



# Center for Effective Lawmaking

## Are Bipartisan Lawmakers More Effective?

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### Abstract

Even in these politically polarized times, being a bipartisan lawmaker yields legislative payoffs. Drawing on data from the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016), we explore whether attracting a larger proportion of cosponsors from the opposing party helps Senators and Representatives advance their legislative proposals. We find that such bipartisanship increases members' legislative effectiveness overall, and especially helps in moving legislation through committee and on the floor. We show these patterns to be robust to both majority-party and minority-party lawmakers and across congressional eras. We also demonstrate the value of reciprocity, in that members of Congress who offer cosponsorships across party lines are more likely to also attract such bipartisan cosponsors to their own bills. Collectively, these results imply that engaging in bipartisan behaviors contributes to a virtuous cycle: those who cosponsor across party lines attract cross-party cosponsors to their own bills, which translates into greater legislative success for their agendas.

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In recent decades, the U.S. Congress has seen increased ideological polarization, declining displays of bipartisanship, and diminished productivity in addressing the nation's most pressing public policy challenges (Binder 2014). At an aggregate level, these patterns reflect the challenges of attempting single-party governance in a system that is designed around multiple veto points, which are often controlled by opposing parties (e.g., Brady and Volden 1998, Krehbiel 1998). Moreover, as the struggle for control of Congress has grown increasingly competitive in recent decades, party leaders have ostensibly advanced a teams-based mentality among their members, in which partisans' first priorities should be to bring about victories for their team, and their second priority should be to deny victories for their opposition (Lee 2016). While some of the greatest legislative accomplishments came about as the product of bipartisan compromise (i.e., Light 2012, Mayhew 1991), and while many of the most highly effective lawmakers in Congress espoused for (and practiced) bipartisanship in legislative negotiations (e.g., Ornstein 1997), such sentiments and outcomes seem out of place in today's Congress.

Or are they? While party leaders might advocate for a unified legislative agenda that discards the perspectives of the opposition party, how do these organizational goals play out at the individual legislator level? Do Representatives and Senators who cultivate a record of bipartisanship find more legislative success, as they seek to advance their bills through the lawmaking process? Or does bipartisanship harm legislators' lawmaking interests – particularly in the contemporary Congress, with its high degree of party competition and conflict? For a newly-elected member of the House or Senate with an interest in advancing her legislative agenda, should she seek to adopt bipartisan lawmaking strategies, or would it be better to build legislative support entirely from within her own party?

To engage with these questions, we draw on a dataset of Representatives' and Senators' sponsorship and cosponsorship decisions on all public bills that were introduced into the U.S. House and Senate between 1973-2016. Doing so allows us to assess whether there are, indeed, direct legislative benefits from engaging in bipartisan activities. More specifically, we examine the relationship between members' records of working across the aisle and their lawmaking effectiveness, showing a strong positive relationship between building bipartisan support for the bills one sponsors and the advancement of one's legislative agenda. Our findings indicate that those Representatives and Senators who attract a balanced proportion of Democrat and Republican cosponsors to their bills are, indeed, more effective lawmakers than are partisan legislators. They see a larger percentage of their introduced bills advance through the committee deliberation stage, and onto the floors of their respective chambers. They also see a larger number of their bills become law than those legislators who do not secure a large proportion of cosponsors from members of the opposite party.

These results are robust to whether the legislator is in the majority or minority party, as well as to whether she served in Congress during earlier or more recent (and ostensibly more partisan and contentious) eras. Although such relationships do not establish an irrefutable causal link between lawmakers adopting bipartisan stances and their subsequent (increased) lawmaking effectiveness, the evidence is highly suggestive and robust across many different modeling assumptions and specifications.

We also examine the correlates of legislators' ability to build bipartisan coalitions on their own bills, helping us to understand which legislators are more likely to have this resource at their disposal. We demonstrate that, although there is no direct payoff for advancing her own agenda items that come from cosponsoring the bills of members of the opposite party, such

bipartisan investments do appear to have an indirect effect on one's lawmaking effectiveness. Specifically, we uncover a significant positive relationship between how often a legislator cosponsors the bills of members of the opposite party and the proportion of opposition-party cosponsors that she can attract to her own bills. Hence, by engaging in bipartisan cosponsorships, a legislator can contribute to a virtuous cycle whereby a larger proportion of cosponsors on her bills will be drawn from members of the opposite party, enhancing her own lawmaking effectiveness.

In the broadest sense, our results imply that across chambers, parties, and eras, bipartisan legislative strategies map onto greater lawmaking effectiveness. To advance this argument, we begin in the next section with a brief consideration of the extant literatures on bipartisanship and lawmaking, to motivate our testable hypotheses. We then discuss the data that we employ in our analyses, and present our main findings. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the implications of our results for broader discussions of bipartisanship in Congress.

### **How Might Bipartisanship Influence Lawmaking Effectiveness?**

How often do legislators engage in bipartisan activities, and to what degree are they rewarded for their bipartisan efforts? Harbridge (2015) presents compelling evidence that, as measured by legislators' cosponsorship decisions, bipartisan support for legislative initiatives is alive and well in the contemporary U.S. Congress, despite roll call voting patterns suggesting that the parties are more polarized than ever. While bipartisanship might be more commonplace in Congress than generally appreciated, Harbridge and Malhotra (2011) demonstrate that, from an electoral perspective, legislators might be hesitant to reach across the aisle, for fear of antagonizing and alienating their bases.<sup>1</sup> In fact, legislators' perception that voters – especially

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<sup>1</sup> For an alternative perspective, see Carson et al. (2010).

primary voters – will punish them for compromising can deter legislators from supporting bipartisan compromises (Anderson, Butler, and Harbridge-Yong 2020). And further research suggests that individual donors favor more ideological and partisan legislators (Barber 2016).

Together, these facts suggest that legislators might be better off pursuing partisan rather than bipartisan agendas, unless their bipartisan efforts translate into significant rewards apart from the electoral arena. One possibility – the focus of our inquiry – is that bipartisan engagement may affect legislators’ policy success, which is one of the primary goals of legislators (Fenno 1973). The extant theoretical literature offers competing predictions regarding whether or not bipartisanship activities should boost legislators’ lawmaking effectiveness within their chambers. This is true both of literature that examines aggregate patterns of policymaking in Congress, and of scholarship that focuses on the behavior of individual members.

Research rooted in spatial models of lawmaking predicts that successful legislation will often be bipartisan, because only legislation that meets the policy goals of pivotal veto players can move forward (Krehbiel 1998). Given the frequency of divided government in the U.S., some buy-in from both parties is often required to achieve policy success. Moreover, even under unified government, it is rare for one party to be large enough (or unified enough) to overcome supermajoritarian hurdles in the lawmaking process by itself (Jones 2001). Therefore, most successful legislation will be bipartisan, by construction. This holds true even in the recent era of highly polarized parties (Curry and Lee 2019). If legislators from both parties cannot agree on legislative compromise, then these theories collectively suggest that gridlock will ensue.

Consistent with this argument, former Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN) and Georgetown University Dean Edward Montgomery (Lugar and Montgomery 2015) recently decried the state of partisanship in Congress, arguing that it “had frequently paralyzed congressional-decision-

making, and led both Republicans and Democrats to fail the most basic tests of governance.”<sup>2</sup> If it is the case that bipartisan legislation is much more likely to pass, then, at an individual level, one would expect that those legislators who develop and shepherd bipartisan bills will be more successful than those legislators who advocate for a more partisan policy agenda.

Indeed, profiles of long-serving and successful legislators often highlight their abilities to work across the aisle and build coalitions for their legislation. Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), for example, was well known for proactively identifying Republican allies who could help him to advance his legislative priorities, including the 1982 Jobs Training Partnership Act, where he partnered with Dan Quayle (R-IN) and the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, where he worked in partnership with President Bush. Similarly, Representative Henry Waxman (D-CA) attributes his success in passing reforms of pesticide regulations in the 1990s to building a bipartisan coalition that began with Representative Thomas Bliley (R-VA) (Waxman 2009, 137). Research on legislative entrepreneurship (e.g., Wawro 2001) offers a similar perspective, in suggesting that by devoting time and resources to building coalitions, including those across the aisle, a member can achieve their goals of passing good public policy. Such arguments at the collective and individual level lead to our first testable hypothesis:

***Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypotheses:*** Those legislators who exhibit higher levels of bipartisan activity in Congress will be more effective lawmakers.

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<sup>2</sup> In this same essay, Lugar and Montgomery announced the creation of the *Lugar Bipartisan Index*, which is a metric of bipartisanship among members of Congress, to help provide voters and other observers of Congress with a tool with which to assess which legislators were willing to reach across the aisle to forge compromises. Further information about the Index can be found at: <https://www.thelugarcenter.org/ourwork-Effective-Bipartisan-Governance.html>. The overall findings we offer below are robust to use of the Lugar Index as a measure of legislators’ bipartisanship.

