

FORCES OF CHANGE: EXAMINING INFLUENCERS OF CONGRESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly polarized political climate, understanding the sources that influence the behavior of institutional actors is essential to understanding the outcomes and dynamics that emerge from our institutions as a whole. While much has changed over the years, the core motives shared by members of Congress largely remain the same - though changes in the political environment force members to adapt their behavior to best satisfy those objectives. The secular belief shared by many social scientists and the public at large is that members are chiefly motivated by reelection, and they are willing to do anything to secure it. The increased rate of voluntary departures from the institution testify to the potency of other objectives that factor into the member career calculus. Examining the patterns of voluntary congressional retirement from 1973 to 2023, I find evidence that members consider their effectiveness and influence as legislators when determining if it is worth seeking reelection. Beyond intrinsic features that influence member behavior, external factors such as the President of the United States are also able to impact both behavior and the political fates of legislators. Presidents have long used their "bully pulpit" to engage with and ultimately influence Congress. President Trump's use of Twitter, and its amplified media coverage, maximized his pulpit. I study how he used the platform over the length of his tenure in office as a political tool towards members of Congress - exploring who he talked about, how and when he did so, and finally, some of the consequences faced by his copartisans as a result. While the medium, scale, and tone departed from his predecessors in the Oval Office, Trump's tactics still bear semblance to traditional executive-legislative relations.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Conventional wisdom among social scientists, political pundits, and the public at large has long held that one of the greatest motivations for members of Congress is the continual quest for reelection, yet the willingness for many members to abandon their political office speaks to elusive ambitions within the institution which make their career increasingly unattractive. In particular, Chapter 2 advances a theory that members who are marginalized, as characterized by relative ineffectiveness in pursuing their policy agenda, are more likely to retire. This theory is empirically tested and supported using data on senators and representatives in the 93rd through 117th Congresses, and finds that ineffective legislators are more likely to voluntarily depart from the institution. In a world where incumbents enjoy low rates of electoral defeat, willful retirement becomes instrumental to member turnover and the composition of Congress in general, and better understanding of the motivations that lead members to leave has major consequences for the types of members we would expect to remain in Congress.

Looking beyond internalized factors that influence the behavior of members of Congress, outside forces, particularly other political actors, can also prove influential. Chapters 3 and 4 more closely examine the role of the chief executive and how their actions towards Congress and its members can influence behaviors more broadly, especially among their copartisans.

The highly public nature of Trump's presidency, particularly through his prolific use of Twitter gave the American people a near-constant and unprecedented look at the not-so-inner thoughts of the president. While the medium President Trump used to vent his frustrations with members diverged from his predecessors due to the increased prevalence of social media and his own proclivities, the underlying nature of his actions are politically patterned and far from unique. Since the Trump-years, active efforts have been undertaken to emulate him within the Republican party, and his style may provide a road map for his successors. This paper investigates which members of Congress Trump used social media to target, how he talked about these members, and how this compares with historical trends in

presidential-congressional relations. The long-term use of this medium is uniquely suited to exploring inter-branch dynamics.

Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election produced a reckoning in the American political landscape, particularly within his own political party. The ascension of President Trump sparked debate regarding partisan realignment, and the extent to which he was a product of and/or contributor to the shifts occurring within the Republican party. This paper explores the active role Trump played, while president, to reshape the congressional delegation of the Republican party in his own image. Grievances between the president and members of Congress, however, are far from new. Presidents have historically made overtures to discipline members to come in line with their political perspective and have also made attempts to oust members disadvantageous to their political vision, all to various degrees of success. Trump's use of social media and his abrasive personality may have been a departure from previous Oval Office occupants, but his overarching objectives were far from new. Using data from Trump's Twitter account while he was in office, I find evidence that Trump was fairly successful in driving Republicans he did not like, out of office.

CHAPTER 2:

QUITTING CONGRESS: WHEN REELECTION LOSES ITS LUSTER

Why do members of Congress willingly choose to leave the institution on their own accord? The prevailing understanding of congresspersons is that they are first and foremost interested in job security through their perpetual reelection. Indeed, being asked about voluntarily ended their congressional career has been known to leave some members speechless. Mayhew (1974a) has gone as far to say that some members "have no other interest" (16) than achieving reelection, and Fenno (1978) identifies it as one of their three most important goals, along with implementing good policy and achieving power and influence within the institution. Over the past several years, many high-profile members have left one of the two legislative bodies at ages most would consider to be premature for retirement, a strong indication that there is some credence to the notion that at least some members critically assess the utility they derive from their seats and determine if the time and effort exerted to maintaining that seat is worth it. Arguably, the primary appeal of reelection is that it is the most proximate goals and, by institutional design, is necessary in order to pursue the others outlined by Fenno (1978) - but failure to achieve those objectives may undermine the desire to continue seeking reelection. The implications for why members opt to leave are of paramount importance to the makeup and composition of Congress as a whole.

The modern Congress is dominated by incumbency, with members serving longer in part due to institutional advantages that make reelection easier to secure (Carson, Engstrom and Roberts, 2007; Cox and Katz, 1995; Eckles et al., 2014; Erikson, 1971; King, 1991; Mayhew, 1974b). The incumbency advantage is realized through a variety of factors including the increased benefits such as "pork" they bring to the district, general familiarity with their member and his/her name, and the lack of collective responsibility which makes it difficult for constituents to blame their member of Congress for poor economic performance or other systemic struggles in the same capacity as they do for their executives (Ansolabehere and Snyder Jr, 2002). These contribute to the classic paradox that

citizens hate Congress but love their individual member (Fenno, 1978). Not only has reelection become a more easily achievable objective, members have also opted to maintain careers within the legislature which has played a key role in the institutionalization of both chambers (Polsby, 1968; Price, 1971; White, 2000). While it may be true that the majority of members maintain this fixation on staying in office, and likely maintain this attitude throughout most of their congressional careers, the fact remains that many members willingly decide to retire from seats they would have otherwise kept.

