A Crowded Agenda: Labor Reform and Coalition Politics during the Great Society

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Abstract

For much of the postwar era, conservative forces blocked progressive labor policy from reaching a floor vote. With huge Democratic majorities in Congress, the 1960s represented a rare opportunity for unions to substantively alter industrial relations policy. The decade served as an important moment of policy development for numerous groups in the coalition. Organized labor, however, made few gains during this prolific era. Despite labor’s central position within the governing coalition, Democrats repeatedly failed to pass its most important legislative ambition, the repeal of Taft-Hartley’s right-to-work clause. In 1965, Democrats nearly achieved this goal when such a bill passed the House, only to be blocked by a filibuster in the Senate. By analyzing the Democrats’ legislative priorities during the Great Society, I show how coalitional politics structured the party’s policy agenda, and how this ordering affected legislation in turn. With the infusion of new coalitional demands, party elites strategically placed labor’s controversial issue at the end of a long legislative agenda, effectively eliminating any chance for passage. Rather than locating all blame with the usual suspects, this rarely studied episode suggests that President Johnson and his leaders in Congress played a central role in the bill’s failure.
1 The Promise and Disappointment of Labor Reform in the 1960s

Lyndon Johnson’s 1964 presidential race ended in an unprecedented landslide, and with it, one of the most lopsided congresses of the twentieth century. Democrats possessed huge majorities in both the House (294-141) and Senate (68-32). In addition to pure numbers, the overall composition of the 89th Congress gave liberal Democrats a considerable advantage over the Conservative Coalition, the alliance of Republicans and Southern Democrats that operated as a powerful legislative bottleneck throughout the postwar era.\footnote{Under the banner of Johnson’s Great Society, the 89th Congress pursued an ambitious set of issues tailored to new groups in the expanding Democratic coalition. In the first session alone, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act, Medicare, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and a host of regional poverty packages.}

As the most organized group within the party, organized labor played a significant role in the electoral success of Democrats up and down the ticket. After the elections, union leaders believed that their demands for labor reform were at last in reach. Indeed, business groups wary of the coming year also echoed the view that unions were due for a good legislative term.\footnote{Initially, Johnson suggested that the repeal of Taft-Hartley’s right-to-work clause, Section 14b, would take high priority in the 89th Congress. Despite early assurances, Johnson quickly moved away from this pledge once the 1965 term began. In consciously choosing to delay the bill, HR 77, Johnson and other liberal Democrats helped the legis-
lation’s opponents by providing additional time to mobilize against the repeal effort. The decision to delay, I argue, all but sealed the bill’s fate. Though rarely included in most histories of the US labor movement, this understudied episode represents an important moment for organized labor and, more broadly, the coalitional dynamics of the Democratic Party.

Before jumping into the case study, I begin by reviewing recent work on party coalitions and agenda-setting, two literatures that often address similar issues without necessarily speaking to one another. How a party develops and then implements its legislative agenda has received considerable attention in recent years. Yet, the legislative agenda, in two important works in particular, is often described in very different ways: as either the product of gradual issue evolution, or as a list of policies that the majority party can agree upon. While valuable to the study of agenda change, these existing accounts rarely address the intensity of support, or priority, ascribed to specific proposals during a given session. To appreciate what happens after an issue emerges or understand why the majority party is defeated at final passage, further work must explore these coalitional priorities more explicitly.

Coalitional politics play a central role in structuring the party’s priorities, and this ordering directly affects legislation in turn. Parties, I argue, strategically develop the agenda around coalitional issues, and then structure its order to advance the goals of specific groups they most strongly align. Studies that use aggregate measures of attention or roll call votes on a set agenda, however, cannot capture the level of nuance needed for understanding agenda priority. Instead, such anal-
yses call for a more qualitative study of coalitional agenda-setting whereby the se-
quence and priority ascribed to each group’s legislative goals are examined more
carefully. This approach, though limited in scope, utilizes the agenda’s strategic
design to infer the party’s intensity of support for a given group.

After discussing this idea of coalitional agenda-setting, I then apply the frame-
work to a case study of labor reform during the 89th Congress. For much of the
postwar era, conservative forces in Congress ensured that the only bills to reach
a floor vote were those that sought to retrench progressive labor policy.5 During
the 89th Congress, however, Democrats nearly repealed Section 14b when HR 77
passed the House. Though eventually blocked by the Conservative Coalition in
the Senate, the result of the 1965 repeal effort was by no means a foregone con-
clusion. Before the term began, most observers, including LBJ, believed that the
legislation would likely pass.6 Instead of sailing through, however, the Taft repeal
met considerable obstruction by labor’s allies. With numerous groups clamoring
for a piece of the pie, Democrats placed little priority in passing HR 77. Drawing
on the congressional record, contemporary news coverage, and archival evidence,
I show how President Johnson and his congressional leaders consciously privi-
leged the demands of other groups ahead of organized labor’s central issue. In
the end, I argue, agenda-setting came to play a pivotal role in shaping the debate
and, thus, the legislative prospects of the Section 14b repeal.
2 Party Coalitions and the Agenda

Before considering which issues received legislative priority, we must first recognize that partisan elites use the agenda to bolster their political and organizational goals.\textsuperscript{7} Seen through this lens of partisan politics, the structure of the legislative agenda takes on a strategic ordering rich with coalitional dynamics and electoral implications. More than any other phase in the legislative process, setting the agenda reveals the tension between balancing the needs of coalitional pressure groups and the reelection needs of its members. As recent work by Cohen et. al. suggests, parties should not be seen as simple collections of voters and office-seekers, but coalitions that also include “intense policy demanders.”\textsuperscript{8} Parties must consciously weigh the policy positions of pressure groups in order to sustain their material support. For evidence of their account, Cohen et. al. examine the party nominating process and find that groups continue to play a key role in determining the party’s candidates for office.

Moving away from the electoral stage, Karol expands on this theory of parties in examining why elites change positions over time. Linking the party to these groups, he finds that party elites frequently alter their positions on issues, sometimes quite radically, when signaled by intense policy demanders. To maintain or expand their coalition, parties routinely moderate, switch, and even experiment with how they position themselves. The implications of such policy change are important to understanding which groups enter a coalition, as well as how parties change in response to these groups. But how do we measure changes in the intensity by which the party supports or does not support a given group’s policy
positions? How does the coalition sort out which issues and groups see their policy enacted? These questions are particularly problematic when considering well-entrenched groups, like labor, that lack a credible exit option from the coalition. Rather than looking at votes on the House or Senate floor, I propose a more focused analysis of the agenda-setting process. The party’s legislative agenda serves as a venue for constant struggle among the coalition’s constituent groups, all of which expect their pet issue to take priority.