An alternative perspective highlights the collective benefits that come from partisan differentiation (*e.g.*, Koger and Lebo 2017). Bipartisan legislation that fails to differentiate the two parties may be seen by strong partisans as betraying fundamental principles of the party (Baker 2015). Legislators building bipartisan compromises into their bills may lose crucial coalition members in their own party who are needed to achieve success, and may lose leadership support for bringing the bill to the floor.

This dynamic may play out on all sorts of legislative proposals. For example, messaging bills that highlight partisan differences on the chamber floor (but have little chance of being enacted into law) help voters understand what each party stands for (Lee 2016), help individual legislators engage in position taking without the risks of bill passage (Koger and Lebo 2017), and help the party garner support from aligned interest groups (Gelman 2017, 2020). While these messaging bills may be likely to receive legislative attention on the floor, they are unlikely to become law. Hence, it will appear that the most partisan bills – forcing votes on wedge issues – are most likely to get floor attention whereas bipartisan proposals are set aside. Alternatively, the collective partisan incentives to shape policy in ways that align with ideological commitments and promises to the base may also manifest themselves on legislation that the leadership *actively* seeks to advance into law. Such partisan efforts may be seen as particularly attractive when major policy change becomes attainable – such as during Democratic efforts to pass the Affordable Care Act or Republican efforts to repeal it.

Even when such majorities and unified government are not available to push through a highly partisan legislative agenda, party leaders often prefer starting with a strong base of partisan supporters and then picking off opponents from the other side, rather than starting from a truer position of bipartisan compromise. For example, consistent with classic partisan

gatekeeping approaches (e.g., Cox and McCubbins 2005) Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) implemented what became known as the “Hastert Rule” whereby he would not allow legislation to move forward without support of a majority of the majority party (at a minimum). Similarly, in the late-1990s, majority whip Tom DeLay adopted a strategy of starting “every initiative from as far to the political right as we could” (DeLay and Mansfield 2007, 103-104). Partisan bills, especially among majority-party members, may therefore achieve greater success in committee and perhaps on the floor.

At the level of the individual legislator, recent research on legislative *style* (i.e., Bernhard and Sulkin 2018) suggests that “policy specialists” – representatives with focused agendas, especially within their jurisdictions of their committees – achieve greater legislative success. Such specialists likewise exhibit partisan tendencies, more often voting with members of their own parties and engaging less in bipartisan cosponsorship. Taken together, these collective and individual arguments suggest that the most effective lawmakers might actually be those who advocate for more partisan positions. This logic leads to the following hypothesis:

***Partisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis:*** Those legislators who exhibit lower levels of bipartisan activity in Congress will be more effective lawmakers.

Clearly these two hypotheses are in direct competition with one another. Support for the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* would thus be evidence against the *Partisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis*. Alternatively, we could find support for the null hypothesis that there is no relationship whatsoever between the scope of a legislator’s bipartisan activities and her lawmaking effectiveness in Congress. Finally, we may find conditional evidence, such as if bipartisanship is helpful for minority-party legislators, with the opposite true for majority-party legislators. Each possibility is open to empirical examination.



## Data

Testing these hypotheses requires metrics of legislators' lawmaking effectiveness and of the scope of their bipartisan activities. To measure lawmaking effectiveness, we employ Volden and Wiseman's (2014, 2018) Legislative Effectiveness Score (LES), which is a parsimonious summary metric that captures how successful a Representative (or Senator) is at advancing her legislative agenda items (i.e., Public Bills) through the lawmaking process from introduction until (possibly) becoming law. The LES gives higher scores for members with large portfolios, those who tackle more major issues (not just commemorative measures), and those whose bills advance further in the lawmaking process, all normalized to an average value of one in each Congress. For the current study, we analyze the Legislative Effectiveness Scores of every member of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate who served between the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016). While the LES is a reasonably straightforward (and widely accepted) metric of lawmaking effectiveness, it is worth noting that it does not include a number of activities that members of Congress engage in, such as oversight, constituent service, or obstruction. It is focused on the advancement of legislative proposals, in line with our hypotheses.

The concept of *bipartisanship*, in contrast, could mean different things to different people. Consistently voting for bills that are offered by members of the opposing party, issuing public statements in support of members of the opposing party, and (in rare cases) helping to advance the election (or reelection) efforts of out-partisans might all be deemed to be meaningful indicators of legislators' bipartisan activities inside and outside of Congress. For our analysis, however, we focus on one specific metric, which we equate with legislators' propensity to

engage in bipartisan activities on substantive policy issues: how often legislators attract opposite-party cosponsors to their introduced bills relative to attracting copartisans.

Cosponsorship data have been used in a variety of contexts in the study of legislative politics, to engage with questions related to policy support across different groups of legislators (e.g., Swers 2002; Sulkin 2005, 2011), the determinants of network formation in Congress (e.g., Tam Cho and Fowler 2010), the role of confirmatory signaling and cue-taking in lawmaking (e.g., Kessler and Krehbiel 1996, Zelizer 2018), and the efficacy of sanctions for renegeing on promises (e.g., Bernhard and Sulkin 2013). While it is debatable whether a legislator's decision to cosponsor a bill indicates whether she will exert any effort to secure its passage, it is certainly the case that cosponsoring another legislator's bill represents a clear public statement of endorsement of that legislative initiative (Koger 2003). Moreover, this endorsement is likely sincere (Desposato, Kearney, and Crisp 2011); and once a legislator has signed on as a cosponsor, she rarely reneges on that support when voting on the bill (Bernhard and Sulkin 2013). Hence, cosponsorship data allow an analyst to assess whether a legislator supports particular colleagues and their initiatives, regardless of whether agenda-setting or gatekeeping obstacles keep such bills from receiving a vote on the floor (Harbridge 2015). As a result, to assess how bipartisan a given legislator is in her lawmaking preferences and activities, cosponsorship data offer among the most transparent indicators.

Drawing on cosponsorship data for all public bills (H.R. or S., for the House or Senate, respectively) that were introduced between 1973-2016, we capture how often legislators' bills attract bipartisan cosponsors.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, a legislator's *Proportion Bipartisan*

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<sup>3</sup> Bill sponsorship and cosponsorship data for the 93<sup>rd</sup> to 110<sup>th</sup> Congresses were collected and shared by James Fowler (2006). We updated these data for the 111<sup>th</sup> to 114<sup>th</sup> Congresses. Independents are excluded from these calculations and from all analyses reported here.

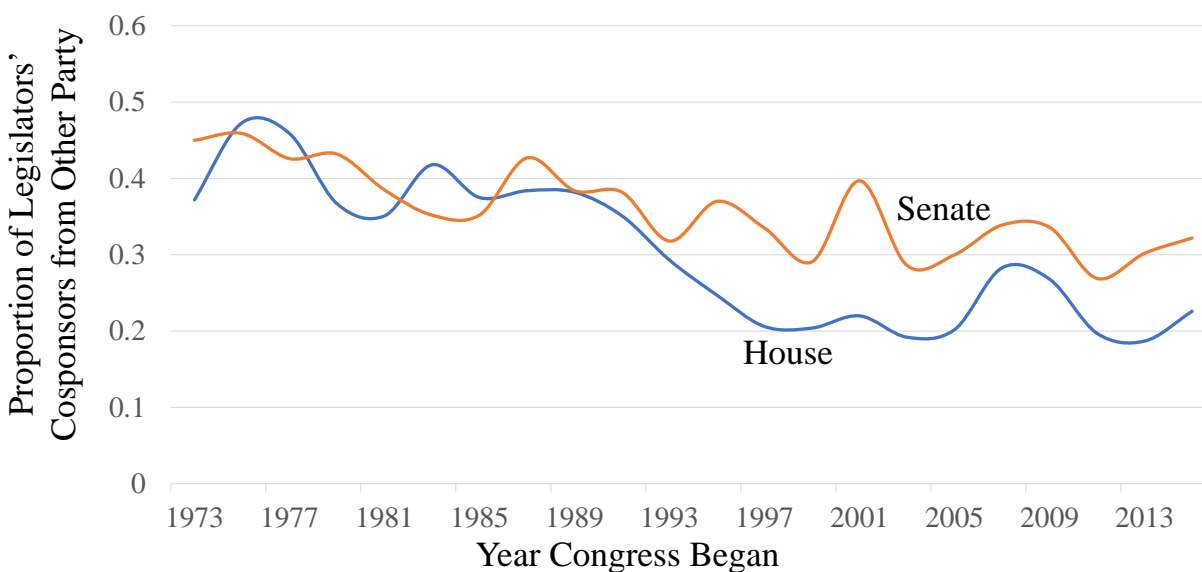
*Cosponsors Attracted* is the average proportion of all cosponsors on her sponsored bills in a given two-year Congress who are from the other party. By construction, we restrict the calculation to those bills a member sponsored that drew in at least one cosponsor. This variable accounts for substantial changes over time in the frequency of cosponsorship.<sup>4</sup> Hence, holding the number of sponsored bills constant, as a legislator attracts more cosponsors from the opposite party to her bills, her *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* value increases. As an example, a lawmaker with two sponsored bills – one with cosponsors only from her own party and one with half of its cosponsors from each party – receives a value of 0.25 for her *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*.

