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SAINTS AND CARDINALS IN APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEES:
ACADEMIC PORK BARRELING AND DISTRIBUTIVE POLITICS
IN AN ERA OF REDISTRIBUTIVE BUDGETING

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Prepared for delivery at the 1989 American Political Science Association, the Atlanta Hilton and Towers, August 31 through September 3, 1989. Copyright by the American Political Science Association.
Certainly since the mid-1970s, when Mayhew (1974) and Fiorina (1977) outlined the electoral connection theory and Ferejohn (1974) examined the allocation of water projects, the subject of pork barrel spending has played an important theoretical role in the contemporary study of Congress. According to the electoral connection theory, individual members of Congress have an overwhelmingly rational electoral incentive to engage in pork barrel spending. By bringing pork home to their districts, members will be able to claim credit with their constituents for these projects and thereby strengthen their chances for reelection. Pork barrel projects are indicative of distributive public policies, those which concentrate benefits in particular geographic regions, i.e., congressional districts, while the cost of these often economically inefficient projects are spread by way of general taxation. This type of particularistic politics therefore, is said to overwhelm concerns for general benefit programs and the allocation of resources based on merit. The consequences of this distributive tendency in Congress are ineffective and wasteful public policies and a worsening budget crisis.

Many of the seminal studies that initially described the electoral connection theory and the rational behavior of legislators were produced in the 1970s and very early 1980s. This was a time when Fiorina (1977, p. 70), for example, felt confident in portraying congressional attitudes towards pork and budget deficits by writing, "Was the increase in the debt limit good policy? Who knows? Who cares?" Indeed, during the 1970s there appeared to be significant institutional incentives and peer group pressures to engage in pork barrel spending. Ferejohn (1974) and Weingast (1979) reported that the handful of heroic members who attempted to stop pork were punished by their colleagues; Mayhew (1974) called such members "saints." Weingast (1979) and Shepsle and Weingast (1981), meanwhile, argued that pork would be curbed either when members found these projects were politically or economically unpopular with constituents, a highly unlikely event, or when entire programs collapsed because of their inefficiency.

This paper indicates, first, that the casual attitude Fiorina described is significantly less evident in a Congress constrained by deficit reduction and Gramm-Rudman-Hollings. In the 1980s, the principal curb on pork stems from the deficit's constraint on all types of spending, where the cost of funding pork projects may come at the expense of general benefit programs. Shick (1983) and Ellwood (1983) described this type of zero-sum tradeoff budgeting

*The author thanks John Gilmour and Joseph White for the many discussions that influenced the writing of this paper.
as "redistributive." What is taking place in Congress in an era of tight, redistributive budgets is a battle between particularistic, distributive politics and politics that favors general benefits.

Second, the very heated debate in Congress over academic pork projects, i.e., the direct funding of academic research facilities and research projects in appropriations bills, suggests that the motivations and behaviors of members are more complex than are suggested by the archetype of the rational pork seeker. There are simply more saints than allowed for by the electoral connection theory and rational choice models. These members hold prominent and powerful positions in Congress and they have a significant influence on public policy. As Fenno (1973) and Arnold (1979, 1981) noted, many members do care about broad policy issues and programs, and, as the example of academic pork barrel indicates, they are quite willing to support merit-based general benefit programs over particularistic pork projects. Although the electoral connection and rational choice theories provide explanations for distributive politics and the existence of saints, they do not account for the success of these saints or their influence on public policy.

Rational Choice Theory and the Behavior of Individual Members

During periods of constrained budgets, it is not inconsistent with rational choice theory to suggest that members will compensate by producing smaller and cheaper pork barrel projects or even by eliminating some distributive programs altogether. Rational choice would also assume that with relatively little conflict within the Congress, members would willingly cut funds from general benefit programs to protect distributive ones, or transform general benefit programs into distributive programs. It is not consistent with rational choice, however, for large numbers of members to oppose actively pork projects on the grounds that such projects are harmful to the general good of the nation, that selecting projects is the purview of the executive branch, or that merit should be the deciding factor in allocating projects.