Despite significant research into agenda-setting, few studies explicitly take policy-motivated groups as the central actors in the process. Using easily countable measures of issue attention, Baumgartner and Jones develop a model chronicling why interest in some policies rise while others fall. But, again, there is little discussion regarding how organized groups work with and against parties to promote specific issues ahead of others. The focus on large aggregate trends, though adept at capturing general patterns, are often subject to misleading interpretations. Attention indicators, such as the topic of a committee hearing or number of sentences discussed in the State of the Union, while interesting, speak to neither the order of the agenda, nor the intensity of interest behind the selected policies.

Take four key issues addressed in the 89th Congress. In addition to considering the Section 14b repeal, Congress passed Medicare, the Voting Rights Act, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and several other controversial bills long kept off the agenda. Yet, if one were to examine the amount of attention these issues received in committee, as Figure shows, there is no reason to think that these issues were top priorities during the 89th Congress. Despite receiving
more attention than Voting Rights and Medicare, labor issues, as the following case study will show, were of much lower priority for the party. Snapshots of larger trends offer very little insight into which issues receive legislative priority by party elites in a given year, let alone which bills eventually become law. Indeed, of the four issues shown, only the labor bill failed to pass. These attention-based approaches, while valuable for understanding long-term change, cannot answer important questions as to why specific issues are prioritized, or how the order of the agenda will play out.

3 Measuring Coalitional Agenda-Setting

In order to establish whether a specific group commands priority on the agenda, studies of coalition agenda-setting must first develop a more detailed account of what kinds of policies different groups want from government, and the extent to which these policy demands are supported by party elites. This form of analysis requires two sets of data necessary for making inferences on the party’s intensity of support for various groups. On the one hand, we need a better sense of what policy demanders want from government at a given point in time. Ideally, this source should reflect the group’s true preferences, not simply their realistic expectations of what is feasible. Additionally, we need to know which issues partisan elites selected as being the important legislative goals of the party.

For information on the position of groups, scholars should, when possible, use internally generated sources, such as newsletters, mission statements, and press
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releases. These records provide more insight into what specific interest groups want prior to the congressional session, or similar unit of time. In order to dispel any fear that the interest group’s demands are more a reflection of political reality, one could go back to the last annual meeting in which the group’s top legislative issues were addressed in full. Instead of relying on concurrent media coverage or, worse yet, whether the group regarded a roll call vote as favorable or not, this level of analysis offers additional leverage over a group’s true preferences.\textsuperscript{11}

Compared to establishing the demands of groups, assessing the degree to which these issues map onto partisan priorities is much easier. For a broader focus, party platforms offer one basis for comparison. Inclusion in a party platform can serve as an important signal to groups who expect legislative returns from seeing their party in power.\textsuperscript{12} Furthermore, platforms are, in a sense, commitment mechanisms by which party elites offer some sort of tangible, public overture to meet the demands of various constituencies. Beyond agenda-setting, platforms also speak to this question of coalitional importance by revealing divisions within a party. In a study using state party platforms, for instance, Feinstein and Schickler find that the conventional view of the 1960s racial realignment is deeply flawed. By examining the views of midrange party elites at the state-level, they demonstrate how a gradual transformation among Northern Democrats, and their coalitional partners, made the Democratic Party the more natural home for African Americans in the years to come. As Feinstein and Schickler’s work suggests, attention to party platforms can be very informative of the underlying tensions within a party’s coalitional structure.\textsuperscript{13}
Alternatively, agenda overlap can be assessed by analyzing the specific legislative proposals that make up the agenda in a given session. Confining the analysis to a more narrow window allows for greater appreciation of the actual order different issues moved through Congress. The sequence of the legislative agenda is an important, albeit overlooked, aspect of policymaking. Whether an issue received a floor vote is sometimes less interesting than *when* the vote occurred. Parties have a finite set of resources, particularly time, to advance their interests. Greater scrutiny should be paid to understanding when an issue is determined to come up for a vote. In addition to reflecting the party’s strategic considerations, the timing of the legislative agenda is also relevant to the general ranking of coalitional importance among different issues. For potential indicators of sequential priority, scholars should consider when the issue comes up in the term, whether the bill is close to a recess, and the overall order vis-a-vis other “important,” controversial legislation.

The agenda’s sequence is more than a mere list of which issues receive a vote, and plays an integral role in shaping a policy’s eventual outcome. Agenda-setting, however, often means that some issues are privileged over others, and that some groups receive high priority while others do not. During the 89th Congress, organized labor was one of these losing groups. In the following section, I apply this framework of coalitional agenda-setting to a study of labor politics under the Great Society. To appreciate why labor reform did not materialize during such a moment of Democratic dominance, greater attention must be paid to the strategic decisions made by party elites when crafting the legislative agenda. Whether
party members supported the repeal legislation at final passage was, in some regards, less important after the bill received low priority during the agenda-setting phase. While by no means the sole reason for the bill’s failure, this legislative delay provided critically important time for the opposition to mobilize against the repeal effort.

4 Labor Policy in the Postwar Era

For organized labor, the decade following Taft-Hartley’s passage was difficult organizationally and politically. Under Section 14b, the statute granting states the ability to pass right-to-work laws, the labor movement fragmented into two spheres: a pro-union North and West, and a collection of anti-union, right-to-work states in the Midwest and South (see Figure 2). Despite investing considerable time and more than a million dollars into the campaign, the CIO effort to organize the South, dubbed “Operation Dixie,” failed to make any significant progress. When labor began its push in 1946, it faced coordinated opposition of business groups at local and state levels. Individual unions, by contrast, competed with one another as CIO and AFL worked to organize new workers into their separate camps. Without a well-organized South, unions in the North were vulnerable to capital flight. Businesses could cut costs by moving, or merely threatening to move, to states where labor unions were weaker.

