation of the pharmaceutical industry, with a PRI_PRD coalition supporting increased regulation in two floor-votes.²⁹ There was also a PRI_PRD coalition opposed by the PAN that passed a transportation bill,³⁰ and another such coalition that passed a bill that set the percentage of revenue contributed by PEMEX to the federal treasury at 40 percent.³¹ There was a bill with the same alignment of parties that mandated that the executive spend all the funds allocated to small business programs, and that the funds spent could not be less than the previous year.³² While the PAN is viewed as Mexico's pro-business party, the opposition attempts to brand the PAN as the party of big business. This floor-vote served that purpose. Still other floor-votes with PRI_PRD coalitions facing PAN opposition concerned social issues. Two votes in November of 2012 extended Social Security benefits to government employees and their families that are in same-sex relationships.³³

What this board array of second-dimension issues has in common is service to the party brands of the PRI and the PRD, and/or service to their constituencies. None of these issues concerned major economic policies important to the PRI's modernizing and increasingly dominant faction of the party. For the PAN, however, many of these policies violated the party's commitment to free-market principles and social conservatism. Besides, the groups that benefited from these measures were primarily the support base of the opposition. Some of the floor-votes scaling along this dimension did not involve economic policy, but rather social or environmental policies. All of the votes could be considered measures that might strengthen the PRI and PRD among constituencies in which the PAN lacked strength. Interestingly, there appears to have emerged during the LXI Congress (2009-2012) a

realization among these two parties that they shared some mutual political interests despite the wide divisions between the leftist PRD and what most *perredistas*³⁴ would describe as the “neo-liberals” within the PRI.

During the two congresses of the Fox *sexenio*, the second dimension was the PRI-support dimension as previously discussed. The first dimension arrayed along a broad range of socio-economic issues. When remnants of the old corporatist support structure of the PRI were challenged, the PAN and PRD teamed up in opposition to the PRI. Minor parties were of little importance during this period. Bi-dimensional votes would occur if structural reforms reached the floor, as the IVA vote of 2003 illustrated. The PRI generally favors structural reforms, but only if they did not violate central tenants of the Party’s founding ideology of “revolutionary nationalism.” The second dimension faded away during the second Congress of the Fox administration.

The new second dimension described above emerged during the second Congress of the Calderón *sexenio* (LXI). At the same time, bi-dimensionality appeared to have returned. The new seemingly bi-dimensional votes saw a PRI_PVEM coalition opposed by the PAN and the PRD along with minor parties that either supported the minority PAN_PRD coalition or were divided on the floor vote. There were 18 PRI_PVEM minimum-winning coalitions during the LXI Congress (2009-2012). Of those 18 floor votes, 10 were “bi-dimensional” ones.³⁵ These 10 floor votes had the PAN and the PRD as a minority coalition opposed to the voting direction of the PRI and PVEM. The PT was divided on all ten of these votes. Without the PVEM, PT, and either the PNA or MC the PAN and PRD did not have a minimum-winning coalition. To better understand why these ten PRI_PVEM coalitions resulted in seemingly bi-dimensional floor votes, it is important to examine the PVEM’s alliances with PRI_PAN and PRI_PRD minimum-winning coalitions.

The PVEM joined only 2 of the 91 PRI_PAN minimum-winning coalitions. However, they joined 16 of the 19 PRI_PRD minimum-winning coalitions. Thus, from a strictly strategic point of view, “bi-dimensional” votes occurred during the LXI Congress when the PVEM and the PRD made opposing choices in respect to forming a coalition with the PRI. In sum, PRI_PAN coalitions were structured by the first dimension, PRI_PRD coalitions (usually including the PVEM) were structured by the second dimension, and PRI_PVEM coalitions (usually opposed by both the PAN and the PRD) were technically structured by both dimensions. Table 4 below illustrates the dimensionality of these coalitions. Note that dimension 1 is considerably larger than dimension 2 for PRI_PAN coalitions, and that dimension 2 is considerable larger than dimension 1 for PRI_PRD coalitions. But for PRI_PVEM coalitions, the dimension 1 and dimension 2 values are almost identical, thus indicating a bi-dimensional pattern of floor votes. The large values for the absolute difference between the mean pseudo R2 values for both the PRI_PAN and the PRI_PRD coalitions indicate that the each coalition was overwhelming either dimension 1 or dimension 2. However, the rather small absolute value for the mean difference between the two dimensions for PRI_PVEM coalitions supports the finding that these coalitions were technically bi-dimensional.

