Presidents as Economic Repairmen: Mandates and Opportunities During Weak Economies

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Abstract

Are presidents allotted more political capital to fix the economy during periods of economic gloom? Presidential scholarship indicates that presidents are often elected as a referendum on the previous party and their handling of the economy, less clear however, is whether presidents are able to translate those electoral conclusions to legislative outcomes. Standard models of lawmaking suggest that to build successful coalitions, presidents must reach out to pivotal voters who sit in the ideological center to pass their agendas. In this article, I find that new presidents who are inaugurated during times of public distress towards the economy enjoy greater political capital to build bigger coalitions and forego the policy preferences of pivotal voters. I also find that these presidents not only push more impactful legislation but pass it as well, when compared to their counterparts.

In 2009, President Barack Obama entered office with a 7.8% unemployment rate and the nation’s economy was shrinking at a rate of 6.7% annually. As the public’s mood towards the economy grew drearier, expectations for the new president to pass legislation to fix the economy grew as well. Keen observers noted that despite having a nearly filibuster proof majority in the Senate, Obama would struggle to pass major legislation as he would need the support of Ben Nelson, the wavering 59th vote in the Senate, as well as the support of at least one moderate Republican—any one of Arlen Specter, Olympia Snowe, or Susan Collins. As political science literature would predict (See the Pivotal Politics Theory, Brady and Volden 1998; Krehbiel 1998), Ben Nelson refused to vote in favor of any stimulus bill without significant policy concessions. Instead of caving in however, then chief of staff Rahm Emmanuel held a private meeting with him, convincing him to vote in favor of the bill without any concessions (Lizza 2009). How was Emmanuel able to defy logic (not to mention political science scholarship) and strong arm Nelson into voting in favor of their economic stimulus bill?

Scholarship on presidential elections finds that economic factors like unemployment figures and annual GDP growth have a significant effect on vote choice where voters who perceive economic improvement vote for the incumbent while voters who have perceptions of a faltering economy vote for the challenger (Abramowitz 1988; Campbell and Wink 1990; Fiorina 1981; Kiewiet 1983; Lewis-Beck and Tien 1996). Less clear however, is what happens after the candidate wins office. Is the candidate able to translate this electoral cache into policy outcomes, regardless of his party’s victories in Congress? Expectations for presidents inaugurated during economic downtimes are often high and difficult to meet, yet scholarship on presidential success in the beginning of their terms yields some hope for new presidents (Hibbs 1982). Indeed, scholarship does find that new presidents enjoy greater policy success in their “honeymoon” periods (Beckmann and Godfrey 2007; Sullivan and de Marchi 2011).

In this article, I examine how perceptions of the economy affect presidential success on domestic legislation during the first year of their presidency. While previous research has focused on how presidents impact the economic agenda (Eshbaugh-Soha and Peake 2005; Eshbaugh-Soha 2005), scholars have yet to discover how the economy affects the success of the president’s agenda. Of course, presidents who propose legislation during poor economies will likely propose ambitious legislation, regardless of their party’s standing in Congress. Indeed, what is key is whether presidents are able to build coalitions large enough to pass these proposals and convince pivotal voters to bypass their power of demanding policy concessions.

I find that presidents who come into office with a poor public mood towards the economy pass more ambitious economic policy and build strong coalitions as compared to presidents who come into office with moderate or positive public moods towards the economy.

This article proceeds as follows. In the following section, I review the scholarship on presidential elections, mandates, and legislative success. I follow with a section outlining my data and methodology. I proceed with a presentation of the results. The fourth section concludes with implications and avenues for future research.

Presidential Power and Mandate Politics

Achieving legislative success is difficult for the president both constitutionally and institutionally. Constitutionally, the president has little power in terms of legislating, with nearly all of the lawmaking powers bestowed to Congress. Institutionally, the lack of responsible party government as defined by E.E. Schattschneider (1942), in which a party governs cohesively, complicates issues even more so. While being on the same “team” and sharing a party label may foster some legislation (Cox and McCubbins 1993), most legislators vote according to their own self-interests and beliefs (Burden 2007; Jacobson 2000; Sinclair 2006; Wattenberg 1991; 1998). Furthermore, while presidents can “go public” and campaign for their legislation to influence Congress (Kernell 1993; Neustadt 1990), these efforts have only a modest impact on legislator behavior (Bond, Fleisher, and Krutz 1996; Edwards 1989; Krehbiel 1998). As a result, legislative success is contingent on building majority coalitions through bargaining and compromise (Beckmann 2009; Elving 1995).