In the court of public opinion, organized labor was on the defensive as well. Throughout the 1950s, the image of unions tarnished as headlines continually
publicized the abuses of Big Labor. This reputation of corruption was particularly salient in late 1957 when the Senate’s McClellan Committee began investigating the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.\textsuperscript{16} Though primarily targeted at the Teamsters, the hearings marked a noticeable shift in the public’s perception of unions in general. In January 1957, before the hearings started, Gallup found that 75\% of respondents generally approved of labor unions. As Table\textsuperscript{1} shows, public support for unions fell more than 10\% as the year went on, reaching its nadir in October 1958. Drawing upon the McClellan Committee’s findings, Congress passed the Landrum-Griffin Act in 1959, placing heavier restrictions on the accounting and finances of unions. In the end, the decade concluded as the postwar period began, with the passage of anti-labor legislation.

Despite possessing legislative majorities in Congress, Democrats made very little progress on pro-union labor reform. Scholarship on this policy inactivity often emphasizes union complacency, the institutional stickiness of Truman-era policies, and obstruction by Southern members of Congress.\textsuperscript{17} These works, while important, tell only part of the story. For the most part, the existing literature focuses on the 1940s and 1950s when the Conservative Coalition was strongest. Few studies examine labor’s position within the Democratic Party during the 1960s - a period in which we should expect to see labor legislation not only pass out of committee, but reach the president’s desk.\textsuperscript{18} The organized working class, a central force in the coalition, seemed poised to reap the benefits of Democratic rule, but instead saw little legislative success.

In the remainder of this paper, I detail how Democratic leaders in the exec-
utive and legislative branches consciously decided to prioritize other issues to the detriment of Section 14b repeal. To that end, Johnson persuaded a reluctant labor movement to support the primary endeavors of the Great Society before addressing labor’s specific demands. With few alternatives, union leaders were compelled to ignore HR 77 repeal until after Congress finished with Medicare, voting rights, education reform and poverty assistance. Before the term began, supporters and opponents alike believed that the issue would sail through. They were wrong. Beyond merely putting off the vote, these dilatory tactics provided the opposition with the time necessary for coordinating anti-repeal efforts. Inside the Beltway, business advocates lobbied members from RTW states to vote against HR 77. Meanwhile, the National Right-to-Work Committee (NRTWC) and other umbrella groups engaged in a successful grassroots campaign that applied outside pressure on Congress. When HR 77 reached the Senate floor in October 1965, the bill faced opposition from Minority Leader Everett Dirksen and RTW advocates in both parties. Tired of capitulating to Democrats, and needing a victory to recharge his base, Dirksen was persuaded to lead a bipartisan filibuster which unequivocally ended the bill’s progress. Democrats attempted to invoke cloture, but fell fifteen votes short of the two-thirds supermajority. Party leaders attempted to overcome the filibuster in the following session, but were met with unyielding resistance. The 1965 filibuster was the closest unions ever came to repealing Taft-Hartley’s right-to-work statute.
4.1 Agenda Priorities in the Great Society

After a resounding victory in the polls, President Lyndon Johnson began his first elected term with even “grander expectations” of the Great Society to come. Under the auspices of fulfilling the Kennedy legacy, Democrats made tremendous strides in the first years of the Johnson administration. As Johnson declared five days after taking office, “No words are strong enough to express our determination to continue the forward thrust of America that he [Kennedy] began.” True to his word, Johnson used his first year to pass important legislation to fight poverty and racial injustice, the two primary social ills identified in his historic Great Society speech.

Despite the rhetoric invoking JFK’s legacy, Johnson’s aspirations went far beyond what Kennedy originally set out to achieve. Johnson had waited for his opportunity to move out from the shadows of his Democratic predecessors. For Johnson, the Great Society would be his New Deal. Aided by a booming economy, Johnson targeted a wide variety of social problems long forgotten since FDR’s New Deal. Indeed, with his support of unemployment insurance and reforms to the Fair Labor Standards Act, Johnson appeared committed to Roosevelt’s core labor policies. In many regards, a Current History article proclaimed, President Johnson “was picking up [on labor issues] where the New Deal left off in 1938.” Once his term began, however, Johnson seemed more interested in how unions could help build his Great Society, and less wedded to the idea of spending political capital on their top issue, the repeal of Section 14b.

With passage of the Wagner Act in his first term, Roosevelt did more to ad-
vance the interests of unions than any other president before and since. During the Eisenhower years, business advocates used Taft-Hartley to undo many of labor’s gains secured under the Wagner Act. Without national labor legislation to curb the post-Taft decline, unions would only continue to shrink and fragment as a movement. Johnson’s administration was the first moment since Truman’s failed veto that the repeal of Section 14b seemed plausible. For Johnson, the Great Society came first. Johnson framed social problems and their solutions in starkly different terms than Roosevelt. When FDR took office, the administration made strengthening the labor movement a centerpiece of its agenda for addressing the country’s social and economic woes. Johnson turned this logic around, arguing “what’s good for this country, is good for the American labor movement.”

Lyndon Johnson, while never the strongest labor supporter, was a reliable pro-union vote after beginning his climb in the party ranks. Yet, as President, LBJ’s priorities in setting the agenda demonstrated how little he valued unions among the vast chorus of interest groups clamoring for attention. Years of AFL-CIO support had taught Johnson that labor would support the party regardless of his actions. Consequently, Johnson instead adopted a strategy designed to court new constituencies entering the electorate. Consequently, labor’s demands took a backseat to the vastly ambitious programs designed to meet the immediate needs of other emerging left-leaning groups.

Everything from civil rights to medical coverage for the elderly found its way into Johnson’s expansive domestic policy agenda. Even labor issues were framed and addressed in these terms. For instance, Johnson pushed for a substantial min-
imum wage increase and the expansion of unemployment insurance in order to provide assistance to low-income and unemployed workers. Organized labor’s most important issue, HR 77, received far less attention under this framework, and union leaders had little rebuttal for why industrial relations reform should take precedence over so many other groups demanding immediate attention on the agenda. Given this calculus, and a realistic understanding of the limits to his post-election political capital, President Johnson immediately went to work to ensure that his priorities were the first issues addressed when the 1965 session began.

Shortly after his inauguration, Johnson dispelled any lingering ambiguity whether HR 77 would lead his legislative agenda. Johnson first hinted at a reluctance to push hard on the divisive issue in his 1965 State of the Union. Instead of aggressively backing the bill, Johnson briefly mentioned that he “recommended” repeal in a two-line reiteration of the party platform. Compared to education and health care, both of which received their own sections in the speech, HR 77’s obligatory endorsement stood as an early testament to the low priority Johnson gave to labor’s demands. Though publicly supportive of the bill, Johnson’s “White House nod” indicated a reluctance to move “as fast as the big labor federation [AFL-CIO] wants.” President Johnson’s position towards HR 77 was unofficially confirmed a few days later when the administration leaked that Congress was not to concentrate its initial efforts on early passage of HR 77.