More important, rational choice argues that members will seek projects for reelection purposes, and that attempts by members to oppose distributive projects will not only be unsuccessful, they will be punished by their colleagues. Indeed, the notion of "universalism," where members approve overwhelmingly omnibus bills that contain projects for any members who want them (Weingast, 1979; Shepsle and Weingast, 1981), depends upon the "risk adverse" nature of members to support rather than oppose these project and avoid the wrath of their peers and the Hobbesian world of Riker's (1962) ever-shifting minimum winning coalitions.

The basis for these hypotheses is the rational choice assertion that members are essentially uniform in their motivations and behavior. Indeed, although rational choice theorists have come to place great emphasis on rules and committees as "choke points" of
ves willing to restrict the discretionary portions of the budget that fund distributive projects, protect general benefit programs, and eliminate some distributive programs. The example of academic pork barrel funding, furthermore, identifies the power of individual saints in opposing distributive projects in favor of general benefit programs.

**Distributive Politics and the Rise of Redistributive Budgeting**

The pressure to engage in congressional distributive politics can be curbed, usually in response to macroeconomic and budgetary constraints. Students of budgeting have pointed out, for example, that the congressional allocation of distributive projects has changed over time. Shick (1983) found that during much of the nineteenth century the dominant notion of limited government and consensus over the balanced budget principle restrained pork barrel spending. Later, in the early twentieth century the creation of the executive budget helped to reduce distributive demands within the Congress.

Research conducted in recent years has identified three periods of budgeting that reflect congressional ability and willingness to fund distributive projects. During the period of "classical budgeting" described by Wildavsky (1964) and Fenno (1966), one significant institutional factor in controlling pork projects was the closed nature of the appropriations process, where members of the appropriations committees were shielded somewhat from interest groups and the particularistic demands of their colleagues. The members who were recruited to the committees were selected in part because they were perceived to be willing to conform to the committees' norm of guardians of the purse. Committee members were assigned by the chairmen to subcommittees where they were less likely to have a parochial interest in the agencies and activities under their jurisdiction. At the same time, economic growth during the 1950s and 1960s enabled the committee members to achieve consensus over the budget's base while providing for orderly, "fair share" incremental growth in programs. The overall expansion in the budget allowed the appropriations committees, particularly in the House, to play the role of guardians of the purse by setting funding at slightly below the president's request. Pork barrel projects were approved during this period, but their size, number, and cost were restrained by the appropriations committees.

The second period of budgeting, which coincides with the rise of the electoral connection theory, dates from approximately the late 1960s to the early 1980s. This period, as Shick (1980, 1981a, 1983), Haas (1987), and Wildavsky (1989) have noted, was characterized by the relative decline in power of the appropriations committees over federal spending, including distributive projects. The committees were subjected to two conflicting pressures. On the one hand, they were blamed for the growing federal deficits of the 1970s; the enactment of the Budget Reform Act of 1974 reflected the transfer of the guardian role from the appropriations committees to the newly created budget committees. On the other hand, many
time, the caps strengthen the budget committees' efforts in enforcing the budget resolution.

The effects of these incremental constraints have been particularly evident in the budget (302a) allocations distributed to the appropriations committees through the budget resolution. Although appropriators have oversight over only 44 percent of federal spending (Haas, 1987), the budgets they administer are critically important to the advocates of the electoral connection and rational choice theories as the appropriators must approve the bulk of the federal government's pork barrel projects. Much of the rest of the federal budget consists of entitlements and other forms of uncontrollable spending. These entitlements and other funds may be useful for constituency service activities, to ensure, for example that some district resident received a lost social security check (Fiorina, 1977, 1981; Haas, 1988b; Johannes and McAdams, 1981; McAdams and Johannes, 1981, 1985, 1988; Yiannakis, 1981). Traditional pork projects such as dams and military bases, however, usually require appropriations. Consider the reduced funding appropriators have had to spend on domestic discretionary programs. During FY 1980-89, according to the Senate Budget Committee, budget authority for domestic discretionary spending had fallen by $21.5 billion in real terms; in FY 1980 it accounted for 5.3 percent of GNP, but by FY 1989 it had reached 3.5 percent. As specified in the 1987 White House-leadership two-year budget agreement, this category of spending was allowed to increase by only $3 billion for FY 1989. The 1989 bipartisan summit allowed FY 1990 domestic discretionary spending to do little more than keep even with inflation.