The president can however, offer his leadership on policy priorities to assist Congress in overcoming their overwhelming collective action problems, even by only signaling support for legislation (Canes-Wrone 2005; Kingdon 1989; Marshall and Prins 2007; Neustadt 1960; Moe 2002). However to pass key legislation, the president must bargain to build their winning coalitions (Beckmann 2009; Peterson 1990). Already a cumbersome task, contributing to this difficultly is party control of Congress or the lack thereof. While the lack of responsible party government makes building coalitions necessary, having control of both chambers of Congress makes the process of building coalitions easier (Bond and Fleisher 1990; Cox and McCubbins 2005; Edwards 1989).

Buoying the president’s ability to pass his preferred legislation is the idea of bargaining power and mandates. While the breadth of the literature on presidential mandates is fairly critical as to their existence, there is an emerging sense that the idea of electoral mandates may be justified. Indeed, Raymond Wolfinger (1985, 293), a pessimist on electoral mandates argues that binary votes cannot truly convey what the voters desire making the idea of mandates “inherently implausible.” Robert Dahl (1990) comes to a similar conclusion claiming presidential mandates are myths.

Still, others find that the idea of mandates should not be easily dismissed. A number of studies have found that elections can serve as signals as to the voters’ policy preferences with regards to the status quo (Campbell et al. 1960; Fiorina 1981; Rabinowitz and Macdonald 1989). Furthermore, Conley (2001) finds that when presidents run issue-based campaigns and win decisively, presidents can and often do claim mandates. Others find that mandates are merely social constructs that depends on what Washington elites define as the election’s meaning (Peterson et al. 2003; Grossback, Peterson and Stimson 2005). That is, presidents enjoy greater congressional support only when lawmakers perceive that the president and his policy positions are broadly supported by the electorate (Beckmann and Godfrey 2007; Dwyer and Treul 2012; Peterson, Grossback, Stimson, and Gangl 2003).

Given that presidents seem to be afforded greater legislative support when the public supports them, do economic concerns yield such legislative support? That is, does American concern for the economy empower presidents to introduce new domestic legislation to help spur the economy? Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that other exogenous factors have this affect like disaster, war, and other crises yielded greater policy support for presidents (Dickinson 2008; Lieberman 2000; Skowronek 1993).

Scholarship on presidential elections lends further reasons to believe that economic conditions impact political capital. Specifically, Fiorina (1981) and Kiewet (1983) find that presidential contests after World War II have demonstrated the presence of economic voting in which voters who see economic prosperity vote for the incumbent or incumbent party while voters who see economic gloom vote for the challenger. Specifically, voters make electoral decisions in the hopes of either keeping economic prosperity or galvanizing a slow economy. This suggests that presidents who enter office during periods in which the public is concerned about the economy possess a greater mandate to enact legislation to help the economy recover.

Presidential Coalition Building: The Pivotal Politics Model

One must remember still, the basis of legislative success is that to pass legislation, presidents must lobby Congress to build a majority coalition to pass legislation. Scholars have pointed to presidents lobbying centrist swing voters in the legislative end-game to achieve the winning majority vote (Brady and Volden 1998; Krehbiel 1998; Lockerbie, Borrelli and Hedger 1998) as well as congressional leaders in the early game of agenda setting (Beckmann 2009). Krehbiel (1998) and Brady and Volden explain this phenomenon using a formal model of lawmaking entitled, “the pivotal politics model.” Expanding on Black’s (1948) and Down’s (1957) respective works on the median voter theorem, the pivotal politics model affixes the median voter theorem to the United States Congress by including the two thirds majority vote to overcome a presidential veto and by taking into account the super-majoritarian rules of the Senate by including the need to overcome a Senate filibuster.

Figure 1 illustrates the pivotal politics model when there is a liberal president.

[Insert Figure 1 About Here]

According to the model, when the president prefers the liberal status quo to any policy change, the pivotal voter would be the legislator to break this veto, or the 33rd percentile senator, here represented as *O*. Perhaps more relevant to the president’s agenda is the filibuster pivot, here represented as *F,* and the median pivot for the House, here represented as *M*. When the president prefers policy change to the status quo, the president must appease the 60th senator on the opposite side of the ideological spectrum. Only when this senator is pleased by the policy change can any change occur. Likewise, if the median voter in the House of Representatives is dissatisfied, they too can prevent policy change. In sum, the theory holds that the president can only lead policy change to the median voter in the House, and the 60th senator’s preferred policy destinations, while the Congress can only lead policy change to the *O* position if a presidential veto is used, and the shaded area (or the gridlock interval) will remain unchanged.

