

“The Effects of State Level Presidential Approval on Support in the Senate”

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Abstract

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In this paper, we seek to correct two important limitations of previous research. First, we use a new database of state level surveys of presidential job performance (Beyle, Niemi, and Sigelman 2002). With some appropriate adjustments (Bond, et al. 2002), these polls allow us to estimate presidential popularity at the appropriate level--among Senators' constituents at different points in time. Second, we use a research design that allows us analyze both cross-sectional and dynamic components of the relationship. Because both public approval and congressional support for the president vary over time as well as across space, a panel design provides a more complete test of the relationship. We find that measuring presidential popularity at the appropriate level (among members' constituents) and analyzing the data to account for both temporal and spatial variation reveals systematic affects: presidential popularity has a statistically significant, but substantively marginal, affect on support in Congress.

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“The Effects of State Level Presidential Approval on Support in the Senate”

The effect of presidential popularity on congressional support for the president is one of the most important and persistent debates in the study of presidential congressional relations. Although Washingtonians widely accept the proposition that high public approval leads to greater legislative support for the president, systematic quantitative studies generally fail to find convincing evidence of such a relationship.

In this paper, we seek to correct two important limitations of previous research. First, we use a new database of state level surveys of presidential job performance (Beyle, Niemi, and Sigelman 2002). With some appropriate adjustments (Bond, et al. 2002), these polls allow us to estimate presidential popularity at the appropriate level--among Senators' constituents at different points in time. These data allow us to directly test the relationship between presidential job approval among Senators' constituents and support for the president on floor votes from 1991-2002 (102nd-107th Congresses).

Second, we use a research design that allows us analyze both cross-sectional and dynamic components of the relationship. Previous studies of this relationship among individual members of Congress typically used a cross-sectional design. Yet, because both public approval and congressional support for the president vary over time as well as across space, a panel design provides a more complete test of the relationship.

This research design also allows us to test two hypotheses derived from Neustadt (1960) that have not received extensive attention. First is Neustadt's suggestion that the effects of public approval are not symmetrical, but rather declines hurt more than increases help. Second, is Neustadt's "shift of range" argument that the effects public approval are more likely to be observed when there are large increases or decreases in the president's public standing.

We begin with an overview of the theory, evidence and limitations of previous research on the effects of public approval of the president on congressional behavior. Next we discuss our research

design, including how we overcame some problems with the state level presidential approval data. Our analysis finds that the president's popularity among Senators' constituents exerts a statistically significant but substantively marginal affect on support on the Senate floor. The conclusion puts our findings into perspective.

Presidential Approval and Legislative Success

Theory and Hypotheses

The primary theoretical mechanism explaining why popular approval should be expected to affect congressional support for the president is electoral self-interest. As Neustadt (1960, 86) explains, members of Congress "must take account of popular reactions to their actions. What their publics think of them becomes a factor, therefore, in deciding how to deal with the desires of a President. His prestige enters into that decision; their publics are part of his." This theory suggests that members of Congress adjust their support for the president to respond to how popular he is with their constituents. Although few voters have specific information their representative's support for the president, Arnold (1990) argues that members of Congress try to anticipate "potential preferences" of voters. And the strategic politician theory (Jacobson 1990; Jacobson and Kernell 1983) suggests that decisions of potential challengers and campaign contributors are influenced by the president's popularity with the public. Thus, all that is necessary to establish a relationship is for members of Congress to *believe* that their support for the president might become a campaign issue in the next election.

The primary hypothesis suggested by this theory may be called the *Presidential Popularity Hypothesis*: Presidential support in Congress is positively related to the president's popularity with member's constituents. Neustadt's (1960) discussion of the effects of the president's "public prestige", however, suggests that the relationship is nuanced and subtle.

Presidential popularity is but one several political considerations that influence the behavior of members of Congress. Compared to party, ideology, and constituency, the effects of public approval of the

president are likely to be indirect and marginal. As Neustadt (1960, 87) explains, “Rarely is there any one-to-one relationship between appraisals of his popularity in general and responses in particular.” Instead, public prestige “is a factor operating mostly in the background as a conditioner, not the determinant of Washingtonians will do about a President’s request.” Systematic quantitative research supports this view (Bond and Fleisher 1980, 1984, 1990, 2000; Bond, Fleisher, and Northrup 1988; Bond, Fleisher and Wood 2003; Edwards 1989, 1997).

Most empirical studies use the Gallup approval question, and relate the actual percent of the public approving of the president to some measure of support or success in Congress (Edwards 1980, 1989; Bond and Fleisher 1980, 1984 1990; Bond, Fleisher, and Northrup, 1988; Fleisher and Bond 2000; Rivers and Rose 1985; Ostrom and Simon 1985). Yet Neustadt (1960, 93) argues that the president’s public prestige is defined by the perceptions of Washingtonians rather than something that is measured directly in public opinion polls: “Like reputation, prestige is a matter to be judged, not ‘known.’”