Bringing the consideration of the other accepted member objectives of influence and policy, sheds light on additional incentives to leave. Congress itself has been historically unproductive in recent sessions (Statistics and Historical Comparison, 2020), but there is considerable variation amongst members in their contributions to the bills that do still make it through the process. Even fake-out retirees such as Marco Rubio (R-FL) who initially planned to retire from the Senate regardless of the outcome of his 2016 Presidential bid, cited his general dissatisfaction with the lurching speed of the legislative process as the reason for his planned departure, but he ultimately made the decision to seek re-election, two months before the Senate primary (Press, 2016). This lack of power, or the prediction of a future diminished power, should make holding a Congressional seat less attractive if a member has interest in more than retaining a job and title. A key measure used to test this paper's theoretical expectations of marginalized members being more likely to retire are Legislative Effectiveness Scores (LES) which are an aggregate variable consisting of a variety of factors that attribute to a members relative power in advancing legislation within their institution (Volden and Wiseman, 2009, 2014). LES provides an industry standard for legislator productivity and has even been used by members of Congress such as Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) in the 2020 South Carolina Democratic Presidential Primary debate to tout her success in the chamber (South Carolina Democratic Debate Transcript: February 25 Democratic Debate, 2020).

I find evidence that members in both chambers of the United States Congress are motivated to leave by their lack of personal productivity but there are some nuances that suggest some contrast between the House and Senate on this front. Members in both chambers are influenced by their institutional seniority, further supporting existing theories. These findings are highly consequential for our understanding of congressional

exits and member behavior as a whole. That less effective law makers are more prone to voluntary departures further reinforces that members of Congress have concerns and goals beyond simple reelection and that retirement's important role in congressional turnover is more prevalent among the institution's least productive members.

2.1 Congressional Retirement

Why do members of Congress choose to retire? Some congressional retirements are, naturally, explained by age and health related reasons. The biological drivers of retirements are perhaps the most individualistic and difficult to predict as there is no standard cutoff age or standardized repository of member medical records. For the eldest members, outside observers speculate each term whether or not that member will retire which, sometimes cynically, turns into speculation of whether that member will die in office when they choose to pursue another term. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) was a lightning rod for this type of speculation for years before her death in the middle of the 118th Congress, with the 90-year-old's failing health and mental state such that she was even unaware of her staff issuing a statement that she would not seek reelection in 2024 (Gans and Weaver, 2023).

Other health factors are often kept private. While the deteriorating health conditions of some members become public knowledge well before a member leaves (through retirement or death) such as John McCain's (R-AR) brain cancer diagnosis in 2017, many others either choose to keep these matters private until they announce that it has motivated their decision to retire from Congress or die from their ailment. The private nature of member health records and the more obvious implication poor health has on career decisions has largely minimized scholarly examination (Maltzman, Sigelman and Binder, 1996), which has generally accepted that it plays some role though not one that is as easily predicted.

Another important category is political retirements such as those motivated by electoral vulnerabilities and scandals. Although the vast majority of members seeking reelection handily win their races, there are still members every cycle who are defeated and there are members with enough foresight to predict their likely loss and will ultimately choose to voluntarily call it quits rather than waste the time and financial resources needed to run a campaign (Ahuja et al., 1994; Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson, 1996; Brace, 1985;

Wolak, 2007). Similarly, members who are entrapped in scandal, particularly if that scandal has legal ramifications, are also likely to quit due to the vulnerable and embarrassing position it places them in (Shea, 1999). These strategic forms of retirement have been discussed in the literature but this project seeks to address an additional question that is not readily explained by electorally vulnerable members leaving - why do members who would most likely win their reelection efforts, and are in good health, willingly choose to leave Congress? This paper seeks to answer this question and contribute to the existing literature with a new focus on theoretically driven factors that influence retirement decisions, some of which have been under-examined. I forward a new theory that argues that marginalized members, as characterized by their relative ineffectiveness in the legislative process, are more likely to retire.

The current literature on Congressional retirement has been narrowly focused in several capacities. It has been fairly typical for studies addressing other aspects of Congress more broadly to passively acknowledge that members retire strategically when they face reelection challenges (Jacobson and Kernell, 1983). This approach to Congressional retirement sets the stage for more deliberate focus on retiring members while acknowledging that their simple existence does not dispel Mayhew (1974a)'s work. In fact, retirement can very much be seen from the perspective of an electoral decision where members either elect to forfeit their reelection opportunity when they fear their electoral prospects or improve their political station by running for a higher office.

A common approach to studying retired members has involved looking at large "waves" within single Congresses where particular mechanisms motivated a higher than average number of exits (Ahuja et al., 1994; Bianco, Spence and Wilkerson, 1996; Carson and Engstrom, 2005; Clarke et al., 1999; Groseclose and Krehbiel, 1994). For example, Carson and Engstrom (2005) provide a pre-modern example of constituents punishing legislators for their actions, and some legislators leaving before they were electorally ousted, during the 1826 Congressional elections as retribution for Congressmen who supported John Quincy Adams in the previous presidential election in districts that voted for Andrew Jackson. A more contemporary example of strategic retirement that received a considerable focus of scholarly analysis are the congressional elections of 1992 (Ahuja et al., 1994; Clarke et al., 1999; Shea, 1999). Ahuja et al. (1994) outline contextual factors that

contributed to retirement rates including a strong anti-incumbent mood caused by check-kiting scandals and the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill Supreme Court hearings, 1992 marking the final opportunity for members to cash out their campaign funds into their personal assets, and the presence of newly drawn congressional districts. Further analysis of the following cycle by Clarke et al. (1999) suggests that members' prospective income, as diminished by the campaign finance reform, was the most important factor in that cycle as it was an equal incentive for members of both parties to retire, unlike the scandals.