Building off the pivotal politics model, Beckmann and Godfrey (2007) argue that presidents enjoy honeymoons by replacing a president of the opposite political orientation with a hostile Congress or by ushering in new majorities of the same ideological persuasion. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

[Insert Figure 2 About Here]

In the figure, the President ushered in new majorities that would assist in passing his agenda. This moves the filibuster pivot (*F)* to a position that is closer to the President’s preferred policy position. It also decreases the size of the gridlock interval. Similarly, if the previous president faced the opposing party as majorities in both the House and the Senate, a president of the opposite ideology would enjoy majorities. This would again, move the filibuster pivot (*F)* to a position that is closer to the President’s preferred policy position while also shrinking the gridlock interval.

The other way that presidents enjoy greater legislative success early in their terms is when their campaign intertwines policy initiatives with elections for lawmakers. That is, if the president’s policy proposals have a significant effect on the lawmakers’ minds, then they may enjoy greater policy support than they would have otherwise enjoyed (Beckmann and Godfrey 2007). I seek to build on this finding. I hypothesize that during hard economic times, members of the House and Senate that would be pivotal or even against the president’s policy proposals will support the president. Because constituents are often less ideological than their representatives (see Fiorina et al. 2004), pivotal or even other opposing members of Congress will be more inclined to listen to their constituents during economic down times as a way to signal to their constituents that they are indeed attempting to fix the economy.

Figure 3 models this hypothesis.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

In this example, a liberal president *(P)* proposes legislation but faces a fairly large gridlock interval, seen here in the light gray in which the liberal president must attract the filibuster pivot, here represented at her standard position at S*(f)*. However, in poor economic circumstances, pivotal senators are more inclined to listen to their constituents who expect the president to improve the economy. This new position is represented at E *(f)*. Given this move towards the president, there is also shrinkage in the gridlock interval, represented by the darker gray section.

Similarly, in the House of Representatives, while there is no super majoritarian pivotal player similar to the filibuster pivot, the median member of the House is still pivotal to the passage of legislation. Though Cox and McCubbins (1993; 2004) find that House leaders are the most powerful members of the House, as deferral to the party yields more electoral gain than individuality, a majority coalition must still be built. Indeed, if economic concern causes members of Congress to vote against their party and with the president, House coalitions should be larger. For example, in a Democratically controlled House of Representatives, the leadership would not need to entertain the thought of releasing right-leaning Democrats from voting for the bill, as they would willingly vote for the bill without whipping, as many of their left-leaning, or moderate Republican counterparts would.

As a result, House and Senate coalitions should be larger for economic bills during periods of economic concern as members of congress defer to policy rather than party. Even still, if the American people are able to give the president extra political capital on economic policy, first year presidents of weak economies should be able to push through much more ambitious bills.

Data

To test my hypotheses, I use David Mayhew’s data on major policy enactments[[1]](#footnote-1). Because I am only interested in first year policy proposals, my data runs from Dwight Eisenhower to Barack Obama and covers only policy proposals that presidents proposed (i.e. not initiated from Congress). In the dataset, Mayhew (and others) compile a list of important policy proposals from each president and weights each of them by their importance, on a scale from one to four. For Obama, I filled in the weights using the methodology Mayhew initially used. For each enactment, the data set also has the size of the winning and losing coalition as well. Since the bills in this dataset cover a variety of policies, I code them dichotomously where a 1 corresponds to all bills dealing with economic policy, while a 0 corresponds to all other bills. In an effort to create a conservative model, I count all policies tangentially related to the economy as non-economic bills (i.e. social security, healthcare, or immigration). Accordingly, I examine 60 pieces of legislation.

To test my hypotheses, I run three models. Specifically, I run two ordinary least squares regression models predicting the size of the winning coalitions in the House and Senate respectively. Since the number of members of Congress present varies from vote to vote, I computed the size of the winning coalition as (Y/(Y+N), where Y represents the number of yes votes and N the number of no votes. All voice votes were dropped from the dataset.