Washingtonians judge the president’s public prestige in a number of ways including looking at public opinion polls, and Neustadt himself utilizes the Gallup poll to illustrate the concept (1960, 89, 96). But the percent approving at any given point in time may not capture Washingtonian’s perceptions of the president’s public prestige. Neustadt (1960, 96) argues, “In looking at these figures [i.e., Gallup polls], one can and probably should ignore the variations month by month; what cannot be ignored is [a] sharp shift of range” that tends to stabilize for many months thereafter. An example of such a shift of range includes when Eisenhower’s approval shifted from the 60s to 50s in 1958. And the effects of large increases and decreases are not symmetrical: “Popularity may not produce a Washington response. But public disapproval heartens Washington’s resistance” (Neustadt 1960, 90)

Thus, in addition to analyzing the effects of the level of public approval, we test two additional hypotheses. First, we test an *Asymmetry Hypothesis* to see if declines in public approval have larger effects than increases. Second, we test a *Shift of Range Hypothesis* to see if large changes in presidential popularity

(i.e., changes greater than 10%) have a stronger effect on support in Congress than small incremental changes.

The Findings and Limitations of Previous Research

Research on the relationship between public approval of the president and support in Congress has reported a wide range of findings. Some studies find a strong positive relationship (Brace and Hinckley 1992; Edwards 1976, 1980; Ostrom and Simon 1985; and Rivers and Rose 1985), while others find little or no relationship (Bond and Fleisher 1980, 1984, 1990; Bond, Fleisher, and Northrup 1988; Bond et al. 2002; Cohen, et al. 2000; Collier and Sullivan 1995; Edwards 1989, 1997; Fleisher and Bond 2000; Peterson 1990). Some even find a negative relationship under certain conditions (Bond and Fleisher 1980; Bond, Fleisher, and Wood 2003). The wide range of findings in the literature results in part from differences in measures and methods of analysis. These studies have analyzed different dependent variables over different time periods using different indicators of presidential popularity. Although there are a number of appropriate measures of the key concepts in this literature, data limitations have frequently prevented an optimal test of the relationship between public approval of the president and legislative support.

Consider first the range of appropriate indicators of the dependent variable, presidential support and success in Congress. Some studies analyze presidential success using “box scores” (Covington, Wrighton, and Kinney 1995; Rivers and Rose 1985), success on winning and losing roll call votes (Bond and Fleisher 1984, 1990; Fleisher and Bond 2000), and aggregate success rates over time (Bond, Fleisher, and Wood 2003; Brace and Hinckley 1992; Edwards 1997; Fleisher, Bond, and Wood 2003; Shull and Shaw 1999). These studies focus the analysis on the question of what explains the president’s success on passing policies he prefers. Note that the indicator of success varies over time. Box scores or aggregate success on roll calls typically cumulate success over a calendar year, and the analysis seeks to explain why the president is more successful in some years than in others. But even if the dependent variable is whether the president wins or loses a roll call vote, the variation is over time from one roll call to the next. Since these indicators of

success are the aggregate result of decisions of individuals in Congress, an indicator of the president's national popularity during the time the collective decisions are made is appropriate. Although such a research design is appropriate to test an important aspect of presidential-congressional relations, this type of analysis cannot directly test the effects of presidential approval on the micro-level decisions that produced the aggregate result.

Other studies analyze presidential support among individual members of Congress (Bond and Fleisher 1980; Covington 1987a, 1987b, 1988a, 1988b; Edwards 1976, 1980, 1989; Sullivan 1988, 1990, 1991). These studies analyze micro-level decision making, and seek to explain why some members of Congress support the president more often than others. The most common indicator of individual support for the president is Congressional Quarterly, Inc.'s (annually 1991-2003) Presidential Support Score or some variant (Edwards 1989). Note that a presidential support score measures cross-sectional variation across individual members of Congress. Yet, this measure also aggregates individual behavior over time—typically a calendar year. This aggregation conceals variation in individual behavior over the course of a year. Since most studies analyze data for more than one year, however, there is variation over time as presidential support scores for a given member vary from year to year. Because annual aggregation is too long a time to conduct a meaningful analysis of change in individual behavior, analyses of presidential support scores typically focus only on the cross-sectional variation.

A direct test of the effects of presidential popularity on the behavior of individual members requires a measure of popularity that varies cross-sectionally across members. That is, we need an estimate of the president's job approval rating among each member's constituents. Because such a measure was not available, past research on individual members' behavior typically relied on national level presidential approval or election results as substitutes for direct measures of constituency opinion.

A common measure of presidential popularity is the Gallup presidential job approval question (Edwards with Gallup 1990): “Do you approve or disapprove of the way [the incumbent] is doing his job as president?” Since presidential support scores aggregate individual members’ behavior over a calendar year, researchers typically use the average annual Gallup approval in the analysis. Although this measure is a valid and reliable indicator of presidential popularity at the national level, the president’s job approval rating varies greatly across states and congressional districts. Gallup polls based on national samples cannot gauge public approval at the appropriate level—among each member’s constituents (Bond and Fleisher 1984; 1990, 64-65; Cohen et al. 2000).¹ Using national level approval in an analysis of individual level presidential support scores is not testing a cross-sectional relationship, because the measure of approval does not vary cross-sectionally. Instead, such a research design is in effect estimating the relationship between variation in presidential approval from year to year on variation in the average level of presidential support from year to year (Bond and Fleisher 1984).