While leaked in January, the decision to delay action on HR 77 was reached even before the term began. In a private conversation with United Auto Workers
(UAW) President Walter Reuther, the president explained his decision to delay as one of strategy. Early attempts to pass HR 77, Johnson claimed,

“will wreck everything... if we can get those things [Medicare, tax reform, unemployment insurance and Appalachian relief] going, why then we can get to the other thing [HR 77], but if we bring that up first that will drive the South and the Republicans together in an old bloc again. It will give them a much top heavier coalition.”

Johnson continued to explain how initial success with other legislation would “get the ball rolling” for the Taft-Hartley repeal. Though justified as the best way to ensure HR 77’s passage, Johnson’s plan was ultimately motivated by an unwillingness to risk other legislative priorities of the Great Society. At this point in the term, most onlookers believed that the Taft-Hartley repeal would pass. Yet, even with a huge majority, labor’s divisive issues presented a degree of uncertainty that Johnson was unwilling to accept. Regardless of its justification, the strategy did little to improve the bill’s prospects. In addition to signaling the White House’s low priority in the issue, the delay actually undermined by HR 77 by providing more time to business groups who were quietly mounting an opposition.

4.2 Legislative Delay by Labor’s Coalitional Allies

When a window to repeal finally presented itself in 1965, most union leaders believed that Section 14b should top the legislative agenda. The decision to delay infuriated labor leaders who, on the electoral front, campaigned for Democrats in the 1964 elections and, in the legislative arena, provided grass roots support in passing controversial legislation like the Civil Rights Act. During a meeting
to brief labor on the Taft strategy, Johnson later recounted, AFL-CIO President George Meany insisted that the president place HR 77 higher on the agenda since “we [labor] elected you and we elected you by ourselves.” Johnson proudly responded that he was “not going to put a few men in this room’s interests ahead of seventy million workers in this country.” Johnson refused to risk his policies geared towards other policy demanders in order to help labor, as he saw it, win a few more certification elections. Unable to change the president’s decision, unions could either support Johnson’s programs, and work toward clearing the agenda, or turn their backs on the party and campaign entirely on the issue of Section 14b.

After briefly opposing Johnson’s plan, labor fell back into its supportive role once the 89th Congress began. With a vast network of local unions to draw upon, labor divided its energy and resources on Johnson’s various bills. To this end, George Meany met with or spoke to the president on more than thirty occasions between the January meeting and the October filibuster. Many of these conversations with the AFL-CIO leader had little to do with issues related to labor, and instead focused on how unions could assist the president with other central issues of his agenda. By mid-1965, many of Johnson’s key goals had been met, but organized labor’s issues, as Figure 3 shows, had yet to receive attention from the full Congress. Instead of holding up just HR 77, CQ’s “Congressional Box Score” shows how little progress Congress made on any of labor’s legislative issues. To President Lyndon Johnson, unions were not the all important constituency he needed to offer high agenda priority. While labor issues lingered in committee, many controversial bills cleared both houses of Congress early in the
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term. More importantly for HR 77, this stasis provided business more time to mobilize through private channels. In a press release in April, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) informed its members that the organization “urged ‘an all-out defense’ of Section 14(b).” Appealing to businesses in RTW states and union shop states alike, NAM went on to remind its members that “The very possibility that such a statute can be enacted now serves as some check on extreme union behavior.”

In mid-May, Johnson gave Congress the freedom to move on HR 77 when he sent his “Labor Message” to Congress, “But if union leaders wanted forceful and enthusiastic support for their campaign, they were disappointed.” Johnson took less than ten lines of the message, out of more than two hundred, to address the Taft-Hartley repeal. With a congressional battle imminent, Johnson’s concentration on other issues again signaled weak support for HR 77. By ignoring repeal of Section 14b, the omission demonstrated that the administration had no interest in dragging the issue out if Congress could not readily secure the votes. In the end, these signals did little but inform the opposition that Congress would begin work on the bill, and that the repeal coalition was far less motivated than the right-to-work forces.

After considerable delay by the executive branch, HR 77’s legislative progress continued to face resistance within committee by more of labor’s supposed allies. Looking to extract policy concessions for other groups, Adam Clayton Powell (D-NY), Chair of the House Education and Labor Committee, unexpectedly halted HR 77. Wielding unilateral control over the committee’s agenda, Powell contin-
ued to block HR 77 even after the committee voted in favor of the legislation. Despite joining with other Democrats to support the bill, he nonetheless refused to send HR 77 to the Rules Committee until the House took up legislation on racial discrimination in unions.\textsuperscript{43} Having assured labor of his support in December 1964, Powell’s tactics surprised and angered labor.\textsuperscript{44} Normally a strong supporter of labor, Powell used HR 77 as a vehicle for advancing anti-discrimination policy omitted from the previous civil rights bills. When it came to issues of union racism, as Frymer’s work suggests, the Democratic coalition was deeply divided.\textsuperscript{45} With Powell chairing the committee, organized labor found its legislative goals receiving lower priority. Following pleas from Democrats, labor leaders, and even the NAACP, Powell finally dropped his insistence on anti-discrimination legislation and released the bill from committee in mid-June.

While unions spent the Spring trying to get their Democratic partners to take action, the opposition coalesced around a potent outside lobby strategy targeted at the House. This recognition of legislative vulnerability was privately echoed by business associations leading the opposition charge. Immediately after the president released his May labor message, the Chamber of Commerce’s Labor Relations Department issued a “Special Report on [the] 14(b) Crisis.” “Despite the heavy weight the AFL-CIO has in this Congress,” they wrote, “we have a fighting chance to win on this vital issue.” Moreover, given House Speaker John McCormack’s (D-MA) recent admission that the bill will come down to ten votes, the Chamber went on, “Any race this close could change with a grassroots response from constituents.”\textsuperscript{46} This grassroots strategy was further evident in ac-
tions taken by NAM’s labor department. In a personal letter to business magnate John Howard Pew, NAM Arizona Director Oscar Palmer similarly claimed that the “repeal of 14-b has more than a fifty-fifty chance of passing.” To prevent a “bigger Union Boss Empire,” Palmer insisted that the Republican donor “use every contact” personally and professionally to lobby Congress.47

After a round of testimonies in committee, HR 77 moved to the House floor on July 28, 1965.48 Despite facing stiff opposition in the House, the bill passed in a tight 221-203 vote. Aided by a farm-labor coalition reminiscent of the New Deal, the Democratic majority voting aye included 18 members from right-to-work states. In addition to RTW Democrats, the coalition included 21 Republican defectors from the highly unionized industrial North. The bare majority sent yet another signal to opposition forces that the Taft-Hartley repeal was vulnerable when it moved to the Senate.