Table 4
Mean Pseudo R2 Values by Coalition (LXI Congress)³⁶

Dimensions	PRI_PAN (N=91)	PRI_PRD (N=19)	PRI_PVEM (N=18)
Dimension 1	.607 (.171)	.027 (.044)	.511
Dimension 2	.068 (.099)	.775 (.177)	.516
Dim1 – Dim2	.552 (.177)	.749 (.195)	.260

It is important to keep in mind that WNOMINATE only sorts deputies in relation to the vote choices of other legislators. It does not tell us anything about the policy content of those choices. Whether “bi-dimensional” votes during the LXI Congress (2009-2012) actually raised the same issue preferences found in both the first and the second dimensions is an open question, thus requiring an

understanding of those specific votes. This point is important because the one bi-dimensional vote (the 2003 IVA vote) during the congresses of the Fox *sexenio* resulted in a significantly lower level of party unity, and thus a roll for the PRI (Knight 2011).³⁷ However, apparent bi-dimensional votes actually resulted in higher levels of floor-voting party unity for all parties except the PT during the LXI Congress as illustrated by Table 5 below.

Table 5
WRice Scores by Party and Vote Type for LXI Congress

Party	All Votes N= 667	Contentious Votes N= 131	“Bi-dimensional” Votes N= 10
PRI	.953	.924	.983
PAN	.930	.888	.986
PRD	.856	.827	.964
PT	.853	.891	.877
PVEM	.959	.927	1.0

Why did these 10 technically bi-dimensional floor votes result in higher levels of party unity rather than lower ones as spatial voting theory predicts? To answer this question, we must examine the policy content of these ten floor votes. Eight of the ten votes were part of a series of floor votes on a constitutional amendment package to reform political institutions during the fall of 2011. Of the two that were not part of the constitutional reform package of floor votes involved nominations to the *Instituto Federal Electoral* (IFE).³⁸ The PRI supported the nominees along with the PVEM, while the PAN and PRD opposed them. The other floor vote outside of the constitutional amendment package was in a series of votes on the 2012 federal budget. There were nine votes on this matter. Seven of the nine saw a PRI_PAN coalition, including the approval of the budget in general. The last of these nine votes had a PRI_PRD coalition. The second from last was the “bi-dimensional” vote involving a PRI_PVEM coalition opposed by the PAN and the PRD. This vote involved funds allocate to sports facilities.³⁹ Diputado Pompa Corella argued that his amendment would ensure a fair geographical distribution of

these funds in his state of Sonora rather than the funds going solely to the construction of a planned new stadium in the state. Diputado Landero Gutiérrez of the PAN argued against the amendment, noting that there was a misimpression that the funds would be devoted solely to the new stadium. Both of these seemingly bi-dimensional floor votes that were won by the PRI_PVEM coalition appear to conform to the old PRI-support second dimension from the first Congress of the Fox *sexenio*. In the first case, the PRI got its way as to who would sit on the IFE Board of Directors. In the second case, the PRI was able to support a reallocation of funds to areas of Sonora in which it had greater electoral strength.

The other eight bi-dimensional floor votes were part of the package of constitutional amendments aimed at governmental and electoral reforms. There were 36 votes on these constitutional reforms from October 25th through November 4th, 2011. Most significant were efforts to institute direct democracy provisions, allow for a presidential veto of the budget, permit independent candidates to run for office, and to hold a referendum on permitting elected officials other than the federal president to seek consecutive reelection. The Chamber approved allowing independent candidates to run for office, and they approved a provision that allowed for substitution in the office of the presidency in case of the president's incapacitation or death. The Chamber also approved an amendment that gave the Senate the power to approve or reject presidential nominations to various executive offices and regulatory boards. Among the various floor votes concerning these constitutional changes and more, 17 were contentious votes. Of those 17 contentious votes, 6 were PRI_PAN coalitions clearly scaling along dimension one. Eleven of these votes were PRI_PVEM coalitions, of which 3 scaled as dimension two and 8 scaled as "bi-dimensional" votes.

On the 25th of October, a PRI_PVEM Nay coalition succeeded in rejecting an amendment to proposed constitutional revisions concerning the rights of citizens to be appointed to offices for which they are qualified.⁴⁰ On the next day, two amendments to the proposal to allow referendums received floor votes.⁴¹ In another bi-dimensional vote on the same day, a PRI_PVEM coalition rejected a proposal