Several studies use presidential election returns in states and congressional districts to measure presidential popularity cross-sectionally at the constituency level (Buck 1972; Edwards 1978, 1980; Furlong 1996; Harmon and Brauen 1979; Martin 1976; Pritchard 1983, 1986; Schwarz and Fenmore 1977; Waldman 1967; Weinbaum and Judd 1970). Presidential election results reveal some information about how each member’s constituents regard a newly elected president. But since the votes are cast before the president takes office, election results alone do not provide a valid assessment of the public’s view of the president’s job performance. Even in cases where a sitting president is reelected, numerous considerations other than job performance affect election results in states and districts. Furthermore,

¹Cohen, et al. (2000) used Mason-Dixon polls to measure of the president’s popularity in each state in 1996. This measure varies across states, but this study finds no significant relationship in 1996. Bond, Fleisher, and Northrup (1988) used regional approval in place of national approval. Although regional approval has some cross-sectional variation, it still does not measure approval in each member’s constituency.

assessments of a president's job performance can change dramatically over time, and election returns are a static indicator of constituency preferences.

For these reasons, neither national approval of the president nor presidential election results directly measure constituent approval of the president. Without a measure of presidential job approval at the constituency level, we cannot directly test hypotheses linking congressional support of the president to his popularity with the public.

Fortunately, a number of organizations have been sampling public approval of the president at the state level over several decades. Niemi, Beyle, and Sigelman (2001) have collected these polls. Indicators of overall presidential approval at the state level are available for every state except Alaska from 1991 to 2002. Although these state polls did not use a common question wording and were not conducted in the all months in every state, information from these samples can be used in conjunction with presidential election returns and national approval to estimate more accurate indicators of presidential job approval at the state level than have heretofore been available.

Now that data are available to measure presidential approval among Senators' constituents at different points in time, we need to employ a research design that accounts for the cross-sectional relationships (why some members have higher support than others) and the overtime relationship (whether variation in approval in a constituency over time is associated with variation in a member's presidential support over the same period). We turn now to a description of our research design.

Research Design

The units of analysis are Senators' behavior during each 6-month period from 1991 through 2002. The number of observations is 2400 (100 Senators x 12 years x 2 observations per year = 2400).

Dependent Variable: 6-Month Presidential Support Scores

Our dependent variable is Senators' *6-Month Presidential Support Score*. This variable incorporates several modifications of the familiar Presidential Support Scores reported by Congressional

Quarterly, Inc. (annually 1991-2003). First, CQ's measure penalizes for absences, while ours does not. Second, CQ's measure is based on all votes on which the president expresses a public position. Our measure excludes "hurrah" votes on which the president won with more than 80 percent voting in agreement with his position. These "hurrah" votes typically involve minor and routine issues, and excluding them focuses the analysis on more important issues on which there is at least minimal conflict.² Furthermore, Bond and Fleisher (1990, 63-64) show that including nonconflictual presidential wins in the measure inflates apparent presidential support more for minority presidents than for majority presidents. This bias is particularly problematic in the Senate when there are large numbers of presidential nominations that are typically approved by unanimous or near unanimous margins. Third, CQ's measure calculates members' support for the president over a calendar year. Because we want to test hypotheses involving changes in public approval and changes in presidential support, we need a measure aggregated over a shorter period of time. Although we would have preferred to measure presidential support for monthly or quarterly (3-month) intervals, we chose a 6-month interval because many of the shorter intervals contained too few presidential votes to calculate a meaningful percentage. Thus, we measure presidential support as the percentage of conflictual roll calls during each 6-month period from 1991-2002 on which each senator voted in agreement with the president's publicly stated position. Because six months is a quarter of a two-year Congress, we use the term "quarter" to refer to one-fourth of a Congress.

Presidential Approval among Senators' Constituents

The primary independent variable of interest is the president's popularity among Senators' constituents. Niemi, Beyle, and Sigelman (2001) have collected state level polls measuring presidential job approval over several decades. Because these polls are based on statewide samples they provide a

²Our measure includes all presidential defeats, even those on which the president stands alone against a near unanimous Senate. Because these relatively unusual votes represent instances of institutional conflict, they are neither trivial nor routine and belong in a measure of presidential support.

rich source of information about presidential popularity among senators' constituents. But numerous polling organizations used different questions to assess presidential job approval in various states at different times. As such, the raw percent approving in these polls does not provide a measure that is directly comparable across states. Furthermore, polls are not available in all states at times appropriate for a particular analysis. Bond, et al. (2002) propose a way to use these polls to produce comparable estimates of presidential approval in every state in particular months of the year.

One major problem to overcome is variation in question wording. Some polls asked opinions about overall job performance, while others ask about a specific policy area (e.g., managing the economy or foreign policy). Even the questions about overall job performance used several different question formats with response options ranging from two categories (approve/disapprove) to five categories (strongly favorable to strongly unfavorable). Minor changes in question wording can influence responses in surveys of public opinion (Asher 1992). Analyses of this collection of state polls show that positive estimates of presidential job approval declines as the number of response categories increases (Beyle, Niemi, and Sigelman 2002; Bond, et al. 2002).