It is important to characterize bipartisanship through cosponsorship as a proportion rather than as a count of such cosponsors from the other party; if we employed the latter measure, members with larger portfolios would receive more cosponsors and higher effectiveness scores, all else equal, simply by construction of these variables. Moreover, given that bills that move further through the lawmaking process attract more cosponsors as they progress, a simple count of cosponsors from the other party would therefore trivially be associated with higher lawmaking effectiveness. However, our fundamental question is not about accumulating more cosponsors (from either party), but rather about whether there is a greater return from growing the support of members of the opposing party or of one's own party at the margins. If the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* is correct, we should expect a positive correlation between LES and the *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. A negative correlation would offer support for the *Partisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis*.

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<sup>4</sup> In the 93<sup>rd</sup> Congress, only 30 percent of House bills were cosponsored compared to 73 percent of bills by the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, for example (Harbridge 2015).

**Figure 1: Level of Bipartisan Cosponsorship over Time**



*Note:* The figure shows that about 20% of the cosponsors attracted to Representatives' bills come from the opposing party in recent Congresses, down from about 40% in earlier Congresses. For the Senate, this decline is to about 30% bipartisan cosponsors attracted recently.

Given the rising partisanship and polarization in Congress over recent decades, we might expect the *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* to be in decline. As Figure 1 shows, this is exactly the case. About 40% of cosponsors were attracted from the other party in the 1970s and 1980s – nearly as if cosponsors were attracted to legislators' bills regardless of party affiliation. These rates fell to about 20% in the House and 30% in the Senate in the most recent decade. This higher rate in the Senate may be due to less acrimonious partisanship in the Senate, or perhaps due to the need to reach across the aisle to gain 60 votes for cloture on most policy measures. Despite these declines, some members of the House and Senate continue to score highly on this bipartisanship variable, such as Representative Jon Mica (R-FL) in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, Representative James Clyburn (D-SC) in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, and Senator Lisa

Murkowski (R-AK) in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, each of whom, on average, drew more than half of their cosponsors from the opposing party.

### **Analyses and Findings**

Particular care is needed in analyzing the relationship between bipartisanship and legislative effectiveness, for a variety of reasons. For example, this relationship may simply be linked to legislators' ideologies, with centrists having an easier time attracting bipartisan cosponsors and also being more likely to have their bills advance through the lawmaking process. Or, for instance, majority-party legislators may have less need to attract bipartisan cosponsors, while at the same time being advantaged in lawmaking. To address these concerns, we take two additional steps beyond our careful coding of bipartisanship described above.

First, we rely on cross-sectional time-series regressions with legislator fixed effects. Fixed effects account for the types of legislators who are naturally more active in moving bills forward, and in attracting cosponsors from the opposing party. This allows us to interpret the coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* as the marginal impact of changes in the proportion of opposite-party cosponsors on her LES, holding underlying member-specific patterns fixed. Second, we control for the standard set of covariates that help to explain legislative effectiveness found in the literature (e.g., Volden and Wiseman 2018). These variables account for ideology, party status, seniority, committee chair positions, and a host of other considerations that otherwise might influence both bipartisanship and effectiveness. Descriptive statistics and sources for all of these variables can be found in Appendix Table A1.

Based on the logic developed above, if attracting a substantial proportion of cosponsors from members of the opposite party contributes positively to a legislator's lawmaking efforts, then consistent with the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis*, we would

expect the coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* to be positive and statistically significant. If, however, reaching out to (and gaining the support of) cosponsors from the other party makes a legislator's agenda less appealing to her own party's members or leaders, then consistent with the *Partisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis*, we would expect that the coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* to be negative and statistically significant.

Table 1 shows the results from a series of models exploring this relationship. Models 1.1 and 1.4 show the basic results in the House and Senate, respectively, for regressions without the numerous control variables. We find a strong positive relationship between the proportion of cosponsors on a Representative's (or Senator's) bills who are drawn from the opposite party and her lawmaking effectiveness. Moreover, Models 1.2 (for the House) and Models 1.5 (for the Senate), show that this relationship holds even when we control for the usual (time-varying) correlates of a member's lawmaking effectiveness. The decline in the size of the coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* shows the importance of adding these controls. That said, these coefficients remain positive, significant, and sizable. Specifically, each one-standard-deviation increase in *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* is associated with a 0.08-point rise in LES in the House and a 0.06-point rise in the Senate. Given the average value of 1.0 for the LES metric, this is equivalent to six to eight percent greater effectiveness, about equivalent to two additional terms of seniority.

**Table 1: Lawmakers Attracting Bipartisan Cosponsors Are More Effective**

<b>DV: Legislative Effectiveness Score</b>	Model 1.1: House	Model 1.2: House	Model 1.3: House	Model 1.4: Senate	Model 1.5: Senate	Model 1.6: Senate
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted</i>	0.986*** (0.128)	0.433*** (0.097)	0.446*** (0.097)	0.538*** (0.189)	0.309* (0.146)	0.368** (0.147)
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered			-0.238 (0.215)			-0.372 (0.273)
Seniority		0.058*** (0.009)	0.057*** (0.009)		0.021* (0.011)	0.021* (0.011)
Majority Party		0.784*** (0.117)	0.715*** (0.125)		0.326*** (0.086)	0.228* (0.112)
Majority Party Leadership		0.362** (0.133)	0.361** (0.133)		0.146 (0.130)	0.148 (0.129)
Minority Party Leadership		-0.198* (0.095)	-0.208* (0.097)		0.087 (0.074)	0.075 (0.074)
Speaker		0.028 (0.277)	0.038 (0.277)			
Committee Chair		2.774*** (0.217)	2.774*** (0.217)		1.032*** (0.116)	1.026*** (0.115)
Subcommittee Chair		0.675*** (0.077)	0.678*** (0.077)		0.328*** (0.078)	0.326*** (0.078)
Power Committee		-0.191*** (0.051)	-0.189*** (0.050)		-0.085 (0.070)	-0.081 (0.071)
Distance from Median		0.457* (0.225)	0.448* (0.224)		0.247 (0.191)	0.222 (0.190)
Size of Congressional Delegation		-0.020 (0.023)	-0.020 (0.022)		-0.015 (0.034)	-0.014 (0.034)
Vote Share		0.027** (0.010)	0.026** (0.010)		0.001 (0.019)	0.001 (0.019)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>		-0.0002** (0.0001)	-0.0002** (0.0001)		0.00002 (0.0001)	0.00003 (0.0001)
Constant	0.744*** (0.037)	-0.915 (0.567)	-0.783 (0.550)	0.820*** (0.067)	0.215 (0.755)	0.390 (0.736)
N	9,202	8,997	8,997	2,192	2,167	2,167
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.40	0.40	0.02	0.41	0.41

*Notes:* Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with legislator fixed effects and robust standard errors in parentheses. Observations are members of the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016). \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Consistent with the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis*, the models suggest that lawmakers who attract a greater proportion of their cosponsors from the other party are significantly more effective as lawmakers themselves. In contrast, cosponsoring bills at a greater rate across party lines does not directly affect a lawmaker's own effectiveness.

In Models 1.3 and 1.6, we add *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered*, which is simply the proportion of bills that a legislator cosponsors that are introduced by a member of the other party out of all of the bills the member cosponsors in that Congress. This variable captures an alternative way that bipartisanship may be perceived in Congress. Its inclusion allows us to

assess whether it is the attracting or the offering of bipartisan support that influences legislative effectiveness. The coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered* is not statistically significant (when including all the control variables from the earlier models), indicating that it is the attraction of bipartisan cosponsors, rather than the offer of bipartisan cosponsorships, that matters.<sup>5</sup> However, the coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* remains positive and significant.<sup>6</sup>

This support for the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* is robust to a variety of alternative specifications. For example, the findings from the models in Table 1 are largely unchanged upon adding a control for the average number of cosponsors a legislator receives on her bills.<sup>7</sup> The findings are also robust to models excluding member fixed effects. Such models, as shown in Appendix Table A2, feature even larger coefficients on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*. This suggests that, in addition to the benefits of a legislator attracting more bipartisan cosponsors than she typically does, those legislators who tend to attract such cosponsors at an overall higher level across their careers are also more effective. Put another way, there appear to be lawmaking benefits from attracting bipartisan cosponsors, whether that is a deviation from a member's typical behavior, or whether it is a way of life.

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<sup>5</sup> Without these control variables, there is a significant (negative) relationship between offering bipartisan cosponsorships and a member's LES.

<sup>6</sup> As noted above, support for the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* is robust to using the Lugar Bipartisanship Index as an alternative measure. That said, the Lugar Index captures both bipartisan cosponsorships offered and attracted. The disaggregate analyses presented here show more clearly which form of bipartisanship is associated with greater lawmaking effectiveness – specifically attracting bipartisan cosponsors is important.

<sup>7</sup> This variable is positive and significant when no control variables are included in the regressions (such as in Models 1.1 and 1.4), but becomes insignificant upon including the controls in the main models.