The redistributive budget crunch of the 1980s appears to have restrained if not produced a decline in pork barrel spending. After President Reagan complained in his 1988 State of the Union Address about the pork "tucked away behind a little comma here and there" in the FY 1988 omnibus budget bill, the administration promised it would release a list of pork projects. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which regularly monitors these projects, later identified only $3 billion of pork in the $1 trillion budget. According to John Palmer of the Urban Institute, "The role of pork in the budget has declined. It just isn't a significant budget item anymore—if it ever was" (Blustein, 1988). An earlier, more generous estimate of pork was made by Charles Schultze of the Brookings Institution, who stated that pork accounted for "no more than $10 billion, not really big bucks in a $1 trillion budget" (Thomas, 1988). These estimates of what are relatively limited amounts of pork coincide with earlier observations (Ellwood, 1984; Schultze, 1984) that, as Arnold stated, "the impact of the congressional quest for local benefits on federal expenditures seems to be diminishing" (Arnold, 1981, p. 283).

More specifically, consider how budget constraints have recently influenced Arnold's (1979) three examples of distributive projects: water grants, Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG), and the site selection of military bases. From FY 1981 through FY 1987, outlays
increase during the 1980s. In fact, this decade has witnessed such a rapid rise in academic pork that newspapers such as the Washington Post frequently report on the topic; one recent article was titled, "'Academic Pork' Proliferates as Traditional Form Lags" (Havemann, 1988), and a series of articles on the appropriations committees focused on academic pork (Morgan, 1989a; 1989b; 1989c). In his 1988 State of the Union Address, President Reagan singled out academic pork barrel research for condemnation. Academic pork is a relatively new category of distributive project, one that previous studies of distributive politics (Arnold, 1981) regarded as unique for its general immunity to pork barrelling. Consequently, it provides an interesting case study of how a novel form of distributive project gains favor in Congress, particularly during a period of extreme fiscal constraint.

More important, what is significant about the case of academic pork is that it allows for testing of behavior across subcommittees. Where, for example, river and harbor projects (Ferejohn, 1974) fell under the jurisdiction of one appropriations subcommittee, that of Energy and Water, academic distributive projects emerge from many subcommittees. Academic pork is not substantively generic; there may be as many different types of projects as there are scientific disciplines, federal agencies, and appropriations subcommittees.

Academic pork, therefore, enables us to test across subcommittees the rational choice hypothesis that individual members are relatively powerless, that "saints" who oppose distributive projects are especially ineffectual, and that they are punished by their peers for opposing such projects.

The data for this study include interviews with more than twenty-five appropriations committee professional staff and personal staff of members who sit on the committees, interviews with several members who serve on the committees, and data on academic earmarks contained in the report language for all appropriations bills, supplemental appropriations, and continuing resolutions for FY 1980-89 (Boren, 1987; Savage, 1989). The interviews were granted on the basis that the identities of the interviewees would be held in confidence.

Finally, by definition, academic earmarking, the pork barrelling of academic projects, describes the practice where a member of Congress inserts language in federal legislation, especially appropriations bills, that calls for a federal agency to fund the research facilities or research projects of a specified academic institution in a manner that bypasses peer and merit review. Thus, an earmarked project is one that would not exist without the direct intervention of Congress.

**The Rise of Academic Pork**

As the casual reader of such journals as *Science*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Physics Today*, and *Chemical and Engineering News*
National Science Foundation in 1950, language was inserted in the organic act that called upon the agency to "avoid the undue concentration of such research and education" funding. In the 1960s, four major congressional hearings were held on the subject of equity (Murphy, 1971). Nevertheless, although many members frequently expressed their concerns about geographic equity to the various federal research agencies, with rare exception they refrained from bypassing the peer review process through earmarking until the 1980s.