The main predictor variable for these models is the percentage of Americans that view the economy as the number one problem. The source for this data is Gallup’s most important problem poll, aggregated by year. Courtesy of the Policy Agendas Project, data are available from 1947-2012. Again, if a large portion of respondents lists the economy as the top problem, new presidents should gain political capital to build broad coalitions for ambitious economic policy bills. For simplicity of interpretation (specifically with the interaction term discussed in the results section), I code this variable dichotomously, where a 1 corresponds to any year where respondents listed the economy as the top problem, and a 0 corresponds to all other years.

Closely related to this variable, another variable that is of key interest is whether the legislation is economic policy. New presidents inaugurated during economic turmoil should have greater political capital to push *economic* policy, but theoretically, there should be little reason that presidents gain capital for other policy areas. As a result, key to the understanding of the problem is whether the policy in question is economic policy, and whether the economy was viewed as the top problem—calling for an interaction term. I will talk at greater length about this in the results section.

I also control for a number of factors. As mentioned in the previous sections, if the president has a larger number of co-partisans in congress, he will be able to build larger coalitions easier. As a result, I control for the number of co-partisans in each chamber, respectively. I also control for the president’s approval rating. President’s with higher approval ratings are able to not only pass more legislation, but are able to pass more complex legislation (Canes-Wrone and De Marchi 2003). Finally, I control for the weight placed on the bill, demonstrating how impactful the bill was. Again, new presidents facing poor economies should be able to propose impactful bills successfully at a rate that is greater than other presidents.

The third model I run is an ordered logistic regression model, predicting the weight, or importance of the policy. Again, since the dataset includes only successful bills, we are measuring presidential success with regards to what they could get passed. That is, presidents that have greater political capital, through either the explanatory or control variables above, should be able to push more important policy, while those with less political capital will push less important policy. For this model, I use the same predictor and control variables as the OLS regression models. I also interact the “economic bill” variable with the “top problem” variable again. The following section discusses this as well as the results in greater detail.

Results: Presidential Success and the Economy

A first, descriptive cut of the data demonstrates that while every post WWII president enjoyed at least some form of policy success within their first year, economic policy tended to be a very small portion of their legislative success. Figure 4 demonstrates this.

[Insert Figure 4 Here]

Only one president, George H.W. Bush, had their entire legislative success come from economic policy. However, if one were to continue to examine Bush the elder’s legislative legacy, domestic policy was not this president’s strongest priority. Indeed, even the most successful presidents had only a portion of their legislative success come from economic policy.

Still, this reveals little. Perhaps only some presidents had a need for a change in economic policy. Further still, economic crisis is but one of many crises first year presidents could face, forcing them to focus on other issues. Incorporating Gallup’s results on the top problem facing the country may shed more light on the problem at hand.

Figure 5 illustrates the number of economic successes by president, divided by which presidents faced the economy as the top problem, according to Gallup polling results.

[Insert Figure 5 Here]

Interestingly, when looking at economic policy alone, presidents facing poor economic moods seem to pass less economic policy than presidents facing better economic moods. At first this conclusion seems counterintuitive. Yet new presidents dealing with the economy as their top problem may propose legislation that is far-reaching and more ambitious, as there may simply be a greater need for more impactful policy. As a result, simply looking at the number of bills passed and signed into law does not accurately demonstrate whether my hypotheses are correct or not.

To fully test my hypotheses, I turn to the regression results, predicting the size of winning coalitions. The results for the first model examining House coalitions can be found in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 Here]

In the first model, none of the variables significantly predict the size of House coalitions except whether the piece of legislation is an economic bill or not. Here, economic bills have small coalitions, confirming what the descriptive results illustrated—economic policy is indeed harder to pass and as a result, has smaller House coalitions. However, this first model does little to demonstrate whether attitudes towards the economy increases or decreases House coalitions. As a result, I interact the economic bill variable with the economy as the top problem variable. The results are also presented in Table 1.

Here, economic bills still enjoy smaller coalitions, but because of the interaction term, this has a slightly different interpretation. While economic bills do enjoy smaller coalitions than other policy areas, economic bills that were passed during times where attitudes towards the economy were negative enjoy larger House coalitions, suggesting that members of Congress that would otherwise vote against the bill vote in favor of it to appease voters who are concerned about the economy. In addition, in the model, the weight or impact of the bill is also statistically significant, where bills that are more impactful have slightly smaller coalitions. Given the larger coalition size for bills that were proposed when public attitudes towards the economy were poor demonstrates when the pivotal player becomes, at the very least, less pivotal to the lawmaking process.