## **In What Lawmaking Stage Does Bipartisanship Help?**

Although the models of Table 1 offer initial support for the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis*, the aggregate LES measure may mask important underlying variance. Specifically, bipartisanship may be more important in some stages of the lawmaking process than in others. Thankfully, the component parts of the Legislative Effectiveness Score allow us to explore this issue. In particular, the LES focuses on five stages of lawmaking, from the number of bills a member sponsors (BILLS) to how many of those receive action in committee (AIC) to how many receive action beyond committee on the floor of the House or Senate (ABC) to how many pass their home chamber (PASS) to how many become law (LAW).

To explore the effect of bipartisanship across these stages, we conduct further analyses of each stage separately. In Table 2 we report the results of a series of regressions for the House (Models 2.1-2.3) and the Senate (Models 2.4-2.6) where the dependent variables capture different stages in the lawmaking process, and the independent variables are identical to those in Models 1.2 and 1.5 in Table 1. More specifically, in Model 2.1 the dependent variable is the number of bills that a Representative introduces into a two-year Congress; in Model 2.2 the dependent variable is the number of those bills that receive any sort of action beyond committee; and in Model 2.3, the dependent variable is the total number of bills the member introduced that ultimately become law. Models 2.4-2.6 employ analogous dependent variables for the Senate. Comparable models for the “action in committee” and “passing home chamber” stages are offered in Appendix Table A3. We again rely on fixed-effects linear models, but the results are substantively similar upon employing the additional assumptions of negative binomial count models.

**Table 2: Members Who Attract Bipartisan Cosponsors Achieve Greater Success in Committee and in Producing Laws**

	Model 2.1: House # Bills	Model 2.2: House # ABC	Model 2.3: House # Laws	Model 2.4: Senate # Bills	Model 2.5: Senate # ABC	Model 2.6: Senate # Laws
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted</i>	0.456 (0.877)	0.853*** (0.166)	0.485*** (0.088)	4.297 (3.156)	2.340** (0.822)	0.569* (0.319)
Seniority	-0.439*** (0.113)	0.096*** (0.016)	0.016* (0.007)	0.054 (0.327)	0.104* (0.056)	-0.030* (0.018)
Majority Party	5.876*** (1.074)	1.159*** (0.211)	0.468*** (0.089)	-0.966 (1.980)	2.504*** (0.460)	0.647*** (0.182)
Majority Party Leadership	1.392 (0.975)	0.560* (0.245)	0.256* (0.124)	3.087 (2.941)	0.320 (0.679)	0.193 (0.251)
Minority Party Leadership	-0.784 (1.439)	-0.298 (0.173)	-0.138* (0.080)	3.726 (3.008)	0.149 (0.411)	0.050 (0.150)
Speaker	-2.025 (2.705)	-0.328 (0.543)	0.430* (0.208)			
Committee Chair	2.678* (1.463)	5.113*** (0.394)	1.750*** (0.172)	8.860*** (1.729)	5.807*** (0.587)	1.331*** (0.208)
Subcommittee Chair	2.312*** (0.679)	1.107*** (0.131)	0.329*** (0.056)	8.141*** (1.673)	1.162** (0.457)	0.490*** (0.159)
Power Committee	2.399*** (0.730)	-0.504*** (0.098)	-0.139*** (0.041)	1.922 (1.563)	-0.890* (0.402)	-0.158 (0.142)
Distance from Median	9.811*** (2.063)	0.075 (0.401)	0.339* (0.192)	-1.189 (4.830)	1.686 (1.096)	1.154** (0.394)
Size of Congressional Delegation	-0.010 (0.211)	-0.045 (0.036)	-0.021 (0.016)	-1.449* (0.848)	-0.093 (0.154)	-0.045 (0.066)
Vote Share	0.608*** (0.119)	0.080*** (0.018)	0.030*** (0.010)	-0.282 (0.435)	0.029 (0.100)	0.030 (0.036)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>	-0.004*** (0.001)	-0.0005*** (0.0001)	-0.0002** (0.0001)	0.003 (0.003)	0.0001 (0.001)	-0.0001 (0.0003)
Constant	-11.858* (6.155)	-2.217* (0.997)	-0.783* (0.472)	44.178** (17.309)	-0.322 (3.863)	-0.665 (1.503)
N	8,997	8,997	8,997	2,167	2,167	2,167
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.34	0.22	0.13	0.44	0.19

*Notes:* Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with legislator fixed effects and standard errors in parentheses. Observations are members of the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016).

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Dependent variables for Models 2.1 and 2.4 are the number of bills introduced by the lawmaker; for Models 2.2 and 2.5 are number of member's bills that successfully navigate out of the committee process to the floor; and for Models 2.3 and 2.6 are the total number of laws produced from the lawmaker's sponsored bills. On the whole, the results show lawmakers who attract a greater proportion of bipartisan cosponsors do not tend to sponsor significantly more bills, but do have greater success throughout the rest of the lawmaking process.

Several robust findings emerge across the models of Table 2. First, in Models 2.1 and 2.4, we see no significant effect of bipartisanship on the number of bills a member puts forward. In other words, the findings that we presented in Table 1 regarding the (positive) relationship

between a legislator's lawmaking effectiveness and the proportion of opposing-party cosponsors who sign onto her bills is not simply an artifact of her introducing significantly more legislation (which would be positively correlated with her LES), in comparison to legislators who do not attract many bipartisan cosponsors.

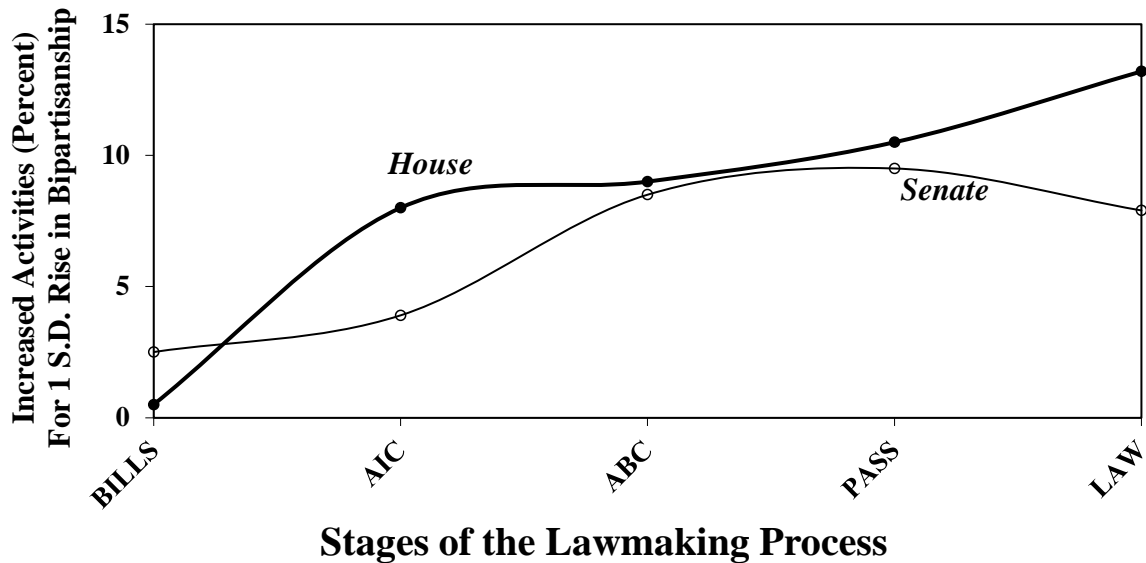
In Models 2.2 and 2.5, however, we see that the coefficients on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* are positive and statistically significant. These findings imply that, as the proportion of other-party cosponsors on a legislator's bills increases, more of her introduced bills advance through the committee stage to the floor the House or Senate. A similar result is obtained in Models 2.3 and 2.6, in which we see a positive association between a legislator's bipartisan cosponsors and more of her bills becoming law.

In Figure 2, we illustrate these effect sizes across all five lawmaking stages. The figure shows the percent increase in legislative activity at each stage associated with a one standard-deviation increase in her *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*.<sup>8</sup> Consistent with Models 2.1 and 2.4 in Table 2, we see that increases in the proportion of bipartisan cosponsors attracted do not map into notably more bills introduced by Representatives and Senators. That said, for every status step thereafter, a higher proportion of bipartisan cosponsorship of one's bills clearly maps into greater levels of lawmaking success. More specifically, Representatives who attract a one-standard deviation larger proportion of bipartisan cosponsors to their bills experience about 8-14% increases in their bills receiving committee attention, passing the House, and becoming law.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, the 13.3% increase in the number of laws produced in the House comes from multiplying the regression coefficient in Model 2.3 (0.485) by the standard deviation (0.194) and dividing by the number of laws produced on average by House members (0.710). Specifically,  $(0.485)(0.194)/(0.710) = 0.133$  or 13.3%.