to lower the threshold for citizens to introduce legislation to Congress from .13 percent of the voter roll to .065 percent.⁴² On November 3rd, PRI_PVEM coalitions succeeded in blocking two motions, one of which was a “bi-dimensional” one. The latter was a proposal by the PAN to remove an article calling for a referendum on allowing consecutive reelection.⁴³ In a speech on the floor, PAN deputy Nancy González Ulloa stated, “The majority [PRI] has opted for the path of least resistance, putting forth a proposal whose only purpose is to evade the political cost of having rejected consecutive reelection by employing a strategy of legislative populism.”⁴⁴ The next day, the PRI_PVEM coalition lost a bi-dimensional vote in favor of a referendum on consecutive reelection, but only because their coalition’s yea vote total of 53 percent did not surpass the two-thirds threshold for constitutional amendments.⁴⁵ If *diputada González Ulloa’s* offered an accurate interpretation of the PRI’s intentions, one might suspect that the PRI was not unhappy with the loss. Likewise, on that day, the PRI_PVEM coalition lost a floor vote in favor of a constitutional amendment allowing for referendums on other matters, with its 54 percent yea vote total.⁴⁶ The final technically bi-dimensional vote involved the PRI_PVEM coalition winning a vote opposed to an amendment to the constitutional proposal to allow for independent candidates.⁴⁷ The amendment would have given independent candidates access to public campaign funds, free air time, and other government aid provided to the political parties.

Based on the policy content of the ten bi-dimensional floor votes in which the PRI and PVEM formed coalitions, it appears that the old PRI-support dimension reappear with the aid of the PVEM. In the case of the constitutional amendments, these votes allowed the PRI to support limited reforms to governmental and electoral institutions without undermining its populist brand. In respect to the other two votes, the PRI was able to support its party in Sonora and to configure the directorship of IFE more to its preferences. What appears from the WNOMINATE analysis to be bi-dimensional votes, are in fact a third dimension during the LXI Congress (2009-2012). There is only the statistical appearance of bi-dimensionality due to the scaling of members of five relevant, highly unified legislative parties within a

two-dimensional space. The ability of the PRI to choose among three potential coalition partners while maintaining minimum-winning, two-party coalitions created the opportunity for a three-dimensional issue space for which the PRI took full advantage.

Given the absence of bi-dimensional votes during the two congresses of the Calderón *sexenio*, it is not surprising that PRI coalitions, which accounted for 100 percent and 99.2 percent of the coalitions during the LX (2006-2009) and LXI (2009-2012) Congresses respectively, were only defeated twice over the six years of the two congresses. Those two defeats were the two PRI_PVEM aye votes concerning the 2011 constitutional reforms described above. More important for the analysis to follow, the PRI and its coalition partners were never rolled; i.e., unsuccessfully opposing a measure that passed a plenary vote in the Chamber. This suggests that the PRI effectively controlled the agenda throughout the Calderón *sexenio*, albeit with the help of the PAN, PRD or PVEM depending on the PRI's preferences and party seat totals. Table 6 below displays the absence of rolls in the Chamber. One can also see that only one negative coalition did not include the PRI.

Table 6
Coalition Roll Rates by Congress

Coalition	LX Congress		LXI Congress	
	Nay Votes	Passed	Nay Votes	Passed
PRI_PAN	24	0	22	0
PRI_PRD	n/a		0	0
PRI_PVEM	n/a		12	0
PRI_PT	n/a		2	0
PRI_PRD_PVEM_CONV	4	0	n/a	
PAN_PRD_PVEM_PT_MC	n/a		1	0
Totals	28	0	37	0

The single case of the PRI being excluded from a coalition that exercised effective negative agenda control is illustrative. This floor vote occurred at the very end of the LXI Congress, on April 27th, 2012, only just over two months prior to the presidential election. The issue before the Chamber was the approval on a new commemorative coin celebrating more than 500 years of the “meeting of two worlds.” In other words, a coin dedicated to the arrival of the Spanish in the Americas. The PAN, PRD, PVEM, PT and MC all voted against minting the new coin. The PNA voted in favor of doing so, while the PRI failed to establish a party direction with 67 *priistas*⁴⁸ voting aye, 59 voting nay, and 5 abstaining.⁴⁹ The PRI was not rolled because they were not part of a minimum-winning negative coalition. The bare majority coalition (as measured by seats) that did oppose the bill succeeded in defeating it. At the time, the total number of deputies in the Chamber had fallen to 491. With the PRI’s 233 seats and the PNA’s 8 seats, a PRI_PNA coalition constituted only 49 percent of the Chamber. However, the four-party coalition of the PAN, PVEM, PT, and MC held 249 seats at that time, 51 percent of the total. Given these numbers, this four-party coalition would have had a majority vote in the *Junta*. One suspects that this majority coalition allowed the bill to reach the floor with the expectation that it would divide the PRI on a controversial topic, thus damaging their brand shortly before the election. The floor vote also gave these parties the opportunity to enhance their party images, especially in the case of the PRD, a party that includes in its programmatic agenda support for Mexico’s indigenous peoples.