Other studies also address members quitting rather than facing tough reelection bids, beyond the 1992 cycle. Stone et al. (2010) examine evidence from the 1998 cycle and conclude that even seemingly secure incumbents are still fearful about the prospects of electoral defeat and consider retirement accordingly. A recent analysis of the 2018 midterms reinforces previous findings that contextual factors can shape members of particular parties to more strongly consider their electoral vulnerability and make career decisions based on their perceived likelihood of defeat (Brant and Overby, 2021). More broadly, Brace (1985) and Kiewiet and Zeng (1993) offer frameworks that suggest members engage in risk-taking analyses and seek to avoid electoral defeat, especially in the wake of redistricting and that the existence, or lack thereof, of political opportunities to run for higher office shapes whether members choose to retire. These opportunities are most frequently characterized by members of the House making the decision to run for a vacant or vulnerable Senate seat but could also refer to members who ran for state-level offices rather than seeking reelection.

Scandals are another angle retirements have been viewed from that are connected to the previous studies on strategic retirement due to the electoral costs and ramifications associated with scandals. Examining the aforementioned checking scandal from 1992, Shea (1999) finds that the media coverage or lack thereof, in a members district shaped the electoral ramifications of the scandal for those members, and in turn their decision to run again, with a positive relationship between media coverage and retirement. Paschall, Sulkin and Bernhard (2019) observed 253 cases of personal or professional scandals among members of congress from 1989-2012. They find that scandals have strong negative effects on members' careers, harming their electoral prospects, reducing their legislative effectiveness, and harming their influence within the institution potentially

costing them committee chairmanships and other roles, important attributes of congressional service. Naturally those detrimental outcomes contribute to strategic decisions to not seek reelection or even to outright resign before the expiration of the member's term. The effects of scandals can potentially linger well beyond the subsequent term after the scandal began, potentially affecting future bids. Taylor and Cobb (2019) finds that individual-level characteristics increase the likelihood for a member to become embroiled in scandal such as those in positions of power and elected from districts that have traditionally been forgiving of scandals. They also find that marginalized racial minority members are more likely to be involved in scandal and subsequently be sanctioned by the chamber. Hamel and Miller (2019) examines congressional scandals from 1980 to 2010 and finds that their electoral impact has been mediated by the increased support those members receive from donors and voters becoming less punitive in the post-1994 period of nationalized electoral politics. The decreased costs of scandals suggested by these findings may mean that these events have grown to provide less incentive for members to willingly leave when their unethical actions have been exposed in recent years.

A more niche perspective in the literature is the idea that members leave Congress because they have lost "enjoyment" of the institution and that the desirability of the job has lessened over time (Frantzich, 1978). Hibbing (1982) finds that a considerable spikes in Congressional retirement in the 1970s coincided with significant institutional reforms that reduced power among senior members, more elderly members reaching retirement age, and growing time-demands associated with the job. Lost enjoyment may disproportionately affect some members more than others, as Moore and Hibbing (1998) argues that situational dissatisfaction with Congress is strongly tied to a member holding an electorally marginal seat or being denied positions such as committee chairmanships. Displeasure with one's current position in Congress is also closely tied to ambitions to run for higher office (Livingston and Friedman, 1993; Theriault, 1998). These findings tie into member's ambitions to have influence in the institution and demonstrate a need for greater utility out of a congressional seat to merit retaining it. A gender component may also influence this frustration in the House, as Lawless and Theriault (2005) finds that women have greater rates of voluntary retirement as they are more susceptible to these factors that make Congress less enjoyable.

A noticeable trend in the House of Representatives is the relatively higher rates of retirement among Republicans compared to their Democratic counterparts. Various explanations for this phenomenon have been discussed (Ang and Overby, 2008; Gilmour and Rothstein, 1993; Murakami, 2009). Ang and Overby (2008) attribute Republican retirement decisions to their status as the "permanent minority" in the forty-two years between 1953 and 1995. Republicans in more recent years are also faced with an additional institutional consideration as their chairs and ranking members have term limits,¹ at the end of which they return the rank and file and lose much of their policy influence (Deering and Wahlbeck, 2006). Reynolds (2017) suggests these term limits played a role in the retirement rates among House members in the Republican caucus.

Most of the literature has focused on the House of Representatives with only very few studies giving attention to the Senate. Examinations of retirement behaviors in both chambers finds commonality in the importance of age and electoral vulnerabilities (Livingston and Friedman, 1993). There is some variation in the degree to which these are important for members in each chamber, with representatives more concerned about electoral security and senators with their age (Bernstein and Wolak, 2002). Masthay and Overby (2017) test many of the existing theories on retirement in the House in the context of the Senate. They find that the institutional features of the Senate, including electoral insulation and less dominant party control, change retirement dynamics. Notably, Republicans were far more likely to retire from the House during the era of Democratic dominance of the chamber, but that relationship is nonexistent in the Senate, while age, being up for reelection, and being appointed to the Senate increase retirement. The body of Senate retirement research has thus far been limited in quantity and scope, largely focusing on contrasts between the House and Senate while not necessarily forwarding new explanations for retirement decisions for members in the upper chamber.