For the Senate, the results are largely similar, if not more predictable. Table 2 presents the results for this model.

[Insert Table 2 Here]

In the initial model, presidents with higher approval ratings build slightly larger coalitions than presidents with lower approval ratings, consistent with previous findings on presidential approval ratings. Interestingly, attitudes towards the economy and the policy area have no statistical significance in this model. Another oddity is that president’s who enjoy larger majorities in the Senate are shown to have smaller winning coalitions. On the surface, this seems to be counterintuitive as presidents should be able to build larger coalitions if they have more co-partisans in the chamber. Yet it is more likely, however, that presidents with more co-partisans see less incentive to compromise, and thus build coalitions that are suffice for passage.

As with the regression model examining the House of Representatives, I again interact the economy as the top problem variable with the economic bill variable. The results of this model demonstrate a different trend. Again, presidential approval and the number of co-partisans a president has in the Senate have a positive and negative relationship, respectively, likely for the same reasons listed above. Interesting here however is that once the interaction term is introduced to the model, economic bills have significantly smaller coalitions than other bills. This is especially noteworthy because the interaction term remains insignificant. This means that Senate coalitions for economic policy are significantly smaller during normal economic times than during times where public attitudes towards the economy are pessimistic. While the results of this model do not suggest that pivotal voters are as swayable as in the House, they do demonstrate a similar phenomenon. As each model (not to mention the descriptive data) has demonstrated, economic policy is much more difficult to pass than other policy. Given this, the fact that Senate coalitions do not follow this trend during times of in which the public views the economy negatively suggests that new presidents do gain some political capital in the Senate as well.

What about the bills overall? The previous results suggest that first year presidents serving during poor economies have an easier time passing economic legislation, but do they also take advantage of it by passing more ambitious and impactful legislation? Table 3 lists the results of an ordered logistic regression model predicting the importance of each bill passed.

[Insert Table 3 here]

In the first model, again, the president’s approval rating has a statistically significant and positive effect on the relative impact of the legislation. Also, the number of co-partisans in the Senate has a statistically significant and positive effect on the weight of the legislation, while the number of co-partisans in the House has a statistically significant and negative effect on the weight of the legislation—though we should note that the effect is negligible.[[2]](#footnote-2) Interestingly, when the economy is listed as the top problem, presidents seem to propose (and pass) legislation that carries much more weight—though in this model it is unclear whether that legislation is economic or other legislation.

To gain a better understanding, I include the interaction term in the second model also presented in Table 3. Here, again the presidential approval rating, has a significant and positive effect on the weight of the bill, while the number of co-partisans continues to have a negative yet statistically negligible effect on the weight of the bill. In this model, the interaction term washes out the effect of the economy on the weight of the bill as it becomes centralized on the interaction term. This suggests that presidents propose and pass “heavier” or more impactful *economic* legislation during periods when attitudes towards the economy are negative. These findings are consistent with what was hypothesized earlier in the paper as presidents push more impactful legislation and pass it with larger coalitions in the House and Senate—suggesting that the power of pivotal voters is neutralized. Indeed, if the counter were true and coalitions were large because pivotal voters were able to gain policy concessions from the president, presidents would not be able to pass impactful legislation as Table 3 suggests as pivotal voters do not sit closely to the president, ideologically.

Conclusions and Implications

Scholarship on the president’s power with Congress often focuses on how presidential campaign promises translate into new public policy. More often than not, presidents struggle to translate broad campaign promises into real policy—instead most focus on pushing a small legislative agenda based on a narrow narrative. These policy proposals are typically what presidential candidates campaign on and eventually push their legislative agenda.

Still, to assume that all presidents possess the same power to push legislative agendas is problematic. As Richard Neustadt points out in his book, *Presidential Power*, political capital is a function of popularity and prestige—that is not all presidents share the same levels of success. Presidents who enjoy greater popular support amongst the electorate and Congress will enjoy greater policy success. This article adds to this explanation of political capital during honeymoon periods albeit modestly. Indeed, the models in this paper begin to demonstrate that presidents who are inaugurated during periods of economic gloom in the public enjoy greater political support to fix the economy, a phenomenon that seems to be recognized by pivotal voters. Specifically, presidents who are elected during recessions enjoy greater public policy making power. This is because moderates that would typically possess greater power to move the status quo to their preferred ideological location refrain from using their power and yield their power to the president. As the models demonstrate, presidents are able to build larger coalitions that include not only pivotal voters, but also some members of the opposition.