There are two votes during the LX Congress (2006-2009) in which no minimum-winning coalition supported or opposed the measure presented to the floor. The first one occurred on March 12th, 2009.⁵⁰ This vote was on an amendment that would have provided more generous Social Security benefits to migratory farm workers. The PAN and the PVEM opposed the amendment, while the PRD, CONV, PT, and PNA supported it. The PRI was divided with 59 percent voting yea. Since the only possible minimum-winning coalition that would not include the PRI during the LX Congress was a PAN_PRD coalition, and since the PAN and PRD voted in opposite directions on this motion, one can only

conclude that the PRI and PRD leaders in the *Junta* allowed the amendment to reach the floor because they support it. It is important to note that while this would then be a defeat for the PRI, it would have not been a roll.

A vote on April 30th, 2009 is even more perplexing.⁵¹ This vote was on a bill prepared by President Calderón and approved by the Senate to revise existing criminal and health laws concerning the sale and use of narcotics and psychotropic drugs. The issue of contention that led a number of PAN deputies to vote nay on the bill concerned the amount of marijuana allowed for personal consumption. The President's original draft of the legislation allowed only 2 grams, while the bill that was presented to the floor allowed 5 grams for personal consumption. Despite efforts by the *panista* Administration to convince disgruntled PAN deputies to support the bill anyway, 23 PAN deputies voted nay and 19 abstained.⁵² Nevertheless, 110 PAN deputies supported the bill, thus establishing a party direction in favor of it. The PRD was divided on the bill with 32 of their deputies voting yea, 27 voting nay, and 13 abstaining. It is unlikely that they were part of the majority vote on the *Junta* that allowed the bill to reach the floor without amendments. The PRD and PAN did not form any floor-voting coalitions during the LX Congress, and the PRD objections to the bill were to be found in its law enforcement provisions. The PRI was divided on the floor vote for this bill, with 31 of its deputies voting aye, 19 voting nay, and 8 abstaining. Nevertheless, these PRI votes amounted to 53.5 percent of their deputies voting yea. The bill did pass, but only due to an unusually divided PRD.⁵³ For the all three major parties, this bill was a bi-dimensional vote, but for different reasons. The most likely scenario is that the PRI and PAN leadership on the *Junta* voted to move the bill to the floor for a vote. Unlike the other vote during the LX Congress that lacked the support of a clear minimum-winning coalition, this floor vote was a victory for the PRI and PAN leadership despite the resulting disunity.

First-dimension contentious floor-votes also spanned a wide variety of issues. There are too many first-dimension votes to analyze them in any detail. The vast majority of constitute PRI_PAN

minimum-winning coalitions. Of the 91 such coalitions during the LXI Congress (2009-2012), 83 clearly scaled along the first dimension.⁵⁴ Eighty-five floor votes in total clearly scaled as dimension-one. One of these dimension 1 floor votes that was not a PRI_PAN coalition was instead the only PRI_PT coalition during the LXI Congress (2009-2012). On October 31st, 2009, the PRI and PT opposed an amendment to eliminate taxes on processed Tabaco, while the PRD supported the measure. The PAN failed to establish a direction, though 52 percent of the party supported the amendment on the floor. On the same day, another first-dimension floor-vote saw PRI_PVEM coalition opposed by both the PRD and the PT with the PAN divided again. Unlike the “bi-dimensional” PRI_PVEM coalitions discussed above, the divisions within the PAN led to the scaling of this vote along dimension one. Nevertheless, the PRI and PVEM succeeded in defeating this measure that would have collected more revenues from leases of spectrum bands on the public airways.

There were some important dimension 1 floor votes that were part of the modest structural reforms that did pass the Chamber. Probably the two most important packages of such reforms presented to the Chamber during the two congresses of the Calderón *sexenio* concerned fiscal and energy policies. Both occurred during the LX Congress (2006-2009). The first was a fiscal reform package that came to the floor in the fall of 2007. In the spring of 2008, proposed reforms to the energy sector received floor-votes. In both cases, these reforms pitted a PRI_PAN coalition against the PRD. The reforms changed fiscal and energy policies while allowing the PRI to claim that the party’s foundational principles had not been forsaken.

Unlike the IVA vote debacle of 2003, Calderón’s fiscal reform package of 2007 did not propose to extend the value added tax to foods and medicine. The reform that passed the Chamber included a reduction in spending of 1 percent, a new commission to evaluate national and state budgets, and a provision to allow state governments to add their own sales tax to the federal one. The reform also included a new “informality” tax aimed at large cash bank deposits, and it increased the penalty for tax

evasion. The alternative minimum tax was increased from 16 percent to 19 percent, and the corporate tax rate was increased by one percent to 17.5 percent in 2010. Finally, the reform reduced the government's take from *Pemex*, allowing the parastatal to keep a greater share of its profits. This fiscal reform was estimated to increase the federal government's revenue as a percent of GDP by 2.4 percent or more. Still, this would bring the Mexican government's revenue to only 12 percent of GDP, excluding revenue from PEMEX, the state owned oil company (Haber 2008: 219). This modest reform still left Mexico at the bottom of OECD countries in respect to state revenue,⁵⁵ and far below the revenue needed to invest in programs to promote economic growth and address social needs.⁵⁶