Legislative Effectiveness Scores which form a key component of this paper's analysis of retirement have been used in various capacities in existing political science work. Volden and Wiseman (2009)'s examination of their measure has found that it is closely correlated

¹ Members of the Republican caucus are limited to serving a combined six years, or three terms combined as the ranking member and/or chair of a single committee.

with a member's seniority, position within the chamber (e.g. leadership, committee chair, etc.), and in the House, majority/minority partisan status. The LES measure has proven to be a significant and useful factor in addressing questions about members' legislative activities, such as the difference that may exist between men and women in Congress (Jeydel and Taylor, 2003; Stanley and Blair, 1989; Volden, Wiseman and Wittmer, 2010, 2013). Volden and Wiseman (2018)'s examination of legislative effectiveness within the Senate finds that, compared to the House, senators have less disparity between their scores due to the Senate being a more egalitarian body with more individualistic law-making potential for its members. Additionally, Volden and Wiseman (2018) note that members well known for obstructing the legislative process, score fairly poorly on this metric. While constituents are generally unaware of how effective their members are, they are more approving of members who have an effective track record when presented with their record (Butler et al., 2023).

2.2 Theory and Expectations

The existing congressional retirement literature has made avoiding presumptive electoral defeat a strong theme and has also dabbled in idiosyncratic and personal factors that influence a members decision to leave. This paper seeks to contribute to this literature with a new focus on theoretically driven and predictable institutional factors that attribute retirement decisions to congressional dynamics, some of which have been under-examined.

At the core of this theory are marginalized members which are defined as members who are ineffective at accomplishing their policy goals. This theory assumes that members engage in a cost-benefit analysis when they considering running again for Congress. Mayhew (1974a)'s framing of reelection as an instrumental goal should mean that members with decreased predicted policy benefits upon reelection, should place a lower value on the pursuit of that goal. The opportunity costs of maintaining a congressional career are too great for simple job security to be the primary objective – members of Congress are relatively underpaid compared to jobs that require similar levels of expertise (Hibbing, 1982).

Empirically this theory is examined here primarily through the policy angle - looking at the passage or lack thereof of members bills - but it also extends into the hierarchical

realm of influence within the institution. It is hard to pierce the veil of members being denied a committee chairmanship or other prestigious positions when the modern rules ultimately leave these choices to the party with no guarantees that seniority or other easily deduced traits would secure those roles (U.S. Senate: About the Committee System | Committee Assignments 2023, 2023). However, we do have some insight into when members could be expected to lose these positions, on account of the House Republican Caucus rules placing term limits on their ranking-members/chairs (Reynolds, 2017). There are numerous examples of committee leaders in the Republican party leaving before the term they would be expected to limited out of their position such as Dave Camp (R-MI) (O’Keefe and Kane, 2014) and Mike Rogers (R-MI) (Bresnahan and Sherman, 2014) in 2014 who were the chairs of Ways and Means and Intelligence respectively, and Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), Jeb Hensarling (R-TX), and Lamar Smith (R-TX) in 2017 who were the chairs for Judiciary, Financial Services, and Science Committees (Reynolds, 2017). Members in this position are at the zenith of their influence over the policy-making process, but the recognition that this power will soon expire and they will rejoin the rank-and-file in relative ineffectiveness makes remaining in Congress far less attractive.

The willful departure of the majority of recent Republican House leaders is also reflective of members taking future prospects of diminished power, as opposed to their current state, in considering the choice to leave. The Speaker of the House has long been understood as the most influential member of Congress and one of the most powerful individuals in the U.S. Government as a whole (Follett, 1896; Green, 2010; Taylor, 1908). Nonetheless, the Speaker’s role as a focal point of Congress makes it a vulnerable position with many speakers opting to leave when their party or they are otherwise likely to lose their position (Opsahl, 2018). Since the Speakership of John Boehner (R-OH), who served in that capacity from the start of the 112th Congress through October 2015, Re- publican Speakers have struggled to hold on to for considerable tenure due in large part to internal fractions within their party that threatened to forcefully end their speakership. John Boehner and Paul Ryan (R-WI) resigned and retired before dissident elements within their party could oust them or before their party lost an upcoming election, while most recently Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), who lacked the foresight of his predecessors, has re- signed following the successful vote to remove him from his position (Blood and Freking, 2023). All

of these examples are consistent with our main theory, as the fear of becoming politically marginalized within the institution, or the realization that they have become so in the case of McCarthy, serves a clear motivation to leave office.

The revolving door phenomenon, wherein members easily find work as lobbyists following their departure, willing or otherwise, from the institution provides members a financially lucrative alternative to congressional service that undoubtedly plays a role in decisions to stay or leave. For those choosing to remain in Congress, they must rationalize that the utility of their seat outweighs the financial perks outside the institution which would include their influence over policy and perhaps long-term political leverage to seek a political "promotion" in the future. Members are acutely aware of these prospects irrespective of where they fall into the "stay" or "leave" category at the end of a term. During John McCain's (R-AZ) funeral eulogy, Joe Lieberman (I-CT) recalled a conversation between the two after Lieberman had announce his retirement where McCain purportedly told him "I've been thinking if you go out into the private sector, you're going to make some more money" and that he should use his new salary to buy them a home in Jerusalem (Hubbard, 2018).

I examine evidence for the following hypotheses to determine their respective relationships with voluntary Congressional retirement.

Hypothesis 1: Legislative Ineffectiveness. Members of the House and Senate who are ineffective legislators are more likely to voluntarily leave Congress.

Fenno (1978) describes one of the major goals for members of Congress in both chambers as creating good public policy, with reelection being the most proximate goal to help achieve those ends. If this indeed is the ambition of most members, then a member's level of success, or lack thereof, in getting bills through the legislative process should be part of their calculus when contemplating the future of their congressional career. Although there are important hierarchical differences between the House and Senate I anticipate that members of both chambers will be influenced to retire based on their success or lack thereof in the legislative arena.