A second limitation is missing data. Although Niemi, Beyle, and Sigelman (2001) have collected thousands of state-wide polls measuring presidential job approval from 1962 to 2002, polls are not available in every state in every month. An appropriate research design requires a measure of constituent opinion at a point in time before the observation of the behavior measured by the dependent variable. Since we construct Presidential Support Scores for 6-month intervals, we need an estimate of presidential approval in each state in January and July of each year (i.e., at the beginning of each quarter of the Congresses in our study). Prior to 1990, polls are available for only a handful of states and only for a few months in each year. For this reason, we limit our analysis to the post-1990 period (102nd to 107th Congresses). The type of sample also varies. Some polls sampled only primary voters or members

of a particular party. Since we want a measure that is representative of the state, we use only polls in which the sample was adults, voters, registered voters, or likely voters.

Thus, we need to correct for systematic effects of (1) missing cross-section information (polls not available in every state), (2) missing time series information (polls not available in the appropriate months of a year) and (3) different question wording. In addition, we need to adjust for unknowns in the polls' estimates (e.g., different survey and sampling techniques, and idiosyncrasies from state to state and year to year). To make these adjustments, we regressed the percent approving of the president's overall job performance in each poll (n=957) on variables associated with the missing systematic influences, and several binary variables to control for "ignorance." Then we use the estimates from this backcast model to estimate presidential job approval in each state in the desired months.

Building on the logic of previous research that used presidential election returns to estimate presidential popularity across constituencies, we use the presidential vote in each state in the previous election to adjust for missing cross-sectional information. Although election returns are not a direct measure of public opinion about the president, people in states where the president ran well in the previous election are likely to express more positive job approval ratings than people in states where the president did not run as well. The primary reason to expect different levels of presidential job approval across states is the partisanship of voters in the state. Public opinion research shows that individuals who identify with the president's party rate his job performance more positively than those who identify with the opposition (Bond and Fleisher 2001b; Edwards with Gallup 1990). Previous research suggests that presidential election returns are good indicator of aggregate partisanship in congressional constituencies (Bianco 1984; Bond, Fleisher, and Talbert 1997; Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan 2002; Canon 1990; Erikson and Wright 2000; Fleisher 1993; Jacobson 2001). Since factors such as issues, candidate image, a strong minor-party candidacy, and the overall competitiveness of the campaign affect the presidential vote,

we norm the presidential vote in each state relative to the national vote, and orient the measure relative to the incumbent Senator's party. Specifically, the *Normed Presidential Vote* is the difference between the percentage of the two-party vote in the state for the presidential candidate of the incumbent Senator's party and the national percentage of the two-party vote. This measure seems particularly appropriate for this analysis in that it estimates *presidential* partisanship in each state.

The Gallup Poll provides estimates of the president's job approval rating in a representative national sample. The Gallup estimate can be viewed as national average of job approval ratings across the 50 states. Since Gallup conducts polls each month, we use this information to adjust for changes in the president's standing over time. Specifically, our backcast model includes the national presidential job approval rating in the Gallup poll conducted in the same month as each state poll. Although over-time changes in job approval are probably not identical in each state, we hypothesize that over-time variation in each state tends to rise and fall with the national average.

The other systematic influence that we must account for is the question format. We limit our analysis to state polls that asked about overall presidential job approval. Following previous research that shows that more response categories tend to depress positive responses, we included dummy variables for the number of response categories.

In addition to adjusting for these known systematic influences, we include variables to control for unknowns. Specifically, we include dummy variables for the polling organization conducting the poll, the state, and year. Detailed results are reported in the appendix.

The model explains more than 80 percent of the variance (adjusted $R^2=.827$). The strongest predictor of state level presidential job approval is the president's national level job approval rating in the Gallup poll conducted at the time of the state poll. This finding supports the hypothesis that state level presidential approval tracks over-time variation nationally. The presidential vote in the state also has a strong positive relationship with approval in the state, indicating that the president's job approval

tends to be higher in states where he ran well in the election. This finding suggests that the partisanship of voters and other considerations that allowed the president to run well in the state continue to influence public assessments of job performance after the election. The coefficients for variables referencing the number of response categories are negative and significant, indicating that more response options tend to depress overall approval relative to the base category of two. Dummy variables for state, year, and polling organization are included to account for idiosyncrasies and unmeasured variables. Several of these controls are significant, but they add little to the variance explained by national approval, the presidential vote in the state, and the number of categories in the question (adjusted $R^2 = .76$ without state, year, and poll dummies).

Since we know the presidential vote in each state and the national Gallup job approval rating in each month, we can use the coefficients from this regression equation to estimate presidential job approval in each state in the appropriate months of each year assuming a poll using the Gallup two-category question format. Since our dependent variable aggregates Senators' presidential support over a 6-month interval, we estimate state level presidential job approval in early January and July. The model's predictions are highly accurate. The correlation between the model's predictions and presidential job approval in state polls using the two-category question format is .902 ($n = 382$ state polls; $p < .000$).

Party and Ideology

The literature on presidential-congressional relations shows that party and ideology are major determinants of presidential support (Bond and Fleisher 1990; Edwards 1989). We code members' party relative to the president. The variable is *Same Party* coded 1 if the Senator is the same party as the president and zero otherwise. We use DW-NOMINATE scores to measure ideology of the President and Senators (Poole 2003; Poole and Rosenthal 1997). We estimate *Ideological Distance* as the

absolute value of the difference between the President's DW-NOMINATE score and each Senator's score.