4.3 Section 14b Reaches the Senate

By the time HR 77 left the House, the stage for a drawn out Senate fight was all but set. Yet, even with a legislative battle imminent, Johnson continued to express little concern for the bill’s prospects. In a conversation with Labor Secretary Willard Wirtz, Johnson obliquely asked, “You doing alright in the Senate, I saw some ticker stuff where they were opposing it?” He went on to advise that there was “No rush, I think you ought to get rid of some of the other stuff [unemployment insurance and the minimum wage].”49 What is more, in the lead-up to the Senate battle, the usually assertive president made no effort to use his persuasive
skills to wrangle votes. In the House battle, Administration officials had been instrumental in crafting a compromise by trading votes on the Omnibus Farm Bill. Whether more could have been done to secure enough votes is unclear, but this only reaffirms the notion that the president’s greatest power is in setting the agenda, not through arm-twisting over close votes. When HR 77 reached the Senate in October 1965, there were few undecideds left. After months of delay by President Johnson and Chairman Powell, it was highly unlikely that any amount of vote trading or negotiation could rival the National Right to Work Committee’s (NRTWC) extensive efforts to lobby the Senate.

Over the past year, labor had diffused its lobbying efforts among Johnson’s many legislative goals. Right-to-work advocates, by contrast, waged an effective single-issue campaign devoted entirely to blocking the Section 14b repeal. Between Johnson’s State of the Union and the House vote, Congress received thousands of letters from “small businesses” opposed to HR 77. To assume that the business community did not oppose the bill because large firms like GM and Ford remained publicly silent overstates the case. As internal documents by NAM and the Chamber of Commerce demonstrate, businesses of all sizes were aggressively supporting the NRTWC’s anti-repeal efforts with “an avalanche of letters and telegrams to Congress.” Far from being indifferent to the issue, business groups saw the defense of Section 14b as a top priority. In a survey of the Chamber of Commerce’s members, 189 associations listed the defense of Section 14b as a major issue. Right-to-work was the third most important issue to Chamber members, trailing only overtime pay and minimum wage increases. To garner
broader public support, the anti-repeal campaign complemented its congressional lobbying with a public relations war using pamphlets, fliers, and films. The opposition applied what had been a close, but losing strategy in the House, to the Senate. This time it worked. When the bill finally reached the Senate floor, Minority Leader Everett Dirksen (R-Il) was in command of a coalition of twenty-six senators committed to filibuster the bill.

As the longtime minority leader, Everett Dirksen was a crucial voice on controversial legislation. It was often remarked that Dirksen shared a closer working relationship with Johnson than the president’s successor in the Senate, Mike Mansfield. Although instrumental in passing Johnson’s civil rights legislation, Dirksen was less pliable on a core partisan issue like industrial relations policy. On policy related to organized labor, Northern Democrats and Republicans were deeply polarized, with Southern Democrats siding alongside the GOP. Yet, even with these ideological leanings, Dirksen was undecided on whether to aggressively oppose the bill in the months leading up to HR 77’s vote.

The Dirksen filibuster was not only unexpected, wrote AFL-CIO lobbyist Andy Biemiller, but “wholly unforeseeable.” For much of the term, the opposition believed that if HR 77 was going to be stopped, it would happen in the House, not the Senate. Moreover, at this point in time, neither party had ever attempted to filibuster an industrial relations bill. Most of the year, Dirksen did little to oppose the repeal effort. In late August, Senators Curtis and Fannin presented Dirksen with a list of eighteen Senators prepared to obstruct the legislation in the Senate. Dirksen’s hesitation ended during a September strategy meeting when an addi-
tional eight Senators, mostly southern Democrats, joined the filibuster coalition. In addition to his ideological reasons for opposing the bill, Dirksen came to see the divisive issue as an important opportunity to reunite his base after a session of Democratic success.\textsuperscript{61}

Although they possessed enough votes to pass HR 77, the Democrats had no way of reaching the super majority necessary for breaking a filibuster.\textsuperscript{62} Having chosen to delay the legislation, Democrats had provided the opposition with months to prepare at both the grassroots and congressional levels. The timing of the issue was further complicated by the fact that it reached the Senate just before a congressional recess. With this constraint imposed, the intense and sizable minority defiantly asserted that it would block lawmaking until the legislative break.\textsuperscript{63} Had the bill reached the floor earlier, there was a chance that HR 77 would have passed before the filibuster coalition could take root.

As a counterfactual thought experiment on this question of timing, Figure\textsuperscript{4} uses Poole and Rosenthal’s Common Space Nominate Scores to imagine how the Senate vote might have looked if taken on the House bill.\textsuperscript{64} By using the House vote to pin down HR 77’s ideological placement, we can then examine how many senators are ideologically to the left (aye) or to the right (nay) of the bill. This figure offers a crude hypothetical look into how the Senate would have behaved if given the chance to vote on the House bill from earlier in the term. Taking these scores seriously, this analysis suggests that the House vote would have commanded a 60-40 majority among the Senate, the same number LBJ predicted in November 1964.\textsuperscript{65} While by no means conclusive, it is safe to say that the sooner
the bill reached the Senate, the better its prospects for passage.

In spite of suffering a defeat in October 1965, party leaders resumed efforts to pass HR 77 when the second session began. As a sign of the party’s continued support, President Johnson again mentioned the bill during his 1966 State of the Union. In some ways this gesture was little more than an attempt to mollify a frustrated coalition partner.\textsuperscript{66} The Senate struggle to pass HR 77 began anew in January 1966. Determined to wear down the opposition, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield employed numerous procedural tools in an attempt to break the filibuster. By refusing to allow the chamber into recess from one day to the next, Mansfield hoped to force a showdown over the bill.\textsuperscript{67} With hostilities in Vietnam beginning to ramp up, Mansfield sought to exploit the fact that many in the Senate wanted to move on to debating the procurement of emergency funding. From January 27th through February 3rd, Mansfield endeavored to physically exhaust the obstructionists by convening the Senate at 10:00 AM, two hours earlier than normal. In the end, Mansfield’s tactics proved unsuccessful, and the repeal effort officially ended on February 11th following a third failed cloture vote.