There were ten floor votes in the Chamber on the fiscal reform package on September 13th, 2007. Six of these ten votes were supported by all three major parties within the Chamber. However, four were contentious, with a PRI_PAN coalition opposed to the PRD. Party unity remained quite high for these four votes, with the PRI_PAN coalition having a Rice score of .984 and the PRD having a mean Rice score of .955. This is not surprising considering that this vote scaled clearly along the first dimension. The mean first and second dimension pseudo-R2 values were .975 and .034 respectively. As much as the PRD was opposed to parts of this fiscal reform, the PRI and PAN were strongly supportive of it. The PAN supported the reform because it was the best that could be achieved in coalition with the PRI. The PRI supported the reform because it was the best that could be achieved while maintaining almost perfect unity.

President Calderón's energy reform reached the floor of the Chamber of Deputies on October 28th, 2008. There were fourteen floor-votes that make-up the reform package, all of which were PRI_PAN coalitions. Seven of these votes divided the PRD to the extent that no party direction was established (< .60 aye votes). The remainder saw the PRD opposing the PRI_PAN coalitions. The average Rice score for the PRI_PAN coalitions on all the votes was near perfect (.986), but only .526 for the PRD. The mean pseudo-R2 values for these votes were .931 for dimension 1 and .049 for the second

dimension. These structural-reform floor-votes all scaled strongly along the first dimension. For the PRI, any reform that could be interpreted as relinquishing the state's rectory over the national patrimony would be unacceptable to many PRI members in Congress. The key issue in this regard was Calderón's proposal to allow PEMEX to issue subcontracts to multinational oil companies. After a protracted series of negotiations with the PRI leadership, a compromise was reached that would allow fee-for-service contracts, but that forbade profit-sharing contracts. The compromise also prohibited contracting out for refineries and financing of the fee-for-service contracts.⁵⁷ Despite the efforts of many PRD leaders, led by López Obrador, to paint the reform as a betrayal of a key tenet of the 1917 Constitution, the PRI was able to argue that it kept the faith with some credibility. As with the fiscal reform of the previous year, the PAN got as much as it could with its coalition partner, while the PRI went down the road of energy sector reform as far as it dared without fracturing the party's legislative faction.

Discussion

The evidence shows that the PRI controlled the agenda during the two congresses of the Calderón *sexenio*. With one exception, all floor-voting coalitions during this six year period included the PRI. The increase from one two-party minimum-winning coalition partner for the PRI (i.e., the PAN) to three such potential coalition partners (the PAN, PRD, and PVEM) during the LXI Congress (2009-2012) complicated the issue environment by expanding it to three dimensions, but it also allowed the PRI to better advance its policy preferences and enhance its brand without decreasing its high levels of party unity. This was possible through the PRI's key position on the *Junta* as the most desirous coalition partner for the PAN during the LX Congress (2006-2009) given their ideological proximity in respect to the only significant issue dimension and the comfortable margin of seats held by the coalition. While the PAN could have formed minimum-winning coalitions with the PRD as it had done in previous

congresses, the two parties were too far apart on policy grounds. The PRD alone was not even an option for the PRI during that Congress given that their combined seat total fell short of a majority. But the PRI had the option of forming a four-party coalition with the PRD, PVEM, and CONV if the PAN was not willing to bend far enough in the PRI's direction. It did so nine times.

During the LXI Congress (2009-2012), the PRI had even more leverage given that it could play potential coalition partners off against one another depending on the issue dimension at hand. Given the PRI's closeness to the PAN on dimension-one votes, most coalitions remained PRI_PAN ones, though the percentage fell from 91 percent to 69 percent from the LX (2006-2009) to the LXI Congress. If dimension 2 issues were at stake, the PRI formed a coalition with the PRD, and if Dimension 3 issues were under consideration, the PRI allied with the PVEM. Clearly, the PRI held "all the cards" that led to a near perfect success rate on the floor. Furthermore, it had the power to control the agenda so it was never rolled. If structural or institutional reforms were presented to the Chamber that would damage the PRI's brand, the party leadership had the power to shape the agenda so as to keep any such measures off the floor that might win a plenary vote. The many floor votes in the fall of 2011 concerning the constitutional amendments to reform governmental and electoral institutions support this conclusion.