Method: Panel Analysis with Fixed Effects

Because both the dependent variable (individual members' support for the president) and the primary independent variable (public approval of the president among members' constituents) vary over time as well as across space, we need a method that takes into account variation across both dimensions. Panel analysis, a type of pooled cross-section/time series analysis, is appropriate for this study. We measure both variables to observe temporal and spatial characteristics of each, and then pool the observations into panels of Senators observed through time. A panel design with multiple observations of each case increases degrees of freedom and the confidence we have in the coefficient estimates (Gujarati 1995, 522).

As is common in studies of political process, this panel is unbalanced. The number of individuals (a total of 164 different Senators who served between 1991 and 2002) is larger than the number time points (a maximum of 24 congressional quarters). The pool is unbalanced because every Senator did not serve for the entire time period. The average is 14.6 congressional quarters; the range is one to 24 observations per case. The unbalanced pool prevents estimating panel corrected standard errors.³ The Hausman (1978) test provides guidance about whether a fixed effects or random effects model is appropriate. We are unable to reject the null that the individual effects are correlated with the other regressors, so a fixed effects estimator is appropriate (Greene 2003, 301-03). We use a one factor Least Squares Dummy Variable (LSDV) approach to estimate the models with effects fixed on

³ The effect is to overestimate the standard errors, which works against finding significant coefficients.

the individual. Interpretation of results from this analysis is the same as Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression (Greene 2003, 287, 291, 293).

Findings

Table 1 reports results of models testing our hypotheses. We begin with tests of the basic *Presidential Popularity Hypothesis*, controlling for the influence of party and ideology. The first three models test the basic hypothesis but with presidential approval measured in different ways. Model 1 tests the effects of the level of popularity in the state at the beginning of the congressional quarter; Model 2 tests the effects of changes in approval in the state from the previous six-months; Model 3 analyzes the effects of both the level and change in approval. Each model performs well, explaining around 80% of the variance in 6-Month Presidential Support Scores. Additional diagnostics reveal no indication of autocorrelation ($\rho = .17, .24, .24$, respectively).

[Table 1 about here]

All of the variables hypothesized to influence presidential support in Congress are statistically significant at acceptable levels. Perhaps of most interest, regardless of whether presidential approval is measured as a level or as a change, it exerts a significant positive effect on support in Congress. Compared to party and ideology, however, the substantive impact of presidential approval is minor.

The basic models predict that a Senator of the president's party would be expected to have a presidential support score from 16% to 18% higher than an opposition party Senator. The independent effects of ideology appear similar the party effect. Recall that we measure ideology as the absolute value of the distance between the Senator's and the president's DW-NOMINATE scores. The maximum possible distance is 2.0; empirically the maximum is about 1.5 and the mean is .53 with a standard deviation of .39. A one standard deviation shift in ideological distance is associated with about a 20% decline in presidential support. But note that this estimate underestimates the typical effect of a Senate seat shifting parties. Among opposition party Senators the average ideological distance is .86 with a

standard deviation of .20 compared to a mean of only .17 and a standard deviation of .12 among the president's co-partisans. Thus, if a member of the opposition party replaces one of the president's co-partisans, the typical decline in support is about 54% (-18% associated with the change in party and another -36%, assuming a .69 change in ideological distance, which is the difference between the means for same party and opposition party members). And given the increased party polarization in recent Congresses (Bond and Fleisher 2000; Bond and Fleisher 2001a), the ideological shift associated with a party change may be closer to 1.0 rather than .70. If so, then the combined effects of a party shift and increased ideological distance is a decline in support of about 70% ($-18 - 52 = -70\%$).

In contrast to party and ideology, the substantive effects of presidential job approval among Senators' constituents are small. The positive coefficient indicates that being popular is beneficial, but a one standard deviation increase in the president's job approval rating (i.e., 13.71%) is associated with only a 2.60% increase in support for the president by Senators. The effect of change in approval is somewhat higher (standard deviation of $7.89 * .56 = 4.42\%$) but still marginal (see Model 2). Model 3 indicates that both the level of presidential approval and the change exert significant positive effects on support. The combined effects of public approval ($[13.71 * .09] + [7.89 * .51] = 5.25\%$) remain smaller than the effects of party and ideology.

Model 4 is a test of the *Asymmetry Hypothesis* that declines in approval hurt worse than increases help. Increases and declines in public approval both range from zero to about 19%. The average increase is 2.44 with a standard deviation of 4.80; the average decline is -3.11 with a standard deviation of 4.91. We see that *ceteris paribus* increasing approval tends to boost presidential support while decreasing approval tends to depress it. But contrary to the *Asymmetry Hypothesis* suggested by Neustadt (1960), the relationship is stronger for increasing approval. A one standard deviation increase in presidential approval raises presidential support about 4%, while a similar decline in presidential

approval lowers support about 1%. Party and ideology continue to exert strong effects in this model, while the effects of increases and declines in approval remain marginal.