4.4 Losing Before the Vote

In publicly suggesting that HR 77 was not a central issue, the Johnson administration signaled that it was unlikely to turn the issue into a major fight. By February 1966, no amount of lobbying by unions or pressure from administration officials could win enough votes to break Dirksen’s coalition to filibuster. Without full and early support from Democratic leaders, the bill was defeated before it reached the
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Senate. Despite its ultimate failure, this understudied episode represented the first time since Taft-Hartley’s passage that labor had a viable chance to reform existing industrial relations policy. The Great Society’s “lost opportunity” for social democratic progress was not as predetermined as others have claimed. For the first time in decades, Democrats not only controlled the necessary committees but also faced less business opposition by virtue of a strong economy.

While unable to break the filibuster, the 51-48 cloture vote that ended the Taft-Hartley repeal was not the foregone conclusion that many would assume. Earlier in the year, policymakers on both sides of the aisle believed that HR 77 would ultimately pass. As one commentary flatly proclaimed, “The overwhelming liberal complexion of the new 89th Congress makes it a virtual certainty that Section 14 (b) will be repealed, provided that President Johnson gives his full support to this primary objective of his labor supporters.” Johnson and others, however, failed to play their parts. Both Johnson and Labor Committee Chairman Powell intentionally delayed the bill’s progress in order to advantage other intense policy demanders. In the end, it seems organized labor’s industrial relations agenda may have suffered as much from the ambitious political goals of its coalition partners as it did from the obstructionist tactics of the opposition.

Johnson’s Great Society programs offered coalitional benefits that worked well within his larger goals to tackle poverty and racial injustice. Minimum wage increases and other transitory gains, however, are far more politically feasible than the rare opportunity to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act, the top priority of union leaders. By prioritizing other issues, party elites seriously undermined a bill that
stood to benefit an important coalition partner and a sizable portion of the electorate for years to come. Rather than reaping the varied benefits from a strengthened labor movement, Johnson spent the next year defending against criticism for his “insincere” commitment to unions.\textsuperscript{72} Despite claims to have “done his best,” Johnson’s weak support for HR 77 served only to alienate many in the labor movement. After vigorously campaigning for the party’s legislative agenda, many union members believed that the administration had used them to support Medicare and other legislation without any intention of passing labor reform.

The 89th Congress presented a rare moment in which even the most radical departures from the status quo seemed feasible. How Democrats proceeded during this formative period would have lasting effects on both public policy and their coalition for years to come. Unable to meet every group’s demands at once, the Johnson administration had to decide which issues to prioritize and which to ignore. Few guessed that organized labor would fall into the latter category. Despite continued electoral support, unions failed to command the same attention under Johnson’s Great Society as they enjoyed within Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition. Without a focused scrutiny of the coalition’s priorities, much of this story would have been missed. To appreciate such shifts within a coalition, future work must pay greater attention to how parties sequence their legislative agenda around the demands of key interest groups.
5 Conclusion

In a break from the more candidate-centric models of parties, Cohen et. al.’s recent work posits that pressure groups play an important role in shaping a party’s core values and institutions. According to their framework, politicians serve the needs of intense policy demanders who strategically insert themselves into intrapartisan debates over candidate selection, platform development, and even the procedural rules that govern electoral competition. The model’s focus on groups is an important contribution to the study of parties, but the authors ultimately strip away much of the independent action left to elected officials. Policy discretion over which groups to cater to is particularly relevant when the coalition is composed of numerous groups clamoring for representation on the agenda. Intra-party divisions, though uncommon when a coalition is relatively homogeneous, pose a real threat when numerous groups of varying interests all demand something from their partisan allies. How do party elites adjudicate between competing sets of intense policy demanders? Who gets their issue onto the agenda, and which issues receive top priority?

It is not enough to merely claim that parties represent the interests of policy minded groups. Further work must consider how politicians weigh which groups to advantage and why. Karol’s attempts to demonstrate how parties change positions to satisfy or court coalitional partners is a step in this direction. Conceptionalizing party leaders as strategic coalition managers is an important addition to Cohen et. al.’s theory, but this complication warrants empirical substantiation. To really capture the changing contours of a party coalition, we must look closer at
the agenda-setting process to understand the priorities given to different groups. The party’s legislative agenda is finite - only some issues can receive attention in any given year. If the party must balance the demands of various groups, then it is this early stage in the legislative process that we are likely to find evidence as to which groups the party is prioritizing.

This paper’s case study of the relationship between organized labor and the Democratic Party underscores why some vote-based measures can overlook significant features of coalition management. If one were to look merely at roll call votes on labor issues, Democrats, depending on the region, would appear very consistent over the 20th century. Moreover, this type of analysis says nothing of the content of the legislation passed or promoted in committee. Even when labor legislation made the agenda, unions were frustrated to see their policy goals placed at the end of a long legislative calendar. Indeed, little has changed on this front. Despite mobilizing in large numbers for the 2006 and 2008 elections, organized labor’s demands for “Card Check” have gone largely unnoticed.

Roll call and trend analysis, though tractable, cannot get at the more nuanced features of the agenda’s substance and sequence. Nor can these approaches capture the important relational aspects of coalition management, such as the Democratic Party’s decision to host the 2012 convention in North Carolina. As a right-to-work state, this location infuriated labor and signaled yet again the party’s indifference to their interests. To study the dynamics between groups and parties, we must employ methods that can appreciate these shifts in partisan priorities. Additionally, new measures of legislative priority should be considered when
scrutinizing the agenda-setting process. Questions about when the issue leaves committee, and what other bills precede it, are often more revealing of the party’s larger strategic goals than the eventual roll call vote.

Notes

1 In a study of the oppositional bloc, Manley finds that the Conservative Coalition was significantly less effective in the 89th Congress. Compared to the 1940s and 1950s, in the early LBJ years the obstructionists were far less successful when uniting to oppose an issue. See John Manley, “The Conservative Coalition in Congress,” American Behavioral Scientist 17 (1973).

2 In a special report to members of their Congressional Action Committee, the US Chamber of Commerce insisted that, given the Democrats’ recent electoral success, unions were in a relatively strong position to push their interests in the coming term. “Special Report: A legislative analysis in the category of Labor Legislation,” December 10, 1964. Hagley Museum and Library, US Chamber of Commerce, Series 2, Box 4.