**Figure 2: Legislative Advancement for Lawmakers Attracting Bipartisan Cosponsors**



*Notes:* The figure shows the percent increase in a legislator’s activities at five stages of the lawmaking process associated with a one-standard-deviation increase in attracting bipartisan cosponsors. The five stages are number of bills introduced (BILLS), number receiving action in committee such as hearings (AIC), number receiving action beyond committee (ABC), number passing their home chamber (PASS), and number becoming law (LAW). Calculations are based on the models of Tables 2 and A3. The results show that bipartisanship is not associated with bill introductions, but is positively related with every further stage in the lawmaking process.

Senators who attract a one-standard-deviation larger proportion of bipartisan cosponsors to their bills likewise experience up to about a 10% increase in their bills advancing through these steps in the lawmaking process. Perhaps these somewhat smaller effects are due to most Senators already embracing a higher level of bipartisanship than their House counterparts, with fewer benefits emerging from going beyond these higher average levels. Indeed, a tradition of

bipartisan lawmaking has historically thrived in the Senate (i.e., MacNeil and Baker 2013, Sinclair 2017).

Taken together, these findings suggest that successfully attracting a sizable body of bipartisan cosponsors to one's legislative initiatives is clearly associated with legislative successes. Those Representatives and Senators who successfully cultivate a network of supporters among members of the opposing party have greater success in navigating the different hurdles that tend to emerge throughout the lawmaking process, such as having one's bill reported from a committee, all the way until the bill potentially becomes law.

### **Robustness to Nonlinear Effects, Party Control, and Different Congressional Eras**

The above analyses provide support for the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* overall, and particularly at key stages of the lawmaking process. That said, one might wonder about the extent to which these findings hold across our entire sample, or perhaps whether they are being driven by dynamics that are confined to only the minority party, or to an earlier era. Moreover, there may be some limit to the benefits of bipartisanship. Would attracting cosponsors solely from the other party be a good strategy, for example, if one wants to advance her bills as far as possible?

**Table 3: Support for Bipartisanship Hypothesis Robust to Nonlinear Models and Party Control**

<b>Dependent Variable: Legislative Effectiveness Score</b>	Model 3.1: House All	Model 3.2: House Majority	Model 3.3: House Minority	Model 3.4: Senate All	Model 3.5: Senate Majority	Model 3.6: Senate Minority
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted</i>	1.831*** (0.240)	2.295*** (0.381)	0.537*** (0.112)	1.680*** (0.442)	2.364*** (0.756)	0.554* (0.258)
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted Squared</i>	-1.848*** (0.058)	-2.367*** (0.483)	-0.515*** (0.125)	-1.668*** (0.464)	-2.545** (0.942)	-0.505* (0.304)
Seniority	0.058*** (0.009)	0.090*** (0.019)	0.029*** (0.005)	0.022* (0.011)	0.040* (0.021)	0.018** (0.007)
Majority Party	0.787*** (0.117)			0.334*** (0.086)		
Majority Party Leadership	0.343** (0.132)	0.445** (0.164)		0.153 (0.131)	0.196 (0.160)	
Minority Party Leadership	-0.184* (0.095)		-0.036 (0.051)	0.107 (0.074)		0.036 (0.056)
Speaker	0.030 (0.286)	0.231 (0.399)				
Committee Chair	2.759*** (0.216)	2.445*** (0.229)		1.024*** (0.114)	0.785*** (0.140)	
Subcommittee Chair	0.661*** (0.076)	0.511*** (0.093)		0.312*** (0.077)	0.274** (0.090)	
Power Committee	-0.206*** (0.051)	-0.296*** (0.089)	-0.065* (0.034)	-0.084 (0.068)	-0.127 (0.102)	-0.051 (0.045)
Distance from Median	0.485* (0.225)	0.490 (0.439)	-0.140 (0.115)	0.287 (0.190)	0.417 (0.448)	-0.005 (0.196)
Size of Congressional Delegation	-0.019 (0.022)	-0.045 (0.034)	0.010 (0.009)	-0.015 (0.033)	-0.047 (0.039)	-0.004 (0.048)
Vote Share	0.025** (0.010)	0.035* (0.017)	0.016* (0.007)	0.002 (0.019)	-0.019 (0.032)	0.012 (0.016)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>	-0.0002** (0.0001)	-0.0002* (0.0001)	-0.0001* (0.00004)	0.00002 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0001 (0.0001)
Constant	-1.035* (0.561)	-0.329 (0.881)	-0.545* (0.328)	-0.018 (0.763)	1.123 (1.150)	-0.101 (0.694)
N	8,997	5,167	3,830	2,167	1,193	974
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.41	0.28	0.04	0.42	0.21	0.04

*Notes:* Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with legislator fixed effects and standard errors in parentheses. Observations are members of the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016).

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Models 3.1 and 3.4 contain all members of the House and Senate, respectively; Models 3.2 and 3.5 are limited to majority-party members; Models 3.3 and 3.6 are limited to minority-party members. All models show nonlinear effects from the proportion of bipartisan cosponsors. Specifically, lawmakers' Legislative Effectiveness Scores are rising for higher values of *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted*, until that proportion reaches about 0.5, after which their effectiveness declines. This pattern supports the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* for the vast majority of members (whose cosponsors are mostly from their own party).

To address this latter question, in Table 3 we explore whether a nonlinear relationship between bipartisanship and legislative effectiveness exists by adding *Proportion Bipartisan*

*Cosponsors Attracted Squared* to the main models from Table 1. In Models 3.1 and 3.4 we see that such nonlinear effects are present and strong across the entire sample. These findings suggest that, in both the House and the Senate, the effect of bipartisanship rises until about half of all of a member's cosponsors are from each party, and then falls again when too few of one's own party members serve as cosponsors.<sup>9</sup> The positive linear effects discussed above occur due to most legislators attaining bipartisan support below these peak levels and thus benefiting from greater efforts on this front. Additionally, the smaller effects uncovered above in the Senate likely emerge due to the average level of bipartisanship being already closer to the peak level of bipartisanship in that chamber.

From this perspective, the most beneficial cosponsorship from the other party is the first one, with diminishing effects for each proportional increase thereafter. Put another way, relative to the average level of bipartisanship, movement in a partisan direction is more costly in advancing legislation than movement toward greater bipartisanship is beneficial. Specifically, a one-standard-deviation decline in the proportion bipartisan (coupled with changing its squared value also) is associated with an LES drop of 22% in the House and 16% in the Senate. Yet a one-standard-deviation rise in bipartisanship from the mean values is associated with a rise in LES of only 8% in the House and 3% in the Senate.

Beyond these overall nonlinear effects, Table 3 also shows the breakdown for members of the majority party and the minority party, respectively. Theoretically, it seems entirely plausible that members of the minority party would have to actively cultivate support among members of the opposite (i.e., majority) party if they want their legislative initiatives to succeed. Hence, it would not be surprising to see a positive relationship between the proportion of

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<sup>9</sup> Calculus tells us that these peaks occur at  $-(1.831)/(2 \times -1.848) = 0.495$  in the House and at  $-(1.680)/(2 \times -1.668) = 0.504$  in the Senate.

bipartisan cosponsors attracted to one's bills and the lawmaking effectiveness of members of the minority party. For the majority party, however, it is less clear whether such a relationship might hold. After all, members of the majority party (by definition) are part of a majority coalition even without bipartisan support and their leadership sets the agenda (perhaps preferring partisan legislation to promote their brand).

Models 3.2 and 3.5, however, show similar nonlinear effects for majority-party lawmakers to those found overall, and Models 3.2 and 3.6 show that similar results emerge for the minority party. In each case, the relationship between the coefficients on the linear and the squared versions of the *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* variable points to a peak level of bipartisanship, involving attracting about the same number of cosponsors from the opposing party as from one's own party, all else equal. The coefficient sizes on the bipartisan measures in the majority party are relatively larger, and those for the minority party are relatively smaller. These findings appear to be related to the differences in the dependent variable's size for these two groups, as those in the majority party score about three times higher in their LES than minority-party members on average. Put another way, the proportional benefit of increased bipartisanship on legislative effectiveness is about equal across parties.<sup>10</sup>

On a related note, given the scholarly and journalistic focus on the rise of partisan polarization in Congress over the past twenty years, one might wonder whether support for the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* may have diminished in recent years as parties have increasingly used the legislative agenda for partisan messaging rather than lawmaking (e.g., Koger and Lebo 2017). To engage with this possibility, we analyzed subsets of

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<sup>10</sup> One might also be interested in whether Democrats and Republicans treat bipartisanship equally, regardless of their majority-party status. In analyzing Models 1.2 and 1.5 on these partisan subsets, we find that Democrats receive somewhat larger benefits from attracting bipartisan cosponsors than do Republicans. However, the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* receives support in both parties.



our overall dataset, separated at the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress (1995-1996), which corresponded with the Republican takeover of the House, and the election of Newt Gingrich (R-GA) as Speaker of the House. Numerous scholars and more casual observers of Congress have pointed to how then-Speaker Gingrich actively discouraged bipartisanship within the House; and some scholars (e.g., Theriault 2013, Theriault and Rohde 2011) have argued that Gingrich's efforts in the House led to the subsequent election of Republican Senators who, likewise, discouraged bipartisanship. The models of Table A4 (House) and A5 (Senate) in the Supplemental Appendix show the results of both linear and nonlinear models for these earlier and later eras. The coefficients suggest a slight decline in the benefits of bipartisanship more recently. However, on the whole, they offer further support for the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis* regardless of whether a Representative or Senator was serving prior to or after the "Republican Revolution."