The primary reason these members did not earmark is because they were not asked to. The rise of academic earmarking confirms Arnold's observation (1979), that in the case of distributive projects members may play the role of "entrepreneur" or "local agent." Entrepreneurs act on their own initiative to obtain projects for their constituents, whereas local agents wait for their constituents to request the projects. In Arnold's term's, the members played the role of local agents.

During the 1970s, only a handful of university presidents were entrepreneurial enough to request such projects from their members (Cloud, 1988). Earmarking was simply never regarded as a resource at their disposal. During the early 1980s, however, a number of aggressive academic institutions began to look to earmarking to obtain the federal support they could not win through the peer review system. They actively solicited earmarks from their members, often by way of hiring intermediary lobbying firms. The effect of their efforts can be seen in Table 1. The table shows that the dollar value of earmarks has jumped from a few projects worth $10 million in the early 1980s, to nearly ninety projects worth $200 million or more in both FY 1988 and FY 1989.

Finally, it should be added that by the mid-1980s the members had a special incentive to earmark academic projects that went beyond simply responding to the pleas of university presidents to rectify perceived inequities in the arcane world of academic research funding. What particularly attracts members to academic pork is the implication that these research projects will produce economic benefits, or positive externalities, for the community or region. Members are constantly reminded by the entire higher education community of the role strong academic institutions played in the development of the Silicon Valley in California, Route 128 in Massachusetts, and the Research Triangle in North Carolina, and how these regions remained relatively economically well-off during the 1982-83 recession. Indeed, even during the recession and in the face of Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, Democrats and Republicans alike have favored the budgets of the various federal research agencies to promote the general benefit of the nation's "economic competitiveness" (Savage, 1987). While the members funded individual distributive projects, they also supported the government's general benefit education and research programs.

The Data: Academic Earmarking in Appropriations Subcommittees
protector of the purse, and is marginally more frugal than its Senate counterpart in allocating earmarks.

Table 3 indicates how the practice of earmarking has spread through the appropriations subcommittees in this period. The heaviest earmarking has taken place in the five subcommittees mentioned previously, but opponents of earmarking should be particularly troubled by the rise of pork barreling in the Treasury-Postal, Transportation, and Commerce-Judiciary subcommittees in FY 1988 and FY 1989.

Although earmarking has been growing in some subcommittees, during the last three years it has been significantly restrained in the Labor-HHS-Education and HUD-Independent Agencies subcommittees. These two subcommittees have funded only six earmarks valued at $10.3 million since FY 1987. What makes this relative lack of pork interesting is that the opportunities for earmarking are so extensive in these subcommittees. The programs under their jurisdictions accounted for $14 billion of the federal government's $22.5 billion in FY 1989 nondefense research appropriations. Research agencies such as the National Science Foundation, NASA, the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Education, and the Environmental Protection Agency receive their budgets from these subcommittees. In addition, they appropriate 46 percent of all discretionary domestic spending. Other subcommittees with far fewer resources earmark substantially more than Labor-HHS-Education and HUD-Independent Agencies.

Cardinals and Saints in Appropriations Subcommittees

The key factor in accounting for whether and how many earmarks will appear in a bill is the position on the matter taken by the subcommittee chairman. In the case of the HUD-Independent Agencies subcommittee, chairmen Jake Garn (R-WY) and William Proxmire in the Senate, and Rep. Edward Boland (D-MA) opposed earmarking their bills, which registered just two identifiable earmarks in ten years. In the Labor-HHS-Education subcommittee, Rep. William Natcher (D-KY) and to a less extent Senator Lawton Chiles (D-FL), have been the champions against earmarking. In the early 1980s, however, even Natcher was unable to prevent the earmarking of the bill by Speaker O'Neill, who earmarked projects for the Boston area, or by senators Mark Hatfield and Lowell Weicker (R-CT). At that time the Republicans controlled the Senate, and Hatfield chaired the full committee and Weicker chaired the subcommittee. Since then, Natcher and Chiles have limited the subcommittee bill to just two earmarks that were extensions of projects in existence before they became chairmen.