6 Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Walter Reuther, 24
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November 1964, Citation 6474, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.

7 Cox and McCubbins, Setting the Agenda.

8 Parties are typically framed as organizations of individual candidates who share the common goal of attaining elected office. Building on Schlesinger’s framework of “office seeking coalitions,” Aldrich continues this line of thought with a rational choice view of parties. According to this logic, party rules and structures are endogenous institutions that change according to the electoral needs of individual members. Cohen et. al. break from this literature by bringing groups into the equation. See John A. Schlesinger, “The New American Political Party.” American Political Science Review (1985) 1152-1169; John A. Aldrich, Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Cohen et. al. The Party Decides.

9 Baumgartner and Jones, Agendas and Instability in American Politics.

10 Based on this figure, attention may not always be a good thing for certain groups. The large spike in union-related hearings during the 85th Congress is driven, for the most part, by an investigation of corruption in labor unions. For more on this difficult time, see Nelson Lichtenstein, State of the Union: A Century of American Labor, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 162-166.

11 Assessing a group’s true preferences, as Broockman notes, is no easy task. That said, identifying the motivations of a given group is essential to understanding whether the party’s agenda truly reflects the group’s interests. Only through careful historical scrutiny can we hope to pin down a group’s genuine interests. See David E. Broockman, “The ‘Problem of Preferences’: Medicare and Business Support for the Welfare State,” Studies in American Political Development Forthcoming.

12 Indeed, the fact that Section 14b had been in the Democratic platform for years was commonly cited, by labor and Democrats, as a reason why passage was due. Frank Rafferty, Telegam from Frank Raftery General President of the Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America, to Lyndon Johnson. February 7, 1966. George Meany Memorial Archives (GMMA). Box 50. Folder 21; Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Walter Reuther, 24 November 1964, Citation 6474, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.
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18 Dark’s history of labor and the Democratic Party covers the 1960s, and even HR 77 to some extent. His account, however, fails to appreciate the important role agenda-setting played in the bill’s defeat. See Taylor Dark, *The Unions and the Democrats: An Enduring Alliance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

19 While unions spent the year promoting other Great Society programs, the NRTWC focused all of its resources on HR 77. Even AFL-CIO representatives readily admitted that the anti-repeal forces waged a better ground game through letter writing and the like. See “Labor, Business Lobbyists Clashed on ‘Right to Work,’” *CQ Weekly*, 15 October 1965, 2088.


24 For more on how economic perceptions affect the positions of labor and business, see David
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26 Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Walter Reuther, 14 January 1965, Citation 6730, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.

27 Though significant to the lives of many low-income Americans, minimum wage was not the top priority of organized labor, particularly for union leaders. These short-term victories did not promise the lasting benefits derived from an environment where unions could organize easier in the South and Midwest. Unlike the short-term gains offered by a wage increase, HR 77’s institutional reform would systematically improve labor’s capacity to organize new unions, thus producing increasing returns in the long run that are much more difficult for opposition forces to undo. For more on the strategic logic to these positive feedback effects, see Paul Pierson, “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics,” *The American Political Science Review* 94 (2000): 251-67.

28 Paul C. Light, *The President’s Agenda: Domestic Policy Choice from Kennedy to Carter (with Notes on Ronald Reagan)* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

29 Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Walter Reuther, 14 January 1965, Citation 6730, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.


32 Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Walter Reuther, 24 November 1964, Citation 6474, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.

33 Wason, “Labor-Management under the Johnson Administration; *CQ Weekly*, “Labor, Business Lobbyists Clashed on ‘Right to Work.’”

34 Contrary to the claim that business was staying out of the fight, the Chamber of Commerce
was already keeping a close watch on the issue. In a letter to its state chapters, the Chamber explained that “Hearings were primed to start in late February. When, without explanation, Mr. Johnson’s anticipated message was not forthcoming, the House General Subcommittee on Labor postponed hearings indefinitely.” “Major Legislation in the 89th Congress,” Hagley Museum and Library, US Chamber of Commerce, Series 2. Box 4.

35 While mostly in agreement, organized labor was not entirely united on HR 77’s relative importance. Walter Reuther, one of organized labor’s most uncompromising leaders, sided with Johnson’s decision to delay action on HR 77. In justifying this position, Reuther reassured LBJ that he was “an American before he was a labor leader.” Reuther’s support of the president’s strategy was opposed by many other labor leaders and rank and file, many of whom perceived the low priority as a betrayal. Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Walter Reuther, 24 November 1964, Citation 6474, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.

36 In a departure from other studies of organized labor during the postwar era, this case study suggests that unions did advocate for industrial relations reform at the national level. Looking back at this period, many scholars criticize organized labor’s priorities as short sighted, narrowly conceived goals. In contrast to its radical past, the postwar labor movement passively accepted fringe bargaining as its only recourse. Unfavorable labor laws and further integration into the Democratic Party fostered a general complacence among unions. Moreover, these political compromises would come to play a significant role in constraining the social democratic impact of the Great Society, what Katznelson has called a ‘lost opportunity.’ By the 1960s, labor was more inclined to settle for a meager wage increase than jeopardize the gains unions had secured from aligning with the Democratic Party. See Lichtenstein, *State of the Union*; Katznelson, “Was the Great Society a Lost Opportunity?”

37 Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Walter Reuther, 14 January 1964, Citation 6474, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.

38 Johnson’s various aides and secretaries kept a “Daily Diary” in which they recorded all meet-
ings and phone conversations, and, depending upon the verbosity of the assistant, a terse rundown of the day’s events with running commentary. Lyndon B. Johnson’s Daily Diary Collection, LBJ Library.

39 To recognize labor for its role in lobbying for the education and health bills, George Meany was even brought along on Air Force One for the Medicare signing in March 1965. Daily Diary 19650730. Lyndon B. Johnson’s Daily Diary Collection, LBJ Library.


41 “Labor Message Promises Storms,” Business Week, 22 May 1965, 170

42 In some regards, this tepid response by Johnson also highlighted that the minimal costs to obstruction, a highly influential factor behind the decision to filibuster a bill. See Greg J. Wawro and Eric Schickler, Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the US Senate (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).


44 See “Chronological account of legislative battle to repeal 14-b.” Memo from Biemiller to Meany. GMMA. Box 100. Folder 17.