Still, it is difficult to say that pivotal voters are fully neutralized during these times. Indeed, these models cannot determine if presidents (and their surrogates like Rahm Emmanuel) cut other, non-policy deals with pivotal voters, or even opposition leaders. As a result, while poor economies do seem to give presidents more political capital, it is unclear how that comes into play with negotiations that are hidden from public view.

Also note that this article only examines presidential power during the beginning of presidential terms. Much more research must still be conducted on presidential power during periods of economic downturn. That is, if a president experiences economic distress during his presidency, does he enjoy renewed political capital to fix the economy? Furthermore, the models in this paper do not rely on external events and post-election bums in approval. Instead, this article’s findings serve more as an initial take at presidential power and the economy.

Figures and Tables

Figure 1: The Standard Pivotal Politics Model of U.S. Lawmaking

*F*

*M*

*P*

*O*

Figure 2: Pivotal Politics Model with New Majorities for a

*F*

*O*

*P*

Newly Elected President

Figure 3: Economic Change and the Pivotal Politics Model

*S (f)*

*E (f)*

*S (m)*

*S (o)*

*P*





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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1: Linear Regression Predicting the Size of House Coalitions on Important Bills | | | | | |
|  | Coeff | Robust Std. Err. |  | Coeff. | Robust Std. Err. |
| President’s Party in the House | -.001 | .001 |  | -.001 | .001 |
| Presidential Approval | .004 | .003 |  | .004 | .003 |
| Economic Bill | -.0646\* | .034 |  | -.106\*\* | .045 |
| Economy Top Problem | -.071 | .07 |  | -.105 | .08 |
| Weight | -.017 | .015 |  | -.03\* | .15 |
| Economic X Top Problem |  |  |  | .1\* | .05 |
| Constant | .83\* | .43 |  | .873\*\* | .413 |
| R2 | .23 |  |  | .25 |  |
| N= | 57 |  |  | 57 |  |

\*P<.1, \*\* P<.05

Standard Errors are clustered by president.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 2: Linear Regression Predicting the Size of Senate Coalitions on Important Bills | | | | | |
|  | Coeff | Robust Std. Err. |  | Coeff. | Robust Std. Err. |
| President’s Party in the Senate | -.004\*\* | .001 |  | -.005\*\* | .002 |
| Presidential Approval | .006\*\* | .002 |  | .006\*\* | .002 |
| Economic Bill | -.014 | .02 |  | -.041\*\* | .012 |
| Economy Top Problem | -.05 | .04 |  | -.073 | .05 |
| Weight | -.019 | .02 |  | -.026 | .02 |
| Economic X Top Problem |  |  |  | .065 | .05 |
| Constant | .724 | .232 |  | .757\*\* | .23 |
| R2 | .41 |  |  | .42 |  |
| N= | 53 |  |  | 53 |  |

\* P<.1, \*\*P<.05

Note: The number of observations is fewer due to voice votes held in the Senate.

Standard errors are clustered by president.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3: Ordered Logistic Regression Predicting the Importance of the Bill Passed | | | | | |
|  | Coeff. | Robust Std. Err. |  | Coeff. | Robust Std. Err. |
| Economic Bill | -.429 | .567 |  | -.607 | .638 |
| Presidential Approval | .06\*\* | .022 |  | .056\*\* | .022 |
| Economy Top Problem | 1.64\*\* | .602 |  | .74 | .684 |
| President’s Party in the House | -.032\*\* | .013 |  | -.03\*\* | .15 |
| President’s Party in the Senate | .134\*\* | .07 |  | .12 | .08 |
| Economic Bill X Economy Top Problem |  |  |  | 2.32\*\* | .801 |
| cut 1 | 4.49 | 3.67 |  | 4.48 | 3.67 |
| cut2 | 6.16 | 3.65 |  | 6.16 | 3.65 |
| cut 3 | 7.91 | 3.77 |  | 7.91 | 3.77 |
| N= | 60 |  |  | 60 |  |

\*P<.1, \*\*P<.05

Standard errors are clustered by president.

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1. Because I am interested in both the size of the coalition as well as the size and impact of the bill, I use data from both of Mayhew’s major datasets merging the relevant data. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Using the statistical add on for STATA CLARIFY, I find that a change from the minimum to the maximum number of co-partisans would not yield a whole number increase in the importance of the bill. As a result, while there is a statistically significant relationship here, we can conclude very little from it. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)