### **How Do Legislators Attract Bipartisan Cosponsors?**

Given the legislative benefits from attracting bipartisan cosponsors, it is worth exploring which members tend to succeed in gaining such support.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, given little evidence that *offering* bipartisan cosponsorships aids (directly) in lawmaking effectiveness, one wonders whether there is an indirect benefit from offering such cosponsorships, via reciprocity. Does offering cosponsorships across the aisle help cultivate such cosponsorships on one's own legislation, which in turn is linked to greater effectiveness, as suggested by the results above?

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<sup>11</sup> Given the intriguing findings of this section, future work exploring *both* the causes and consequences of bipartisanship may be fruitful.

**Table 4: Those Who Offer Bipartisan Cosponsorships Attract More Bipartisan Cosponsors**

<b>DV: Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted</b>	Model 4.1: House	Model 4.2: House	Model 4.3: Senate	Model 4.4: Senate
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered</i>	0.626*** (0.039)	0.317*** (0.036)	0.733*** (0.045)	0.538*** (0.047)
Seniority	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.0001 (0.002)	0.0003 (0.002)
Majority Party	0.091*** (0.018)	0.087*** (0.015)	0.135*** (0.022)	0.095*** (0.020)
Majority Party Leadership	0.028* (0.014)	0.013 (0.015)	-0.034* (0.019)	-0.033* (0.016)
Minority Party Leadership	0.004 (0.020)	0.004 (0.018)	-0.015 (0.021)	-0.017 (0.022)
Speaker	-0.029 (0.035)	-0.019 (0.027)		
Committee Chair	0.084*** (0.012)	0.062*** (0.012)	0.047*** (0.013)	0.038*** (0.013)
Subcommittee Chair	0.030*** (0.006)	0.034*** (0.006)	0.0002 (0.013)	0.017 (0.013)
Power Committee	0.005 (0.007)	0.035*** (0.010)	0.005 (0.011)	0.015 (0.012)
Distance from Median	-0.154*** (0.021)	0.005 (0.024)	-0.113*** (0.031)	-0.087** (0.034)
Female	-0.020** (0.009)		-0.014 (0.018)	
African American	-0.034** (0.011)		-0.035 (0.050)	
Latino	-0.023 (0.016)		0.019 (0.039)	
Size of Congressional Delegation	-0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.002 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.004 (0.006)
Vote Share	0.003* (0.001)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.004)	-0.0002 (0.004)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>	-0.00002* (0.00001)	-0.00001 (0.00001)	0.00002 (0.00003)	0.00001 (0.00003)
Constant	0.014 (0.059)	0.079 (0.067)	0.176 (0.136)	0.141 (0.151)
Lawmaker Fixed Effects?	No	Yes	No	Yes
N	8,997	8,997	2,167	2,167
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.24	0.18	0.28	0.33

*Notes:* Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with standard errors in parentheses. Standard errors clustered by lawmaker in Models 4.1 and 4.3; lawmaker fixed effects in Models 4.2 and 4.4. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Observations are members of Congress from the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016).

Dependent Variable *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* captures the average proportion of cosponsors of a lawmaker's sponsored bills who are from the other party (among bills with at least one cosponsor). *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered* captures the proportion of a lawmaker's cosponsorships that are supporting bills sponsored by members from the other party. On the whole, the results show a high level of reciprocity, such that lawmakers who cosponsor across party lines at a greater rate in turn attract a greater proportion of bipartisan cosponsors. This effect holds both on the whole across lawmakers as well as over time for lawmakers who change their behavior from Congress to Congress (in the fixed effects Models 4.2 and 4.4).

To explore these such considerations, we briefly turn to analyses in which we consider *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* as a dependent variable. In Table 4, we report the results of linear regressions containing the other independent variables found across the models above, as well as *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered* to explore whether a reciprocal relationship obtains. Once again, we explore these patterns for both the House and the Senate. We also show models both excluding and including member fixed effects, to capture the bipartisanship both across legislators, and by the same legislators over time. Hence, we are able to assess how a legislator's personal characteristics and institutional positions, as well as her propensity to cosponsor the bills that are introduced by those of the other party, relate to the scope of bipartisan cosponsors that she attracts to her own bills.

Looking across the House and the Senate, we see that certain institutional factors are clearly correlated with the ability to attract cosponsors from the other party. Members of the Majority Party, Committee Chairs, and (at least in the House) Subcommittee Chairs all attract greater proportions of bipartisan cosponsors to their bills. Interestingly, we also see that there is clearly a relationship between a member's ideological position and the propensity to attract bipartisan cosponsors (as indicated by the negative and statistically significant coefficients on *Distance from Median*). As one might expect, moderates attract more bipartisan cosponsors, all else equal. However, this effect declines (and disappears in the House) upon including member fixed effects. In other words, while moderates attract greater bipartisan cosponsors simply by being moderate, there is no evidence that House members who become more moderate over time gain cross-party support from such movement, all else equal. Model 4.1 also suggests that women and African American legislators tend to attract a lower proportion of cosponsors from the other party.

In addition to these findings about the personal and institutional drivers of attracting bipartisan cosponsors to one's bills, we also see that across both chambers, the coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered* is positive and statistically significant in all specifications. This finding emerges from a simple linear regression analysis (Models 4.1 and 4.3), and it is robust to the inclusion of legislator fixed effects (in Models 4.2 and 4.4). In other words, even controlling for whatever idiosyncratic legislator-specific features might be correlated with the ability to attract cosponsors from the other party, as a Representative or Senator increases the proportion of cosponsorships that she offers to bills that are introduced by members of the opposite party, she appears to attract a higher level of cosponsorship from members of the opposite party on her own bills.

These findings imply that one way to increase the scope of bipartisan cosponsors who are drawn to one's bills is for legislators to engage in more bipartisan cosponsorship themselves. The findings in Tables 1 and 4, therefore, collectively suggest that while there is no direct relationship between the act of cosponsoring across party lines and one's lawmaking effectiveness, being a bipartisan cosponsor can clearly contribute to, and facilitate, a virtuous cycle, with respect to lawmaking effectiveness. Legislators who cosponsor more bills that are offered by members of the opposite party attract more cosponsors on their own bills from members of the opposite party. And such reciprocity is associated with greater levels of success as they seek to navigate their bills through the lawmaking process in Congress. As shown in Appendix Tables A6 and A7, this reciprocity is evident both in the majority and minority parties, as well as across congressional eras, in both the House and the Senate.

## Conclusion

With increasing polarization across the parties, tight control of Congress making lawmaking a zero-sum contest for party leaders, and many legislators facing tougher challenges in their primaries than in general elections, the case against bipartisanship has been on the rise. And yet, we (and others) show that bipartisanship continues in Congress, albeit somewhat diminished and often behind the scenes. But why do members of Congress even bother being bipartisan anymore? Here we offer one important answer. Bipartisanship works. Members who can attract support from across the aisle have a greater chance of moving their agenda items through committee and into law.

In his final State of the Union address in 2016, President Barack Obama noted the importance of bipartisanship in bringing about legislative accomplishments and addressing policy problems:

“The future we want – all of us want – opportunity and security for our families, a rising standard of living, a sustainable, peaceful planet for our kids – all that is within our reach. But it will only happen if we work together. It will only happen if we can have rational, constructive debates. It will only happen if we fix our politics.”<sup>12</sup>

He then noted that “a better politics doesn’t mean we have to agree on everything,” but by reaching out to the other side of the aisle in good faith, legislators can help create policies to engage with the biggest problems facing America, that will advance the collective interests of the country. In the absence of such bipartisan efforts, the contentious and partisan political atmosphere in Congress would map into more gridlock, and America’s greatest problems would remain unaddressed by government.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/01/12/remarks-president-barack-obama-%E2%80%93-prepared-delivery-state-union-address>

We have sought to engage directly with President Obama's claims about the efficacy of bipartisan lawmaking, at the level of the individual legislator. In so doing, we explore whether increasing the scope of bipartisanship in Congress can map into greater lawmaking success among its members. Our results present a stark counterpoint to those who argue that Congress is dominated by partisan interests, such that bills will only move forward if they benefit one party over the other. In contrast to this perspective, we find that Representatives and Senators who are able to attract a significant portion of cosponsors to their bills from members of their opposite party are more successful at advancing their bills through the legislative process. While cosponsoring more bills of members of the other party does not lead a legislator to experience greater levels of success in advancing her own bills, *per se*, by choosing to engage in greater levels of bipartisan cosponsorship, that same legislator can receive more bipartisan support on her own bills, which is clearly linked to greater levels of legislative success. Hence, being a bipartisan cosponsor puts a Representative or Senator in the position of experiencing more bipartisan support for her own agenda, helping to overcome the wide range of hurdles that emerge between the time that a bill is introduced and when it (hopefully) advances to the President's desk for signature.