48 The Chamber of Commerce spoke against the legislation in both the House and Senate in June 1965. Though offered by different speakers, the two testimonies were nearly identical. Each began by denouncing “compulsory unionism” as a violation of a core, Constitutional principle - freedom to choose. Coming later in the month, the Senate testimony offered an additional section on how repeal would lead to significant violence and labor strife. Included with the testimony was a recent news article documenting a bloody clash between union members and management in Garrett, Indiana. See “Testimony on Compulsory Unionism before the Labor Subcommittee of
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49 Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Willard Wirtz, 24 June 1965, Citation 8193, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.


52 In a letter to George Meany, labor lobbyist Benjamin Chapman explained that “this would be one time the liberals couldn’t get the two thirds vote needed for cloture.” He went on to ask Meany to appeal to Johnson to pressure the Southern Democrats not to filibuster. Benjamin Chapman, Letter to George Meany, 27 August 1965. GMMA. Box 50. Folder 21.

53 By the 1960s, right-to-work interests were mostly promoted by the NRTWC, an association that claimed to represent small businesses and disgruntled union members. After decades of working with labor, large businesses purportedly did not have a pressing interest in Section 14b. Indeed, according to a survey of labor organizations and anti-repeal forces, big business was believed to have mostly stayed out of the legislative fight during the 89th Congress. See CQ Weekly “Labor, Business Lobbyists Clashed on ‘Right to Work.’”


56 In 1965, the business groups produced numerous publications on the topic of 14b. While some pamphlets explicitly took a stand, like NAM’s “Freedom to Choose: The Case for Retention of Section 14(b) of the Labor-Management Relations Act,” others framed their content using an educational tone, such as the Chamber of Commerce’s “The Issue: Choice or Compulsion.” To reach even larger audiences, the NRTWC produced a 14-minute film entitled, “The People and 14(b).” See Hagley Museum and Library, NAM, Series 7. Box 139; US Chamber of Commerce,
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Series 2. Box 25.


59 This view was explicitly made by the Chamber of Commerce’s Labor Relations Department in the run-up to the committee hearings. Conceding that the bill should sail through committee, the report writes, “The main battle, therefore, will be fought on the floor of the House where present nose counts indicate a close vote.” “Repeal of State Right-to-Work Laws.” 15 May 1965. Hagley Museum and Library, US Chamber of Commerce. Series 2. Box 4.


61 Hulsey *Everett Dirksen and His Presidents*, 216.

62 This numerical reality was evident as early as August. In a letter dated August 27, 1965, AFL-CIO official Benjamin Chapman informed President George Meany that a filibuster coalition was forming in opposition to the bill, and that “this would be one time the liberals couldn’t get the two thirds vote needed for cloture.” GMMA, Box 50, Folder 21.

63 In cases where reaching a supermajority is not feasible, filibusters can be overcome provided that the bill’s supporters have the time and the resolve. If early enough in the year, the governing party can wait out the filibuster, thus shifting the costs associated with these “wars of attrition” to the obstructionists. Wawro and Schickler, *Filibuster*, 259.


65Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Walter Reuther, 24 November 1964, Citation 6474, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.

66 Johnson was now under public assault by union leaders still angry over his weak support for HR 77 in the previous term. As one union leader sternly demanded, “The Democratic Party is without question obligated to render assistance in this matter in order to redeem platform and campaign pledges. Your swift action in this matter is badly needed and deserved.” Frank Rafferty,
Telegam to DNC Chair John Bailey. 7 February 1966. GMMA. Box 50. Folder 21.

67 To forestall a Senate recess, Mansfield used adjournments and other tactics to prevent any other legislation from becoming the pending business of the Senate. See “Right to Work,” CQ Weekly, 4 February 1966, 334.

68 Katznelson, “Was the Great Society a Lost Opportunity?”

69 David Vogel, Fluctuating Fortunes, 10.


71 To be fair, Congress passed a modest minimum wage increase and created temporary, industry specific dispute boards. Without diminishing these successes, a minimum wage increase offers few tangible rewards to higher paid union workers. Unlike industrial relations reform, these short-term increases often tend to “drift” into irrelevance once their benefits are washed out by inflation. For more on drift, see Jacob S. Hacker. “Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States,” American Political Science Review 98 (2004): 243-60.

72 In a conversation with Labor Secretary Willard Wirtz, Johnson was both confused and angry that labor viewed his support as insincere all along. Recording of Telephone Conversation between Lyndon B. Johnson and Willard Wirtz, 22 February 1966, Citation 9658, Recordings and Transcripts of Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Library.

73 Cohen et. al., The Party Decides.

74 Karol, Party Position Change in American Politics.
Figure 1: This figure tracks the number of days four salient issues were discussed in committee between the 79th and 99th congresses. All but one of the issues, “Employee Relations and Labor Unions,” saw a major piece of legislation passed during the 89th Congress. Source: Policy Agendas Project, http://www.policyagendas.org.
Figure 2: By 1965, the nineteen states in black had already adopted right-to-work statutes. Not all efforts had been successful, however, as the seven states in light gray had all voted down RTW provisions before the 89th Congress. The three states in dark gray, Louisiana, Idaho, and Oklahoma, have since adopted right-to-work provisions.
Public Sentiment Towards Organized Labor

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<th></th>
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<td>75%</td>
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<td>Jan. 1963</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1965</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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Table 1: Question: “In general, do you approve or disapprove of labor unions?” Source: Gallup Poll (AIPO), Retrieved 16 February 2011 from the iPOLL Databank, The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.
Labor’s Legislative Agenda during the 89th Congress

Figure 3: In June of 1965, CQ Weekly’s “Congressional Box Score” summed up the 89th Congress’s progress to date. Labor’s legislative issues remained notably incomplete compared to a wide array of other issues. *CQ Weekly*, 18 June 1965.
Figure 4: Using Poole and Rosenthal’s “Common Space” NOMINATE scores, I plotted senators from the 89th Congress along the two ideological dimensions. Instead of using the individual chamber DW-NOMINATE scores, the common space places all legislators on the same scale, thus allowing for comparisons across the House and Senate. By laying the House vote atop the senators’ scores, we have a rough picture of how the Senate may have divided on the House bill. The x-axis plots the 1st dimension, the y-axis uses the 2nd dimension. The dashed cutting line shows the 1st dimension ideological midpoint for the HR 77 vote that passed in the House on July 28, 1965. Observations to the left of the line would conceivably vote aye, while those to right would vote nay. For more on these data see http://voteview.com/dwnomjoint.asp