It is no secret Congress as a whole has been lamented in recent years, by both elites and the public at large, for its perceived inability to accomplish much in the legislative arena. Since the 107th Congress (2001-2003), the number of enacted laws has been

considerably lower than in pre-2001 sessions (Statistics and Historical Comparison, 2020). Members are acutely aware of the reputation their institution has earned but they undoubtedly have some optimism that at least some of the items on their policy agenda are accomplished, or at the very least minimize losses to the opposing party. Incoming members likely possess some degree of patience when it comes to their legislative objectives as freshmen – especially in the Senate – were expected to be fairly passive players according to the norms of the institution (Matthews, 1959). Although the draconian norms that constrained freshmen in the past have eased, lower effectiveness is still observed among the junior ranks of each chamber on account of their lack of expertise and networks within the institution (Volden and Wiseman, 2009, 2018). While I expect that less effective congress persons are more likely to retire, it is generally expected that these retirements will not emerge among first term office holders, with perhaps occasional exceptions who may have held naive expectations of the institution. Because of the lack of predicted overlap between these two groups of members with low effectiveness, the predicted negative relationship between effectiveness and retirement is likely driven at least in part by the most effective members choosing to remain in office.

Hypothesis 2: Senate Electoral Structure. Senators are more likely to retire when they are up for reelection.

This prediction is rooted in a few assumptions. First, the decision of whether to retire should weigh more heavily on senators as they approach the end of their term as winning reelection adds another six years to a member's career. This may encourage members who are older or simply wish to explore other options outside of Congress to choose to leave earlier than they may otherwise have in the House, where reelection would only occupy the next two years, a much briefer period to be stuck with a position that may be losing its appeal. While the option to resign in the middle of one's term is a possibility, doing so outside of extraordinary circumstances (serious health issues and scandal for example) is going to be generally discouraged by the impact losing a member has for that member's party, and by extension that members long-term policy objectives. This should be especially true when there is the possibility that the now vacant seat may fall into the hands of the opposing party via gubernatorial appointment. An early resignation may also adversely impact their state, reducing its representation in the Senate which could have consequences

for federal funding directed towards the state.

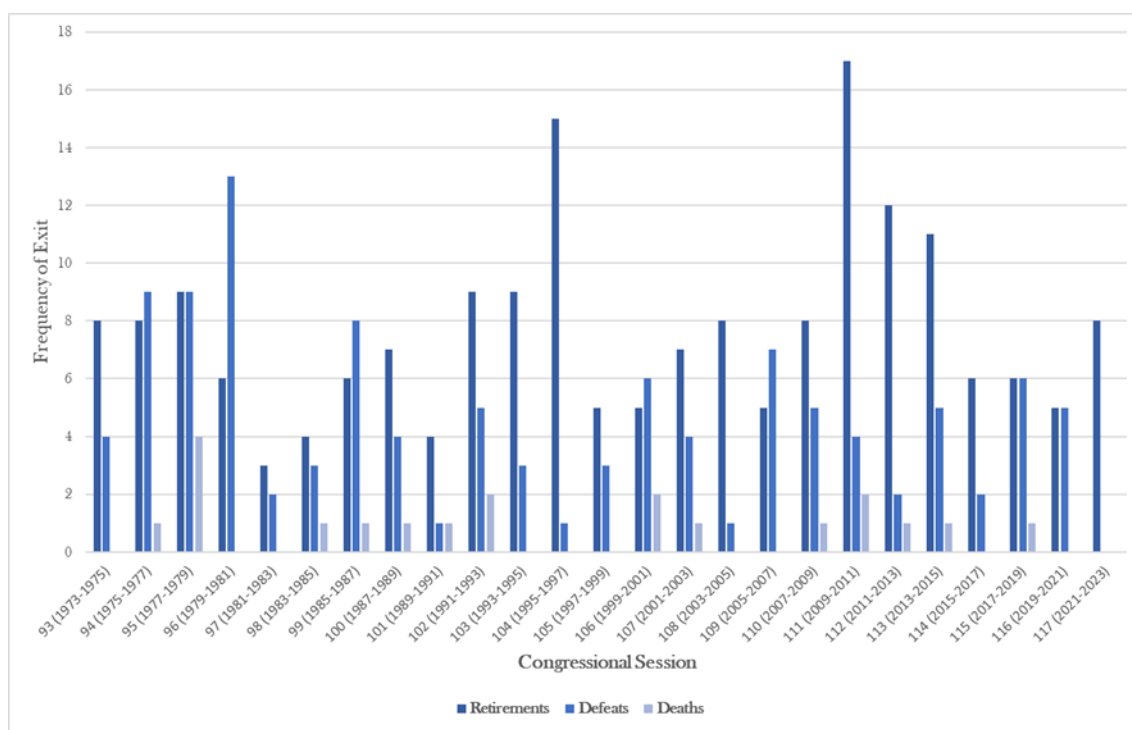
2.3 Operationalization and Investigation

Before delving into the various variables at play in motivating congressional retirement, it is important to identify what qualifies as a retirement. I classify a retirement as any form of voluntary exit, including a member's decision not to run for reelection or their resignation before the end of their term. This classification strategy is in line with existing literature (Masthay and Overby, 2017). I additionally consider a separate classification of retirement in the statistical analysis that factors whether political ambition played a role in that members retirement via the pursuit of a different political office. This is done to evaluate whether there are any meaningful differences when that subset is excluded as politically ambitious members, depending on the office they are pursuing, may be less jaded by the political process than someone who completely calling it quits. There is considerable variety in members who choose to resign from office before the end of their term. Such members may choose to resign because they are in the midst of scandal which is embarrassing and potentially threatening to their reelection efforts, because they are experiencing declining health, or because they have been appointed to a new position. Former President Barack Obama (D-IL) and former Vice-President Al Gore (D-TN), who vacated their Senate seats when they were elected to their higher offices, are also classified as retirements for the sake of consistency. Previous congressional rules granted greater seniority status to their successors if they entered office slightly earlier than the rest of their freshmen cohort by being appoint to fill the seat of their resigning predecessor, providing another potential incentive to resign, such as Wallace Bennett (R-UT), Alan Bible (D-NV), and Phil Gramm (R-TX), though the latter was seemingly unaware that the rule had been changed prior to his early exit. Even electoral losers concerned with their constituents' interests have resigned to give their former opponent a head start in office, though these individuals are not treated as retirees in this data.