Even chairmen who approve earmarks are reluctant to pork barrel general benefit merit reviewed programs, even if this means incurring the displeasure of their colleagues. Thus, despite their big research budgets and wealth of earmarking opportunities, the merit reviewed biomedical research programs in the Department of Health and Human Services and the National Science Foundation
earmark, they should be able to get it through peer review...We have tried to defer to the peer review process, try to leave it to the experts." "Without the peer review process in place, a political judgement comes into play."

The second and related reason given was that the chairmen and many members believed that in the division of labor between the executive and the legislative branches, it is inappropriate for Congress to determine which individual projects should be funded: "Congress appropriates; it's up to the executive branch to carry that out. You let the experts spend the money. This is the opinion of both Proxmire and Garn. It's not up to the Congress to micro manage." "A legislative body should not be setting science policy in this way." "Members will tell you they don't feel qualified to make these detailed and extensive decisions, that it's best left up to the agencies."

A third reason also mentioned was related to the subcommittees' workload and the issue of equity in the distribution of projects. Staffers complained of being overwhelmed with requests for projects: "There are so many demands for funds, let the agencies decide." "You would be going through an auction process every year. Once you allow one earmark, it's letting the old camel nose into the tent." "If you fund one you have to fund them all; you can't discriminate."

Consideration for equity in the distribution of academic projects has resulted in several instances where even subcommittee chairmen who have no reservations about pork prohibit selected new projects. The House Energy & Water subcommittee funded a nuclear medicine project in FY 1987 at the request of a member who was unable to get the project approved by Natcher. The following year, FY 1989, Tom Bevill (D-ALA), the subcommittee chair received fifteen requests for similar projects, and for FY 1990 Bevill received twenty-four new requests for academic projects of all types that totaled more than $200 million. Given the subcommittee's tight budget, and rather than pick a few winners, Bevill ordered that no new academic earmarks be funded for FY 1989 and FY 1990. In the House Agriculture subcommittee, chaired by Jamie Whitten (D-MS), who also is chairman of the full Appropriations Committee, made a similar decision for a smaller pot of academic earmarks in his bill. Whitten is a advocate of earmarking, and he has described the practice as "performing a public service." After receiving more than twenty requests for agriculture trade centers that cost more than a million dollars apiece, Whitten decided not to offend any of the members and ordered that none of the requests be funded for FY 1990. Said one staffer, "We just didn't have any money."

These interviews also indicate that different subcommittees have their own histories and policies regarding distributive projects, in a manner that conforms more to the sociological method of studying Congress than the rational choice scenario, where all members possess the same priorities, behaviors, and motivations. Some subcommittees, especially Agriculture and Energy & Water, are
control of the staff. According to the 1974 Budget Act, as amended and strengthened by Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, the various relevant committees receive their spending totals from the budget resolution by way of the 302a allocation. This allocation is then divided among the subcommittees through the 302b allocation. The 302b allocation indicates the amount of funding available to a subcommittee and it sets a ceiling on outlays and budget authority. The subcommittees are prohibited from violating these ceilings in their bills. Through this process the subcommittee chairmen greatly influence their subcommittees' spending priorities and, if they choose, control pork. In an era of redistributive budgeting, the appropriations chairmen may be more powerful than at any time since the early 1960s. This also holds true for those saints who just happen to be cardinals.