This is not to say that some progress was not made during the LX and LXI Congresses (2006-2012) in respect to structural and institutional reforms. As discussed, some modest but still important reforms were made in respect to electoral law and governmental institutions. There was also an important reform to the Judiciary during the Calderón *sexenio*. In 2010, an important reform to Mexico's transparency regime was enacted, *The Federal Law for the Protection of Personal Data in The Possession of Individuals*. In addition, the *Federal Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information* was amended to protect privacy rights. Civil Society groups saw these changes as restricting freedom of information (Martínez Díaz and Heras Gómez 2011). This bill passed with a near unanimous vote in the

Chamber. However, a call for a more extensive reform that would have expanded the authority of the *Federal Institute for Access to Information and Protection of Private Data* was never presented to the floor during the *Calderón sexenio*. Such a bill would likely result in a contentious vote, perhaps dividing the PRI.

The modest reforms to fiscal and energy policies show that limited structural reforms were achieved with more adept leadership than exhibited by the Fox Administration. Calderón better understood how far he could move the PRI in the direction of structural reforms. Too many *prístas* were not willing to enacted reform that might undermine the PRI's brand founded in "revolutionary nationalism." If these reforms had crossed that line, a true bi-dimensional issue environment would have emerged within the PRI. The PRI's faction within the Chamber would have split between modernizers and the traditionalists, what some would term the "neoliberals" and the "economic nationalists." Instead President Calderón and the PAN legislative faction moderated their proposed reforms to allow the PRI to avoid bi-dimensional, internecine floor votes. Clearly, Calderón had learned from Fox's mistakes. The result was modest structural reforms in fiscal and energy policy, as well as modest institutional reforms. This outcome was probably the best that could be achieved by a PAN president as long as the PRI was the essential coalition partner in the Chamber and able to prevent floor votes that would divide their party.

Conclusion

This study has assumed that legislative parties will seek to advance their policy preferences and promote their brand. When a party is internally divided over its preferences and its brand, legislative party leaders will seek to prevent such divisions becoming public through floor-votes in the legislative assembly. If they have control of the rules and disciplinary resources to maintain party unity, as the PRI had during the two congresses of the *Calderón sexenio*, these leaders will prevent floor-votes that could

roll their party. To do otherwise would neither achieve their policy preferences nor promote their brand, but it would aggravate divisions within the party. The leadership of the PRI's legislative faction in the Chamber during the Fox *sexenio* understood the divided nature of their party in respect to structural and institutional reforms, and they had the power and perspicuity to exercise negative agenda control. Their usual coalition partner and the Calderón administration also understood the limitations of this reality. As a result, some modest structural and institutional reforms were enacted. The constraints of this legislative context made substantial reforms unattainable.

In this paper, we have studied the two congresses of the Calderón *sexenio*. But the legislative calendar does not synchronize exactly with the presidential one. While presidential and congressional elections occur together, there is a three-month delay in the inauguration of the new president following the seating of the new congress on September 1st following the election. Thus, President Calderón completed the last three months of his presidency with the new LXII Congress (2012-2015). In the new Chamber, the PRI continued to hold a comfortable plurality of the seats, having potential minimum-winning coalitions with the PAN, or the PRD, or a three-party coalition with the PVEM and the PNA.

With the encouragement of president-elect, Enrique Peña Nieto of the PRI, the Chamber passed a major reform to Mexico's labor law at the begging of the LXII Congress. The PRI's traditional brand of "revolutionary nationalism" includes a commitment to progressive labor protections ensconced in the 1917 Constitution. The floor-votes on this reform package clearly went to the divisions within the PRI between the "modernizers" and the "dinosaurs." Nevertheless, on nine of the sixteen floor-votes for this reform package, there was a PRI_PAN minimum-winning coalition opposed by the PRD in which the PRI maintained high levels of party unity. The PAN exhibited much lower levels of unity, even joining with the PRD and minor parties on one vote that lost due to PAN disunity. While the labor reform package was substantial in liberalizing the labor market, this PRI-driven reform eliminated the provisions

to introduce greater internal democracy to unions. Still, this package constituted major structural reform, a marked difference in comparison to the lack of such reforms during the LX and LXI Congresses (2006-2012).

Shortly after President Peña Nieto assumed office on December 1st of 2012, a constitutional reform to improve Mexico's education system was enacted with the support of the PAN for all six votes in the Chamber. This reform as can be viewed as contrary to the PRI's traditional commitment to labor rights, in this case public-school teacher unions. Furthermore, it has resulted in considerable protests by teachers organized by Mexico's teacher union (SNTE), historically an important support group going back to the PRI's old corporatist regime. So far in 2013, Peña Nieto has engaged in an aggressive campaign to enact major fiscal and energy sector reforms, which he promises to introduce to Congress by the fall of 2013. He has also called for reforms to Mexico's transparency regime, and legislation that would eliminate the oligopolistic practices of Televisa and Carlos Slim's telecommunications empire despite expectations to the contrary. Will these further structural reforms come to pass?