Figure 2.1 presents the total number of all exits, by Congress, from the U.S. Senate over the observed period of 1973 through 2023, divided between retirements, defeats, and deaths. While the number of total departures per Congress varies drastically over this time, there is generally a clear pattern of voluntary retirements outnumbering exit via electoral

defeat and death, particularly from the 98th Congress (1983-1985) on. The most recently observed 117th Congress witnessed turnover exclusively through retirements. Despite the concerns some may have about members seeking to hold onto their seats seemingly forever, very few members die in Congress.² 191 Senate departures out of the 323 total (approximately 59%) are attributed to some type of retirement rather than being electorally forced out of the chamber. The only Congresses where more members were voted out than retired are the 95th (1977-1979), 96th (1979-1981), 106th (1999-2001), and 109th (2005-2007) Congresses. There are no factors that would suggest an obvious pattern in these elections that stand out (96th and 106th Congresses are cycles in which new presidents were elected into office while the others are midterms), without delving into the particulars of those election cycles.

Figure 2.1: Senate Departures 93rd-117th Congresses



Curiously, the heavily examined 102nd (1991-1993) Congress features a relatively un- remarkable number of retirements in the Senate (8) – suggestive of the fact that, at the macro level, the Senate has retirement patterns differ from those of the House. This is

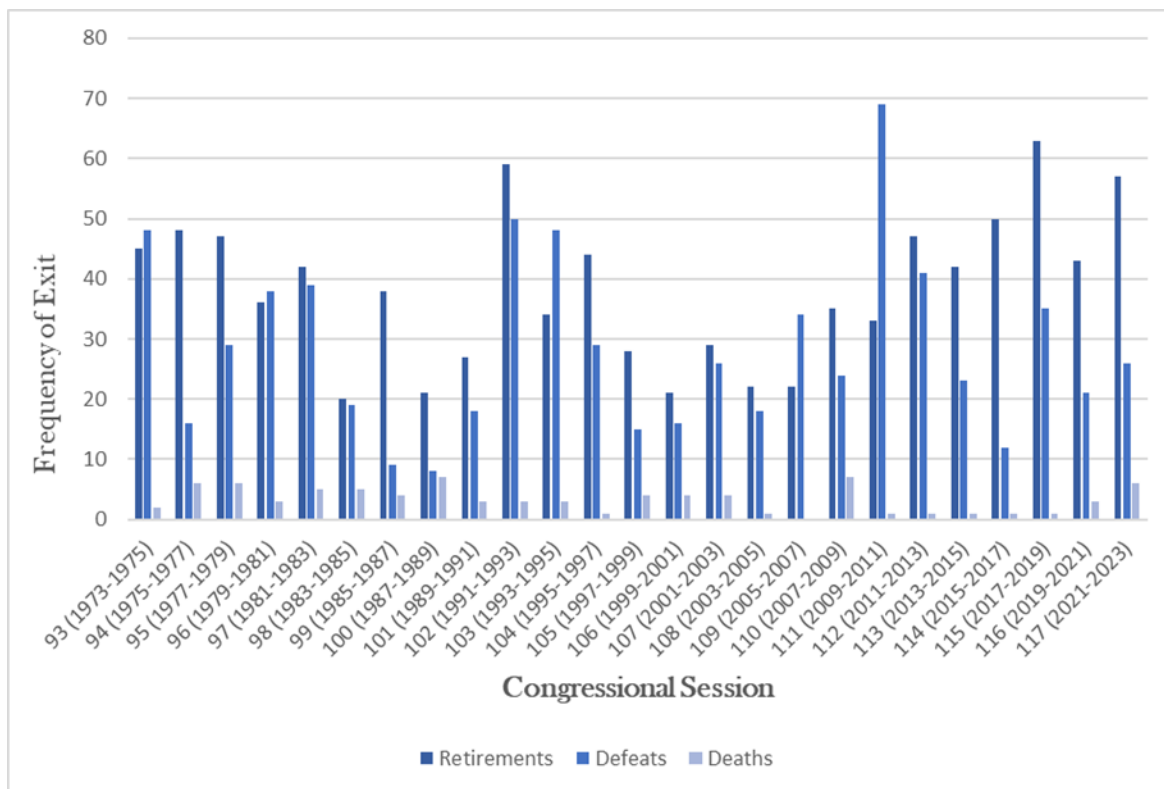
² Members who die in office are considered separate from retirements and are not counted as such in the empirical models

consistent with general expectations of the Senate as it was designed to be the more stable chamber with more electoral isolation. When considering the factors that Ahuja et al. (1994); Clarke et al. (1999); Shea (1999) suggested were responsible for the upswing in House retirements in this year, it is likely that most Senators would not have benefited from the ability to liquidate their war chest as they were not running a campaign and similarly would avoid the electoral consequences of being involved with the checking scandal. Some of the peaks in Senate retirement, such as the one in the 111th (2009-2011) Congress are in part motivated by presidential cabinet picks leaving the Senate for their new offices (i.e. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) resigning to assume the position of Secretary of State) and governor appointees to fulfill the vacancies left by the new presidential administration that ultimately opted to not seek reelection when their term expired (i.e. Roland Burris (D-IL) who was appointed to fulfill the rest of Barack Obama's term after he was elected president).