Finally, Model 5 is a test of the *Shift of Range Hypothesis*. We define a “shift of range” as a 10% or greater change in approval from one congressional quarter to the next. Note that the standard deviation of both increases and declines in approval is about 5%, so a 10% change represents a shift of about two standard deviations. We measure a shift in range with binary variables that equal one if the change in approval was greater than 10%, and we indicate positive and negative shifts in range to see if the relationship is the same for large increases and decreases. A large shift in public approval is associated with about a 10% change in presidential support. And a large decline has a slightly bigger impact (-11.61) than a large increase (10.00). Thus, large shifts in public approval have more noticeable effects than small incremental changes, but they are still more limited than the effects of party and ideology. But we must be cautious when interpreting the impact of large declines during this time period. The only instance of a decline in approval greater than 10% was in the third quarter of the 102nd Congress when the senior Bush’s approval dropped 19% from January to July 1992.

These models assume the relationships in both parties. Table 2 reports the results of models in which we interacted party with ideological distance and the various measures of public approval to see if the effects differ for members of the president’s party and members of the opposition.

[Table 2 about here]

In each party, presidential support declines as ideological distance from the president increases. Although the coefficients are similar for the president’s co-partisans and members of the opposition, the substantive effects differ substantially because variation in ideological distance is much more limited in the president’s party. The most ideologically distant opposition party Senator is 1.51 units away, whereas the most distant member of the president’s party is less than half that distance (.62). Thus the

maximum effect of ideological distance among members of the opposition is a decline in support of about 70%-80%, but among the president's co-partisans the maximum decline is only 32%-38%.⁴

Presidential approval among Senators' constituents has a positive but marginal effect in each party. Model 6 analyzes the effects of the level of presidential approval among Senators' constituents. A standard deviation change in the level approval (about 13.71) is associated with about a 2% change in support from members of the president's party (i.e., $13.71 \cdot .16 = 2.19$), and about 3% from members of the opposition (i.e., $13.71 \cdot .23 = 3.15$). Thus, opposition party Senators are more responsive to the president's popularity among their constituents than are the president's co-partisans, but the substantive impact on support is trivial in both parties. This result is contrary to previous findings that indicating that members of the president's party are more responsive to the president's popularity (Bond and Fleisher 1980). But that study analyzed only the House, and the data were from a much earlier time period (1953-1974). In addition, the analysis relied on national Gallup approval that does not vary across individual constituencies.

Changes in presidential approval have somewhat larger effects (see Model 7), and members of the opposition party continue to be more responsive than the president's co-partisans. A one standard deviation increase in the change in presidential approval leads to about 2.45% more support from members of the president's party (i.e., $7.9 \cdot .31 = 2.45$) and about 6.32% more support from members of the opposition ($7.9 \cdot .80 = 6.32$). The difference between the president's party and the opposition diminishes somewhat in the model with both the level and the change included (see Model 8). For members of the president's party, both the level and the change in approval are significant, leading to a combined change in support of over 4% ($[13.71 \cdot .23] + [7.9 \cdot .14] = 4.26$). For the opposition party the

⁴A one standard deviation change in ideological distance is associated with a decline in support of about 6%-7% among the president's party and about 9%-11% among the opposition. For members of the president's party, mean ideological distance is .17 with a standard deviation of .12; the mean among opposition party members is .86 with standard deviation of .20.

coefficient for level is not significant when controlling for change in approval, so the effect of changes in approval is about 6.79% ($[13.71*0] + [7.9*.86] = 6.79$).

We find no support for the hypothesis that declines hurt more than increases help in either party (see Model 9). Although both increases and decreases are significant, the effects of increasing approval are stronger in both parties. The substantive impact among the president's co-partisans is slight: a standard deviation change leads to about 1.8% more support if approval is increasing and 1.3% less if approval is declining. Opposition party Senators are more responsive to rising presidential popularity, increasing their support a little more than 6% with a standard deviation shift; the effect of falling approval on opposition Senators is small (about 1.3%).

Finally, a shift of range in approval affects support in both parties. The results in Model 10 suggest that members of the president's party increase their support nearly 7% ($b = 6.87$) if there is an increase in approval of at least 10%, but they do not abandon their president if his popularity falls. Members of the opposition increase their support nearly 14% if presidential popularity soars ($b = 13.68$), while a large decline in public approval leads to a 21% decline in opposition support. Recall, however, that the only case of a negative shift in range of public approval was the senior Bush in the 102nd Congress. Thus, what these findings indicate is that Republicans stuck with Bush as his popularity plummeted in 1992, while Democrats stiffened their opposition. Although these results are consistent with Neustadt's arguments about a shift of range and the stronger impact of declines, generalizing from the experience of a single president is risky.

Conclusions

Presidential approval exerts a significant effect on presidential support in the Senate during the 1990s, and the finding holds with different specifications of the model. Finding a significant effect where most previous quantitative studies found none is important. This result suggests that measuring

presidential popularity at the appropriate level (among members' constituents) and analyzing the data to account for both temporal and spatial variation reveals systematic effects.