The analysis of the LX and LXI Congresses (2006-2012) suggest that such major structural reforms will be kept off the floor. But this argument is based on the assumption that the PRI's brand is still tied to the traditional principles of "revolutionary nationalism" for many *priista* legislators. As argued by Camp (2010), a new generation of PRI politicians are replacing the older generation, having important effects on elite policy preferences. If a strong majority of *priistas* are ready to rebrand the party, and to marginalize the "*dinosaurios*," major structural and institutional reforms are likely during the Peña Nieto *sexenio*. The labor and education reforms during the fall of 2012 suggest that the rebranding process may have already occurred. If the PRI's legislative leadership and the rank-and-file accept the new brand, major reforms will come to fruition.

As in the previous two congresses, the PRI has the numbers and a willing partner with the PAN to enact major reforms. Furthermore, the new President has adroitly put together a movement called *Pacto por México* that includes a commitment by all three major political parties to support such reforms. The splintering of the PRD with López Obrador exiting the party and forming a leftist party (“Morena”⁵⁸) enabled the PRD to join the *Pacto* as a center-left member. If on the other hand, Peña Nieto’s reform agenda results in unacceptably low levels of party unity in the PRI’s legislative faction, the party’s leadership on the *Junta* will make sure that reforms are repacked in a way that prevents the party from being rolled on a floor-vote. We have already seen this in the Chamber with the failure to include democratizing reforms in respect to union organizing laws as part of the labor law reform package. In the case of education reform, the SNTE was an easier target than unions in other sectors. Elba Ester Gordillo was expelled from the PRI following the 2003 IVA vote, later forming her own political party, *Partido Nueva Alianza*. She was arrested by the Peña Nieto Administration in February of 2013 on corruption charges. If labor and education reform were largely exceptions to past patterns of negative agenda control by the PRI in the Chamber, Peña Nieto’s ambitious reform agenda may go the way of Fox’s and Calderón’s similar ambitions. However, if the PRI is genuinely in the process of discarding “revolutionary nationalism” and rebranding itself as the “new PRI,” then major structural and institutional reforms may come to Mexico at last.

Footnotes

¹ This is not to argue that the majority of legislators in the Mexican Chamber of Deputies do not have important differences as to the content of structural reforms. But both the PRI and the PAN leadership have made clear that they consider such reforms as essential to economic growth.

² My translation.

³ My translation.

⁴ My translation.

⁵ My translation.

⁶ The complete names of these organizations are the *Conferencia para la Dirección y Programación de los Trabajos Legislativos* and the *Junta de Coordinación Política*.

⁷ A *dictamen* is a bill reported to the floor that usually includes a list of amendments, which are voted on after the floor vote on the bill itself. Unlike the U.S. House of Representatives, these amendments are determined by the committees, not a special committee such as the Rules Committee in the U.S. lower chamber. In this sense, the committees have greater gate keeping power than U.S. committees. Frequently, a *dictamen* will include amendments that the majority coalition opposes. These minority supported *votaciones en lo particular* are most commonly the instances that test whether a procedural cartel is exercising its agenda setting powers.

⁸ Given the leverage the *coordinadores* have over committee chairs, it is curious that chairs of key committee's have no higher party unity scores than the rank and file members of their own party (Knight 2009). One possible explanation of this finding is that chairs of key committees are part of intraparty negotiations. Legislation will not move to the floor if their concerns are not satisfied. In this sense, chairs could be representatives of different intraparty factions rather than proxies of the *coordinadores*. The potential power of the coordinador to remove a committee chair would be a tool that could be employed if a chair was not willing to engage in mutual accommodation with other intraparty factions. This line of reasoning would fit well with the explanation made in this paper for legislative immobilism in respect to structural reforms during the Fox *Sexenio*.

⁹ My translation.

¹⁰ The preceding four paragraph are replicated almost verbatim from my earlier paper (Knight 2011).

¹¹ The data was entered in Stata 12SE. Statistical analyses were performed using both Stata and R.

¹² See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>

¹³ There are votes on whether to proceed to a vote on an amendment that the Chamber's ruling bodies have allowed to reach the floor, but those are essentially substantive votes.

¹⁴ See <http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/>

¹⁵ I am grateful to Dr. Carey for generously making available the Stata do-file that was used for this research project (Carey 2007).

¹⁶ *Convergencia* changed its name to *Movimiento Ciudadano* in 2011.