Looking at the House from 1973-2023 in Figure 2.2, a slightly different pattern emerges. Predictably, there are far more exits from the House in general compared to the Senate, which is to be expected from a body with over four times the membership and where the entire body faces reelection each cycle as opposed to only a third. In contrast from the Senate, there is usually not as severe of a disparity between voluntary and involuntary exits. While retirements generally outnumber electoral defeats and member deaths, there are noteworthy exceptions in the 93rd, 96th, 103rd, 109th, and 111th congresses. Most of these sessions saw the results of notable wave elections including the 1974, 1994, 2008, and 2010 election cycles, where there were considerable swings in the partisan make up of the chamber. The 102nd Congress continues to remain noteworthy with its record number (59) of retirements, consistent with the level of interest it has received from House dedicated studies of voluntary exit. The asymmetry between the House and Senate in the prevalence of retirements and defeats (retirements make up approximately 55% of departures in the House) reflects the different electoral circumstances that exist in the two legislative bodies, with "wave" elections having greater potential to impact membership of the former. A potential source of contribution for why the House sees proportionally more defeats is a potential consequence of House seats receiving less quality challengers (Nice, 1984), and by extension, leaving many representatives with an inflated sense of security that may encourage them to run for office

even when the political tides do not favor them or their party.

Figure 2.2: House Departures 93rd-117th Congresses



To study the determinants of congressional retirement I expand upon Volden and Wiseman (2014)’s House and Senate Effectiveness data set providing additional variables of interest pertaining to retirement. This data set ranges from the 93rd to 117th Congresses (1973-2023) and includes all members that served in both chamber of Congress during the observed period along with several descriptive statistics of the members including their race, vote share in the prior election, gender, and their seniority. Most importantly, this dataset includes legislative effectiveness scores (LES) for all members who served in both chambers over this period of time. The LES measure captures the positive legislative activities of members of Congress, particularly their bill sponsorships. The Senate portion also adds variables for whether the member is up for reelection and, importantly for this research, if they retired at the end of the Congress. The retirement variable has been reviewed with corrections made to accurately reflect retired membership along with creating additional classifiers for members who chose to resign before their term came to an end, those who died in office, and those who lost reelection bids. Information on member

exit for the House has also been collected for this paper for the 93rd through 117th Congresses. Retirement and its derived subsets are dichotomous variables.

Elaborating on the key LES measure further, it is important to consider how it is constructed and what this means for legislator scores over time. Per Volden and Wiseman (2014), scores are normalized across legislators within each two-year congressional session to have an average of "1." As this average is maintained regardless of the productivity of particular legislative sessions at the Congress level, legislators across different sessions cannot be appropriately compared on a score-to-score basis. Within legislators, effectiveness can vary considerably from one Congress to the next, especially when that member transitions from their party to being in the majority to being in the minority, or vice versa, or they are elevated to more powerful positions such as committee chairs.

As a robustness check for the role effectiveness plays more broadly, I also utilize Volden and Wiseman (2014)'s LES Benchmark scores, primarily through whether a member met, exceeded, or fell below them, and the independent components of total bills sponsored and bills that became law. The LES Benchmark scores predict a member's effectiveness score based on their seniority, majority party status, and if they hold any committee chairs. Factoring expected effectiveness into the model and, more importantly, where members fall in regards to those expectations lends further credence to my theory in regards to members expectations for the institution not being met and opting to leave as a result. Separating two of the key LES components further clarifies the interest in participating in the policy-making process and if the tangible success members enjoy influences career choices.

I control for several factors associated with higher LES. These factors include majority party status, whether a member is a committee chair, if they are on a "power" committee,³ seniority, and if the member is in their party's leadership structure. Party leaders rarely propose bills themselves so tend to have low LES but are unquestionably tremendously influential in the actual legislative process. Because previous studies using LES have found differences between male and female members of the institution, with some evidence indicating that women are more effective in certain contexts (Volden, Wiseman and Wittmer, 2013), controls are included for gender. Similarly, racial identity, reduced to a

³ One of the top four highest ranked committees according to Groseclose-Stewart Scores.

simple white/non-white dichotomy due to the under-representation of African, Latino, Asian, and Native Americans in the Senate as a whole, is controlled for due to its potential consequence on other observed factors. Lastly, to mediate the issues of freshmen senators sharing the expectation of low effectiveness with retirees, this status is also controlled for in the logit model. I include two related, yet distinct ideological metrics. The first, a member's ideological distance from their chamber median is a directionless measure, as an extreme conservative and extreme liberal would have similar positions, that is utilized due to the important role pivotal members play in passing legislation, wherein the median members of each chamber provide crucial votes to determine the passage or defeat of a bill (Krehbiel, 1998). Existing on either end of the ideological extreme is thus expected to have some bearing on member success and in turn have implications for a member's likelihood to retire. I also incorporate the first dimension of NOMINATE scores obtained from Boche et al. (2018) to extrapolate if there is an ideological direction that would influence retirement decisions, as conservatism has been theorized as a component of the greater levels of retirements among Republicans in the past (Murakami, 2009).

My hypotheses on the causes of congressional retirements are tested with multivariate logistical regression models in each chamber. To account for the panel-like nature much of the dataset has due to the repetition of many members across several Congresses, I utilize clustered standard errors for each member and include congressional year fixed-effects to address the statistical issues that arise from modelling on so many closely related observations.