Yet the effects of public approval are marginal compared to party and ideology. Thus, while the president tends to benefit from high public approval, working to elect members of his party who share his ideology is likely to have a bigger payoff. President Bush seems to have successfully followed this strategy in the 2002 midterm elections. Bush campaigned hard for Republicans, and his efforts appear to have helped elect Republicans in a few close races. His high popularity may have contributed to more support in Congress, but the most important reason is in helping replace Democrats with Republicans rather than influencing those who were already there.

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Table 1
The Effects of Party, Ideology, and Public Approval on Presidential Support

Independent Variables	Model 1 b (t-test)	Model 2 b (t-test)	Model 3 b (t-test)	Model 4 b (t-test)	Model 5 b (t-test)
EFFECTS OF PARTY AND IDEOLOGY					
Senator & President Same Party	17.98*** (11.14)	15.92** (9.20)	16.26*** (9.41)	15.58*** (9.06)	15.55* (8.92)
Sen. & Pres. Ideological Distance	-51.84** (-23.66)	-53.93** (-23.11)	-52.98*** (-22.61)	-54.38** (-23.45)	-54.38*** (-23.13)
BASIC EFFECTS OF APPROVAL					
Presidential Job Approval in State	.19*** (8.34)	---	.09** (3.41)	---	---
Change in Presidential Job Approval	---	.56** (14.90)	.51*** (12.85)	---	---
TEST OF ASSYMETRY HYPOTHESIS					
Increasing Presidential Approval	---	---	---	.82*** (13.19)	---
Decreasing Presidential Approval	---	---	---	-.27*** (-4.15)	---
TEST OF SHIFT OF RANGE HYPOTHESIS					
Positive Shift in Range in Pres. Approval	---	---	---	---	10.00*** (10.33)
Negative Shift in Range in Pres. Approval	---	---	---	---	-11.61*** (-8.49)
Constant	63.80*** (26.87)	76.38*** (37.46)	70.94*** (27.43)	75.25*** (36.95)	76.01*** (36.97)
N	2399	2061	2061	2061	2061
Overall R ²	.80	.81	.81	.81	.81

*p < .10; **p < .05; *** p < .01 using a two-tailed test.

Note: The dependent variable is the Senator's 6-month presidential support score. Change in State Presidential Job Approval Rating is the difference from the previous 6 month period. Shift in Range in Presidential Job Approval Rating is defined as increases or decreases greater than 10 percent. Items in parentheses are t-scores.

Table 2
The Effects of Party, Ideology, and Public Approval on Presidential Support within Party

Independent Variables	Model 6 b (t-test)	Model 7 b (t-test)	Model 8 b (t-test)	Model 9 b (t-test)	Model 10 b (t-test)
EFFECTS OF PARTY AND IDEOLOGY					
Senator & President Same Party	28.31*** (6.10)	12.39*** (3.05)	-1.07 (-.21)	18.25*** (4.36)	14.09*** (3.47)
Ideological Distance-Same Party	-61.78*** (-11.41)	-53.11*** (-9.27)	-52.07*** (-9.15)	-56.67*** (-9.94)	-57.15*** (-10.00)
Ideological Distance-Opposition party	-46.23*** (-12.30)	-56.92*** (-14.41)	-54.56*** (-13.84)	-54.58*** (-13.92)	-55.52*** (-14.12)
BASIC EFFECTS OF APPROVAL					
Pres. Approval-Same Party	.16*** (4.54)	---	.23*** (5.69)	---	---
Pres. Approval-Opposition Party	.23*** (6.61)	---	-.03 (-.83)	---	---
Change in Pres. Approval-Same Party	---	.31*** (5.84)	.14** (2.27)	---	---
Change in Pres. Approval-Opp. Party	---	.80*** (14.97)	.86*** (14.45)	---	---
TEST OF ASYMMETRY HYPOTHESIS					
Increasing Pres. Approval-Same Party	---	---	---	.38*** (4.15)	---
Decreasing Pres. Approval-Same Party	---	---	---	-.27*** (2.50)	---
Increasing Pres. Approval-Opp. Party	---	---	---	1.28*** (14.19)	---
Decreasing Pres. Approval-Opp. Party	---	---	---	-.27*** (2.70)	---
TEST OF SHIFT OF RANGE HYPOTHESIS					
Positive Shift in Range-Same Party	---	---	---	---	6.87*** (5.16)
Negative Shift in Range-Same Party	---	---	---	---	1.13 (.53)
Positive Shift in Range-Opp. Party	---	---	---	---	13.68*** (9.74)
Negative Shift in Range-Opp. Party	---	---	---	---	-21.13*** (-11.49)
Constant	57.13*** (15.38)	79.40*** (22.96)	79.53*** (19.73)	74.22*** (21.11)	77.43*** (22.46)
N	2399	2061	2061	2061	2061
Overall R ²	.80	.81	.82	.82	.82

p < .05; * p < .01 two-tailed test.

Note: The dependent variable is the Senator's 6-month presidential support score. Change in State Presidential Job Approval Rating is the difference from the previous 6-month period. Shift in Range in Presidential Job Approval Rating is defined as increases or decreases greater than 10 percent. Items in parentheses are t-scores.