¹⁷ Numbers are the total coalitional seats, and thus votes if all coalition party members are present and there are no defections. Numbers are not shown if coalition voting strength is below the minimum of 251 votes needed to form a majority out of the 500 deputies in the Chamber. The PAN_PRD_PVEM_PT_PNA coalition is listed because on the date that seats were calculated, the Chamber had dropped to 498 deputies. Only combinations of parties with the minimum needed to form a majority are shown. Coalitions that include more than the minimum number to form a majority are not shown. Numbers are based on the first day of the last legislative year for each congress.

¹⁸ All coalition seat counts are based on the first day of the last legislative year for each congress.

¹⁹ The PVEM gained four seats in the 2009 election, moving from 17 to 21 seats. The PT gained two seats in that election, moving from 11 to 13 seats.

²⁰ The 19 PRI_PRD coalitions had a differential in favor of dimension 2 equal to or greater than 37% when comparing the pseudo-R2 values of two separate Logit regressions in which vote-choice was the dependent variable and a deputy's ideal point was the dependent variable. The 17 floor-votes most associated with dimension 2 was determined by the same method, but using a criterion of a differential of 50 percent or more.

²¹ These two votes were the first floor-vote on April 25th, 2012, and the fifth floor-vote on April 26th, 2012.

²² See the *Dario de Debates*, <http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/>

²³ This was the 3rd floor-vote of that day. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>

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- ²⁴ This was the 9th floor-vote of December 15th, 2011. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ²⁵ This was the 5th vote on November 10th, 2010. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ²⁶ This was the 2nd floor-vote in February of 2011. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ²⁷ This was the 10th floor-vote on the 28th of April, 2011. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ²⁸ This was the first floor-vote of the day on February 14th, 2012. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ²⁹ See the 3rd and 4th floor-votes on December 15th, 2010. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ³⁰ This was the first vote on February 2nd, 2012. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ³¹ These floor-votes were the 5th and 6th ones on October 29th, 2009. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ³² This floor-vote was the 5th one on November 9th, 2010. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ³³ These were the 6th and 7th floor-votes on November 9th, 2010. <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ³⁴ Members of the PRD.
- ³⁵ Dimension 2 votes were determined to exist when $\text{dim1 R2} < .25$ and $\text{dim2 R2} > .25$, and the differential between dim1 R2 and dim2 R2 was greater than 25 percent.
- ³⁶ Mean pseudo R2 values were calculated by regressing deputy ideal points for each dimension separately on vote choice one coalition at a time for only those floor votes associated with the each coalition. The mean was then determined from the Pseudo R2 statistics for each Logit regression. Numbers in parentheses are the standard deviations for the calculation of the means.
- ³⁷ As discussed in the paper cited, the 2003 IVA vote was not technically a roll since a majority of the PRI opposed the reform that went down to defeat. However, the PRI's Chamber leadership did support the reform which failed due to a divided party. In that sense, it was a roll.
- ³⁸ This was the eight floor vote on October 6th, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ³⁹ This was the eight floor vote on November 15th, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁴⁰ This was the second floor vote on October 25th, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁴¹ These were the first two floor votes on October 26th, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁴² This was the fifth floor vote on October 26th, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁴³ This was the second floor vote on November 3rd, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁴⁴ Quoted from the Chamber of Deputies' *Diario de los Debates*, November 3rd, 2011: <http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/> (my translation).
- ⁴⁵ This was the last floor vote on November 4th, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁴⁶ This was the fourth floor vote on November 4th, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁴⁷ This was the first floor vote on November 4th, 2011. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁴⁸ Members of the PRI.
- ⁴⁹ Four PRI deputies voted present but not voting (a Quorum vote), which does not count for the purposes of determining the outcome of the vote.
- ⁵⁰ This was the seventh floor vote on March 12th, 2009. See <http://gaceta.diputados.gob.mx/>
- ⁵¹ This was the ninth floor vote on April 30th, 2009.
- ⁵² See Salazar, Claudia. "Dividen a PAN leyes contra narcomenudeo." *Reforma*, 5/1/2009 for a discussion of the división in the PAN created by this bill.
- ⁵³ The total votes needed to pass the bill were 158 given the 179 absences that day. The PRI and the PAN contributed 141 aye votes, thus requiring 17 votes from other parties. The PRD's 31 aye votes provide the needed votes for passage. Nevertheless, more PRD deputies voted against the measure than for it if one counts abstentions as nay votes.
- ⁵⁴ Dimension 1 votes were determined to exist when dim1 R2 was $> .25$ and dim2 R2 was $< .25$, and the differential between dim1 R2 and dim2 R2 was greater than 25 percent.
- ⁵⁵ See www.oecd.org
- ⁵⁶ Parts of this paragraph were taken verbatim from my earlier paper (Knight 2011).
- ⁵⁷ See Alma Hernández in *Reforma*, "Redactarán dictamen para Pemex," October 6, 2008.
- ⁵⁸ *Movimiento de Regeneración Nacional*.

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