At the broadest level, our results suggest that President Obama's claims about the efficacy of bipartisanship have merit: those legislators who engage in bipartisan activities contribute to reciprocal bipartisan lawmaking relationships, which benefit them as they try to advance their agendas. Regardless of era or institutional position, for Representatives and Senators who seek to become effective lawmakers in Congress, our results suggest that one ingredient in the recipe for legislative success is for them to become more bipartisan in their legislative activities. The extent to which members of Congress might choose to embrace this

advice, of course, depends on whether they instead want to advance a unified party brand, especially given likely (primary) election responses to overt displays of bipartisanship. These tensions seem ever-present in the contemporary Congress, and are worthy of further study.

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**Table A1: Descriptive Statistics, Variable Definitions, and Sources**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>House Mean (S.D.)</b>	<b>Senate Mean (S.D.)</b>
LES <sup>a</sup>	Legislative Effectiveness Score, described in text	1.030 (1.578)	1.011 (1.017)
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted <sup>b</sup>	Average proportion of cosponsors on member's bills (with at least one cosponsor) from opposing party	0.290 (0.194)	0.354 (0.190)
Proportion Bipartisan Cospons. Offered <sup>b</sup>	Proportion of member's cosponsorships occurring on bills sponsored by member of opposing party	0.277 (0.174)	0.332 (0.168)
Seniority <sup>a</sup>	Count of number of two-year Congresses that member served in	5.275 (4.051)	6.142 (4.630)
Majority Party <sup>a</sup>	1 = Majority Party Member; 0 = otherwise	0.575 (0.494)	0.552 (0.497)
Majority-Party Leadership <sup>a</sup>	1 = In majority party leadership position; 0 = otherwise	0.018 (0.133)	0.053 (0.224)
Minority-Party Leadership <sup>a</sup>	1 = In minority party leadership position; 0 = otherwise	0.021 (0.142)	0.047 (0.213)
Speaker <sup>a</sup>	1 = Speaker of the House; 0 = otherwise	0.001 (0.031)	N/A
Committee Chair <sup>a</sup>	1 = Committee chair; 0 = otherwise	0.052 (0.222)	0.163 (0.370)
Subcommittee Chair <sup>a</sup>	1 = Subcommittee chair; 0 = otherwise	0.248 (0.432)	0.458 (0.498)
Power Committee <sup>a</sup>	1 = member sits on one of the top committees; 0 = otherwise	0.249 (0.432)	0.726 (0.446)
Distance from Median <sup>c</sup>	Absolute distance from member's first-dimension DW-NOMINATE Score to that of floor median	0.377 (0.250)	0.333 (0.221)
Size of Congressional Delegation <sup>a</sup>	Number of House seats from member's home state	18.73 (14.33)	8.72 (9.29)
Vote Share <sup>a</sup>	Percent vote share in most recent election	68.00 (13.51)	59.75 (9.45)

*Sources:*<sup>a</sup>Constructed by authors from data available at [www.thelawmakers.org](http://www.thelawmakers.org).<sup>b</sup>Constructed by authors as described in the text.<sup>c</sup>Constructed by authors from data available at [www.voteview.com](http://www.voteview.com).

**Table A2: Results Robust to Excluding Member Fixed Effects**

<b>DV: Legislative Effectiveness Score</b>	Model A2.1: House	Model A2.2: House	Model A2.3: House	Model A2.4: Senate	Model A2.5: Senate	Model A2.6: Senate
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted</i>	0.980*** (0.128)	0.556*** (0.092)	0.638*** (0.095)	0.616*** (0.134)	0.428*** (0.125)	0.519** (0.128)
Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered			-0.570*** (0.171)			-0.460* (0.244)
Seniority		0.062*** (0.008)	0.063*** (0.008)		0.028*** (0.009)	0.029*** (0.009)
Majority Party		0.557*** (0.051)	0.349*** (0.080)		0.287*** (0.082)	0.136 (0.119)
Majority Party Leadership		0.492*** (0.161)	0.473** (0.161)		0.028 (0.160)	0.026 (0.160)
Minority Party Leadership		-0.135** (0.049)	-0.164** (0.052)		-0.004 (0.064)	-0.020 (0.066)
Speaker		-0.404 (0.236)	-0.410* (0.236)			
Committee Chair		2.989*** (0.228)	2.972*** (0.227)		1.097*** (0.119)	1.093*** (0.118)
Subcommittee Chair		0.719*** (0.072)	0.719*** (0.072)		0.305*** (0.077)	0.309*** (0.078)
Power Committee		-0.207*** (0.050)	-0.213*** (0.050)		-0.089 (0.064)	-0.087 (0.064)
Distance from Median		0.235* (0.102)	0.083 (0.113)		0.104 (0.129)	-0.028 (0.149)
Female		0.081 (0.050)	0.071 (0.050)		0.042 (0.091)	0.034 (0.092)
African American		-0.274*** (0.081)	-0.286*** (0.081)		-0.212* (0.091)	-0.207* (0.092)
Latino		0.045 (0.103)	0.037 (0.103)		0.012 (0.219)	-0.006 (0.207)
Size of Congressional Delegation		-0.001 (0.002)	-0.001 (0.002)		0.010** (0.003)	0.011** (0.004)
Vote Share		0.014 (0.010)	0.012 (0.010)		0.047* (0.022)	0.046* (0.022)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>		-0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0001)		-0.0003* (0.0002)	-0.0003* (0.0002)
Constant	0.746*** (0.034)	-0.583 (0.369)	-0.204 (0.378)	0.793*** (0.054)	-1.407* (0.736)	-1.122 (0.754)
N	9,202	8,997	8,997	2,192	2,167	2,167
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.01	0.42	0.42	0.01	0.39	0.39

*Notes:* Results from ordinary least squares regressions, with robust standard errors in parentheses. Observations are members of the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016).

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Consistent with the *Bipartisanship and Legislative Effectiveness Hypothesis*, the models show the results from Table 1 to be robust to exclusion of member fixed effects, based on the positive and statistically significant coefficients on the *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* variable.

**Table A3: Additional Lawmaking Stages Regressions for Figure 2 Calculations**

	Model A3.1: House # AIC	Model A3.2: House # PASS	Model A3.3: Senate # AIC	Model A3.4: Senate # PASS
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted</i>	0.893*** (0.204)	0.799*** (0.143)	1.509 (1.314)	1.539** (0.563)
Seniority	0.060** (0.022)	0.066*** (0.013)	-0.004 (0.107)	-0.087* (0.040)
Majority Party	1.274*** (0.227)	1.010*** (0.173)	0.539 (0.914)	1.330*** (0.296)
Majority Party Leadership	0.582* (0.273)	0.553** (0.204)	1.603 (1.280)	0.074 (0.482)
Minority Party Leadership	-0.340* (0.196)	-0.263* (0.159)	1.757 (1.671)	0.203 (0.322)
Speaker	-0.852 (0.554)	-0.200 (0.333)		
Committee Chair	4.632*** (0.357)	3.730*** (0.306)	7.606*** (1.198)	2.824*** (0.406)
Subcommittee Chair	1.677*** (0.178)	0.811*** (0.109)	2.650*** (0.677)	0.862*** (0.271)
Power Committee	-0.399*** (0.116)	-0.339*** (0.074)	0.114 (0.854)	-0.523* (0.275)
Distance from Median	0.638 (0.412)	0.303 (0.344)	-0.168 (2.522)	2.124*** (0.660)
Size of Congressional Delegation	-0.109* (0.053)	-0.038 (0.030)	1.202** (0.408)	-0.065 (0.100)
Vote Share	0.082** (0.022)	0.056*** (0.015)	-0.256 (0.248)	-0.007 (0.080)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>	-0.0005*** (0.0001)	-0.0004*** (0.0001)	0.002 (0.002)	0.0003 (0.0006)
Constant	-0.963 (1.296)	-1.508* (0.841)	3.015 (8.567)	0.853 (2.829)
N	8,997	8,997	2,167	2,167
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.26	0.29	0.20	0.25

*Notes:* Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with legislator fixed effects and standard errors in parentheses. Observations are members of the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016).

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Dependent variables for Models A3.1 and A3.3 are the number of bills introduced by the lawmaker receiving action in committees; for Models A3.2 and A3.4 are number of member's bills that are successfully passed out of their home chamber. On the whole, the results show lawmakers who attract a greater proportion of bipartisan cosponsors have greater success in committee (in the House) and in passing their home chambers (in both chambers). These findings complement those for other lawmaking stages in Table 2, and offer further support for the *Bipartisanship and Lawmaking Effectiveness Hypothesis*.