Appendix
Backcast Model of State Presidential Job Approval 1990-2002

Independent Variables		b	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Presidential Vote		.6169849	.0496397	12.43	0.000
National Gallup Approval		.6096569	.0338229	18.02	0.000
Question Categories 5		-10.62064	1.456032	-7.29	0.000
Question Categories 4		-3.395973	.9725224	-3.49	0.001
Question Categories 3		-8.8332707	.8778723	-10.06	0.000
STATE	AL	3.230125	3.286796	.98	0.326
	AK	--	--	--	--
	AZ	11.6928	3.115535	3.75	0.000
	AR	8.697338	3.317701	2.62	0.009
	CA	10.19279	3.210977	3.17	0.002
	CO	5.347869	3.2511296	1.64	0.100
	CT	6.897871	3.298582	2.09	0.037
	DE	4.435266	4.881528	.91	0.364
	FL	7.661463	3.115319	2.46	0.014
	GA	6.534601	3.031789	2.16	0.031
	HI	12.069	4.350412	2.77	0.006
	ID	2.907915	3.777995	.77	0.442
	IL	6.003193	3.069718	1.96	0.051
	IN	1.658128	3.182177	.52	0.602
	IA	11.39634	3.080274	3.70	0.000
	KS	7.766951	3.53485	2.20	0.028
	KY	9.589591	3.325104	2.88	0.004
	LA	9.190169	3.185814	2.88	0.004
	ME	12.23967	4.897787	2.50	0.013
	MD	7.098599	3.305368	2.15	0.032
	MA	12.04163	3.65257	3.30	0.001
	MI	8.365576	3.425012	2.44	0.015
	MN	11.68798	3.27483	3.57	0.000
	MS	7.182607	3.541367	2.03	0.043
	MO	3.029531	3.668472	.83	0.409
	MT	.8726129	3.21741	.27	0.786
	NB	9.371478	3.288725	2.85	0.004
	NV	6.001627	3.393112	1.77	0.077
	NH	7.23295	3.067671	2.36	0.019
	NJ	8.951967	3.078333	2.91	0.004
	NM	2.491572	3.127333	.80	0.426
	NY	9.602874	3.134307	3.06	0.002
	NC	3.854025	3.089262	1.25	0.213
	ND	6.193789	4.850143	1.28	0.202
	OH	13.1795	3.403364	3.87	0.000
	OK	8.044475	3.247993	2.48	0.013
	OR	9.225555	3.57277	2.58	0.010
	PA	9.176994	3.408001	2.69	0.007

RI	15.42653	6.380777	2.42	0.016
SC	3.857929	3.286769	1.17	0.241
SD	5.283761	4.855981	1.09	0.276
TN	7.02628	3.277673	2.14	0.032
TX	6.10877	3.025592	2.02	0.044
UT	2.977431	4.295798	.69	0.488
VT	4.692497	3.54064	1.33	0.185
VA	8.637104	3.005736	2.87	0.004
WA	8.117278	3.268404	2.48	0.013
WV	7.049192	3.839032	1.84	0.067
WI	10.7913	3.132731	3.44	0.001
POLL101	.8314608	2.553263	.33	0.745
POLL302	-5.721181	2.21428	-2.58	0.010
POLL501	1.60677	2.882465	.56	0.577
POLL502	-4.000963	1.991792	-2.01	0.045
POLL503	-1.23658	1.781741	-.69	0.488
POLL701	1.505255	2.161997	.70	0.486
POLL902	2.466184	2.452831	1.01	0.315
POLL1701	-1.14296	2.536545	-.45	0.652
POLL2201	2.180366	2.286173	.95	0.340
POLL3001	-3.107648	1.704818	-1.82	0.069
POLL3201	-3.621452	1.84286	-.20	0.844
POLL3202	-3.79584	1.657464	-2.29	0.022
POLL3501	-3.048794	2.208386	-1.38	0.168
POLL3901	-12.91826	5.791024	-2.23	0.026
POLL9001	1.725289	.863905	2.00	0.046
POLL9002	-2.771589	.9891352	-2.80	0.005
POLL9007	6.906153	6.94545	.99	0.320
YEAR 1991	2.942158	1.622402	1.81	0.070
YEAR 1992	-1.739568	2.103504	-.83	0.408
YEAR 1993	-6.369254	1.686271	-3.78	0.000
YEAR 1994	-2.47263	1.746149	-1.42	0.157
YEAR 1995	-3.566364	1.705484	-2.09	0.037
YEAR 1996	-1.644487	1.595362	-1.03	0.303
YEAR 1997	.5979139	1.733146	.34	0.730
YEAR 1998	3.304297	1.565761	2.11	0.035
YEAR 1999	1.830252	1.653961	1.11	0.269
YEAR 2000	3.446765	1.726293	2.00	0.046
YEAR 2001	7.811422	1.735476	4.50	0.000
YEAR 2002	11.93961	2.037231	5.86	0.000
Constant	10.50216	4.175658	2.52	0.012
N = 957				
Adjusted R² = .827				

The dependent variable is the percent approving of the president's job performance in each state poll. The previous presidential vote in the state is normed relative to the national two-party percentage. Criterion variables omitted are: categories 2, state Wyoming, year 1990. The poll variable comes from the Beyle, Niemi and Sigelman codebook; only polling organizations that did more than 20 polls are included.