After the 302b allocations have been determined by a meeting of the "college of cardinals," it is the prerogative of the subcommittee chair to mark up the bill, using the full spending allocation, before presenting the chairman's mark to the subcommittee members for their approval. Before the chairman begins marking up, the subcommittee members, as well as any member who seeks a project in the bill, submits his or her request to the chairman. With the aid of the staff, the chairman's mark is pieced together, and may be presented, as Boland did with his subcommittee, to the members as late as the afternoon before the subcommittee meets to vote on its bill. An unhappy subcommittee member may have less than twenty-four hours to gather support from his or her colleagues to overcome the chairman's mark. Moreover, the 302b allocations must be respected throughout the budgetary process, which insulates the bills from floor amendments for projects that do not contain revenue offsets. Observed one staff director: "[The chairman's] got this allocation under 302b and he's got to fit everything into it. So he makes that recommendation, and the only way it can be changed is to cut something and increase something else. Now the increasing has never been a problem for members, but the cutting always is."

Although the allocation process in Budget Act has been in effect since the mid-1970s, Gramm-Rudman-Hollings, particularly with its points of order in the Senate, strengthened the process, and in turn greatly strengthened the appropriations committee and subcommittee chairmen. "It made the appropriations committee stronger, absolutely, because the power to say no always gives you more clout than the power to say yes. And what your doing when you have to meet allocations is you say 'no'." In addition to the chairmen, the staffs' power are also enhanced: "It gives the staff unprecedented power because it's staffing that puts the numbers together that they take to the [subcommittee] chair. And it gives full committee staff humongous power when it comes to the 302b allocations, because they meet with the subcommittee staff and take those numbers to the [full committee] chair." "That overall process that gives us more power on appropriations in the sense of setting priorities. We did not have any excuse in the old days to say no. In the old days, we took a lot more abuse and pain and suffering,
using federal funds to make direct or indirect payments to lobbyists who attempt to influence either the Congress or the agencies in making these awards. The provisions were unanimously adopted by the Senate Appropriations Committee, passed by the Senate, have been endorsed by House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO), and, as of August 1989, await consideration in the conference committee on the Interior bill.

Byrd also dropped his support for an $18 million earmark for his own state university, and announced that he would put a hold on the Treasury-Postal appropriations bill to strip it of its academic earmarks.

Byrd introduced the amendment not because he objects to members earmarking bills for their constituents—he is proud of the projects he brings to West Virginia—but rather because the existence of these lobbyists suggests that without their presence the constituents would be unable to work successfully with their members. Byrd recalled his meeting with representatives from the University of West Virginia, where he objected to the hiring of Cassidy: "Why do you think you have to employ a lobbyist?....I'm on the Appropriations Committee—if I can't do it nobody can....Why do you waste your money on a lobbyist when I'm being paid to be your senator?" (Morgan, 1989d) Byrd does not oppose lobbying, he simply wants to eliminate the middle-man between the constituent and the member; he encourages his constituents to lobby him for favors so that he might help them and receive credit for their patron-client relationship.

If it is passed, Byrd's amendment may make it more difficult if not more embarrassing for universities to hire professional lobbyists. These lobbyists, as Byrd correctly notes, "create projects" that would not have existed without their intervention. Ironically, to the extent that professional lobbyists are restrained from creating projects, Byrd will prove to be an inadvertent and rather unholy saint for strengthening the electoral connection.

Conclusion

Electoral connection and rational choice theorists hypothesize that members of Congress seek distributive projects for reelection purposes and they punish their colleagues who oppose these efforts. Members do in fact pursue such projects for electoral reasons, either because they will receive credit directly for the projects themselves or indirectly for the positive externalities they produce. Moreover, members have an additional incentive to seek projects in an era of redistributive budgeting. When budgets are constrained and fewer authorizations passed, members who might prefer to support general benefit programs may have little choice but to pursue distributive projects to demonstrate their legislative effectiveness to their constituents.

Yet the data on the aggregate dollar value of such projects actually approved by the Congress indicates that the amount of
opposing distributive projects, or for the lack of punishment inflicted upon them by their colleagues. Individual members do alter policy, and Congress has proved to be more tolerant of these saints than allowed for by rational choice theory. This tolerance stems from seniority, the power of committee and subcommittee chairmenschips, the respect many saints have earned from their peers, and, in the case of saintly cardinals, their often significant influence in the budgetary process.
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