**Table A4: Support for Bipartisanship Hypothesis Across Eras (House)**

<b>Dependent Variable:</b>	Model A4.1:	Model A4.2:	Model A4.3:	Model A4.4:
<b>Legislative Effectiveness Score</b>	House 1973-94	House 1973-94	House 1995-2016	House 1995-2016
<i>Proportion Bipartisan</i>	0.466***	1.542***	0.373**	1.679***
<i>Cosponsors Attracted</i>	(0.120)	(0.278)	(0.138)	(0.316)
<i>Proportion Bipartisan</i>		-1.340***		-1.844***
<i>Cosponsors Attracted Squared</i>		(0.320)		(0.425)
Seniority	0.085***	0.084***	0.018	0.019
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Majority Party	-0.110**	-0.160**	0.520***	0.527***
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.116)	(0.116)
Majority Party Leadership	0.308	0.303	0.532***	0.507***
	(0.290)	(0.292)	(0.131)	(0.131)
Minority Party Leadership	-0.171*	-0.148	-0.021	-0.007
	(0.101)	(0.100)	(0.072)	(0.075)
Speaker	0.326**	0.316*	0.621*	0.613*
	(0.140)	(0.140)	(0.294)	(0.295)
Committee Chair	1.967***	1.961***	3.091***	3.078***
	(0.261)	(0.261)	(0.326)	(0.324)
Subcommittee Chair	0.862***	0.849***	0.376***	0.370***
	(0.095)	(0.094)	(0.070)	(0.070)
Power Committee	-0.178***	-0.187***	-0.217**	-0.226***
	(0.052)	(0.054)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Distance from Median	0.092	0.108	-0.031	-0.002
	(0.359)	(0.358)	(0.222)	(0.221)
Size of Congressional Delegation	0.015	0.015	-0.032	-0.032
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.024)
Vote Share	0.016	0.015	0.035*	0.033*
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>	-0.0001	-0.0001	-0.0002*	-0.0002*
	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)
Constant	-0.725	-0.778	-0.285	-0.390
	(0.599)	(0.600)	(0.793)	(0.787)
N	4,409	4,409	4,588	4,588
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.45	0.45	0.34	0.34

*Notes:* Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with legislator fixed effects and standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Models A4.1 and A4.2 contain House members from the 93<sup>rd</sup>-103<sup>rd</sup> Congresses (1973-1994); Models A4.3 and A4.4 contain House members from the 104<sup>th</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1995-2016). Results show the robustness of the main results to both earlier and later congressional eras.

**Table A5: Support for Bipartisanship Hypothesis Across Eras (Senate)**

<b>Dependent Variable:</b>	Model A5.1:	Model A5.2:	Model A5.3:	Model A5.4:
<b>Legislative Effectiveness Score</b>	Senate 1973-94	Senate 1973-94	Senate 1995-2016	Senate 1995-2016
<i>Proportion Bipartisan</i>	0.323*	1.849***	0.276	0.834*
<i>Cosponsors Attracted</i>	(0.169)	(0.580)	(0.173)	(0.408)
<i>Proportion Bipartisan</i>		-1.824**		-0.699
<i>Cosponsors Attracted</i>		(0.637)		(0.441)
<i>Squared</i>				
Seniority	0.046*** (0.014)	0.043** (0.014)	0.013 (0.022)	0.013 (0.022)
Majority Party	0.404*** (0.142)	0.420** (0.141)	0.206* (0.108)	0.200* (0.108)
Majority Party Leadership	0.028 (0.268)	0.033 (0.271)	0.105 (0.157)	0.108 (0.157)
Minority Party Leadership	0.013 (0.141)	0.028 (0.141)	-0.012 (0.101)	-0.007 (0.102)
Committee Chair	0.948*** (0.153)	0.956*** (0.152)	1.092*** (0.159)	1.087*** (0.159)
Subcommittee Chair	0.260** (0.15)	0.240* (0.104)	0.309*** (0.098)	0.306*** (0.098)
Power Committee	-0.044 (0.103)	-0.050 (0.103)	0.081 (0.079)	0.079 (0.078)
Distance from Median	-0.432 (0.506)	-0.386 (0.488)	0.041 (0.213)	0.051 (0.212)
Size of Congressional Delegation	-0.046 (0.035)	-0.044 (0.035)	-0.033 (0.082)	-0.034 (0.082)
Vote Share	-0.042* (0.023)	-0.039* (0.023)	0.051 (0.033)	0.049 (0.033)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>	0.0003* (0.0002)	0.0003* (0.0002)	-0.0004 (0.0002)	-0.0003 (0.0002)
Constant	1.987** (0.828)	1.580* (0.867)	-1.108 (1.454)	-1.115 (1.450)
N	1,087	1,087	1,080	1,080
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.41	0.42	0.42	0.42

Notes: Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with legislator fixed effects and standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Models A5.1 and A5.2 contain Senators from the 93<sup>rd</sup>-103<sup>rd</sup> Congresses (1973-1994); Models A5.3 and A5.4 contain Senators from the 104<sup>th</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1995-2016). Results show the robustness of the main results to both earlier and later congressional eras, with the exception of post-1994, where the coefficient on *Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted* in the linear specification only achieves  $p = 0.056$ , one tailed.

**Table A6: Bipartisan Cosponsorship Reciprocity in Majority and Minority Parties**

<b>DV: Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted</b>	Model A6.1:	Model A6.2:	Model A6.3:	Model A6.4:
	House Majority	House Minority	Senate Majority	Senate Minority
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered</i>	0.372*** (0.056)	0.329*** (0.060)	0.624*** (0.083)	0.528*** (0.080)
Seniority	0.005*** (0.001)	-0.006 (0.002)	0.0003 (0.002)	0.0005 (0.003)
Majority Party Leadership	-0.004 (0.015)		-0.033 (0.022)	
Minority Party Leadership		0.022 (0.019)		-0.013 (0.025)
Speaker	-0.017 (0.041)			
Committee Chair	0.049*** (0.014)		0.021 (0.016)	
Subcommittee Chair	0.022*** (0.007)		0.007 (0.013)	
Power Committee	0.037** (0.014)	0.032* (0.014)	-0.008 (0.016)	0.024 (0.017)
Distance from Median	0.062 (0.046)	0.134** (0.043)	-0.076 (0.057)	-0.042 (0.076)
Size of Congressional Delegation	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.006* (0.003)	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.013 (0.009)
Vote Share	0.003* (0.002)	0.002 (0.003)	0.002 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.006)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>	-0.00002 (0.00001)	-0.00002 (0.00002)	0.00001 (0.00003)	0.00001 (0.00005)
Constant	0.063 (0.080)	0.148 (0.127)	0.135 (0.172)	0.260 (0.244)
N	5,167	3,830	1,193	974
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.12	0.05	0.25	0.14

*Notes:* Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with legislator fixed effects and standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Observations are members of Congress from the 93<sup>rd</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1973-2016).

The results show that the reciprocity found in Table 4 holds for both the majority and minority parties in both the House and the Senate.



**Table A7: Bipartisan Cosponsorship Reciprocity across Congressional Eras**

<b>DV: Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsors Attracted</b>	Model A7.1:	Model A7.2:	Model A7.3:	Model A7.4:
	House 1973-94	House 1995-2016	Senate 1973-94	Senate 1995-2016
<i>Proportion Bipartisan Cosponsorships Offered</i>	0.272*** (0.054)	0.292*** (0.050)	0.419*** (0.093)	0.592*** (0.060)
Seniority	-0.004** (0.002)	0.004** (0.001)	-0.0001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)
Majority Party	0.289*** (0.034)	0.069** (0.023)	0.075 (0.048)	0.090*** (0.020)
Majority Party Leadership	-0.007 (0.022)	0.022 (0.018)	-0.027 (0.029)	-0.038* (0.020)
Minority Party Leadership	-0.051* (0.030)	0.034* (0.020)	-0.064* (0.031)	-0.007 (0.027)
Speaker	0.145*** (0.017)	-0.078*** (0.021)		
Committee Chair	0.102*** (0.021)	0.039** (0.015)	0.029 (0.023)	0.052** (0.017)
Subcommittee Chair	0.051*** (0.009)	0.017* (0.009)	-0.001 (0.025)	0.027* (0.017)
Power Committee	0.043** (0.015)	0.024* (0.014)	0.005 (0.018)	0.025 (0.018)
Distance from Median	0.279*** (0.060)	-0.048 (0.031)	-0.149 (0.118)	-0.055 (0.036)
Size of Congressional Delegation	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.007)	0.002 (0.011)
Vote Share	0.005* (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.0002 (0.007)	0.007 (0.005)
Vote Share <sup>2</sup>	-0.00003* (0.00001)	-0.000005 (0.00001)	0.000005 (0.00004)	-0.00004 (0.00003)
Constant	-0.144 (0.102)	0.147 (0.099)	0.219 (0.216)	-0.225 (0.188)
N	4,409	4,588	1,087	1,080
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.14	0.30	0.37

*Notes:* Results from cross-sectional time-series least squares regressions, with legislator fixed effects and standard errors in parentheses.

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$  (one-tailed).

Observations in Models A7.1 and A7.3 are members of the 93<sup>rd</sup>-103<sup>rd</sup> Congresses (1973-1994); and Models A7.2 and A7.4 include members of the 104<sup>th</sup>-114<sup>th</sup> Congresses (1995-2016).

The results show that the reciprocity found in Table 4 holds for across these congressional eras in both the House and the Senate.