2.4 Retirement in the Senate

Table 2.1 and Figure 2.3 presents the results of the main model for retirement from the United States Senate. Model 1 shows the results for all retirees, while Model 2 removes those who retired with political ambition from the subset. There is support for both hypotheses that members with lower legislative effectiveness are more likely to retire and Senators are more likely to retire when they are up for reelection as opposed to the middle of their term. That LES is significant even in the Senate where legislators have access to far more negative power to shape the process, further speaks to the value of legislative

productivity to retirement calculations.⁴ For many senators the capacity to obstruct the other side is simply an inadequate substitute for implementing desirable policy. While there is a range of retirement probabilities at each level of effectiveness, there is a noted decrease in a member's likelihood to willingly leave office the more effective they are. This holds true even when factoring out politically ambitious types as in the Senate this is frequently appointees who are forced to resign early-to-mid term and naturally have a lower level of effectiveness as a consequence. Examining the effects of electoral status on retirement, there is a strong positive relationship between retirement and senators being up for reelection. The role of the electoral cycle in shaping the retirement decisions of senators – even those who choose to resign before their time in office naturally expires – suggests that there are strong norms that encourage even those contemplating not serving a full six years to closely align their retirement with the end of the term. This should come to relatively little surprise considering individuals such as Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) have faced incredible public pressure to resign due to failing health and it's debilitating impact on her service in the Senate, but there was no movement in that direction before her death.

Seniority is also positively associated with retirement, as consistent with existing theories. As a variable highly correlated with age, it is natural that seniority would motivate a member to consider retirement eventually, as holds true in most professions, and may also allude to diminishing returns derived from continued congressional service. Senators are also influenced by their prior electoral performance in considering their retirement calculations. This is interesting as the institution was designed to be more insulated from electoral pressures with its six year terms, though clearly this is not quite lengthy enough to completely diminish electoral-vulnerability concerns. It is noteworthy that freshman status does not have a statistically significant negative relationship with retirement. This suggests that there is a non-trivial population of senators who choose to leave at the end of only a single term. As even freshmen senators tend to be older, and terms last for 6 years, time related concerns may potentially influence many members to not seek reelection after the first term. Connecting this with LES, it is also possible that retiring

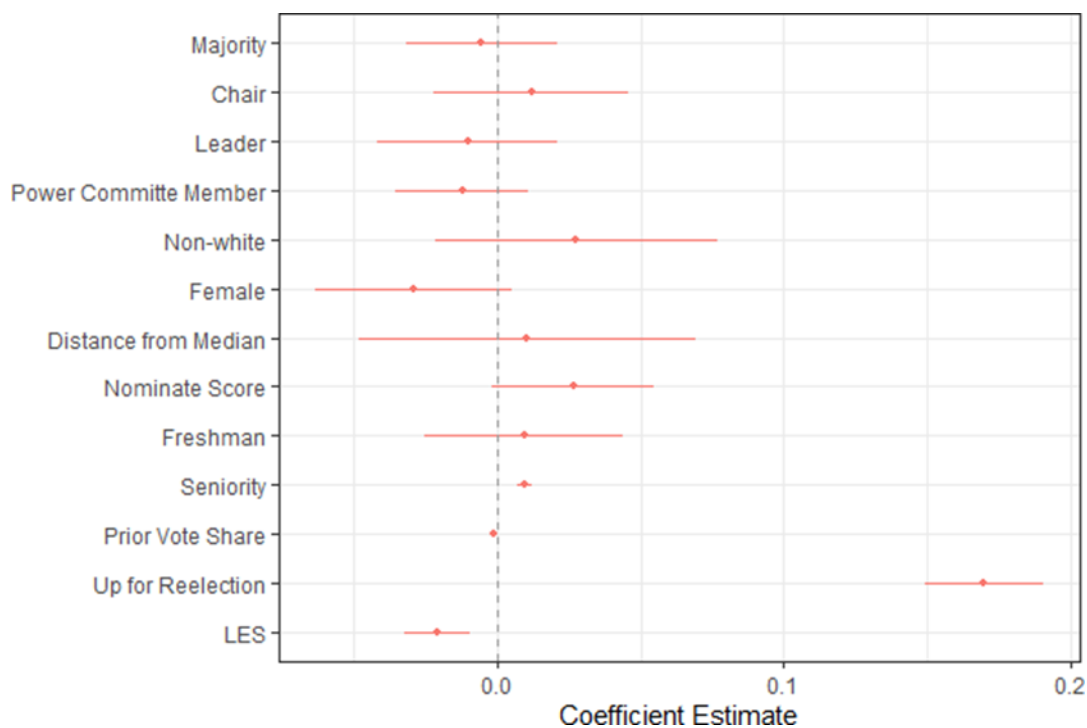
⁴ These results are consistent with the models that evaluate actual LES versus predicted Benchmark LES featured in Appendix Table 1

freshmen had more optimistic expectations for their legislative productivity when they entered office – naivete that was shattered at some point within their first six years.

Another interesting null is that majority party status seemingly plays no role in retirement calculations in the Senate. The Senate has lacked a lengthy period of uni-party dominance such as Democrats enjoyed for over forty years in the House (Ang and Overby, 2008; Gilmour and Rothstein, 1993; Murakami, 2009), and is generally seen as more egalitarian in how legislators are allowed to participate in the process, even as a member of the minority party. It may also be the case, that legislative (in)effectiveness is the underlying feature that makes being in the minority party so unattractive.

The gender difference in the results, women being less likely to retire than men, is noteworthy in that it contrasts with prior findings in the House (Lawless and Theriault, 2005). However, the most likely explanation for this occurrence is the nature of the data, and more pointedly, the relatively low number of women who have served in the chamber over this period and the even smaller number who have retired. The null results in Model 2 which ignore those who have retired for the sake of pursuing an alternative political office reinforces this.

Figure 2.3: Senate Retirement Coefficient Plot Model 1



Breaking down LES into two of it's major components, bills proposed and bills that

were enacted into law, in Table 2.2 I find that the stronger effect emerges from members sticking around if they have sponsored several bills, whereas the passage of those bills has null results. While this may be indicative of some final term shirking in terms of actually getting a bill past the finish line, this is inconsistent with the types of shirking that have

Table 2.1: Retirements in the Senate Over Time, 93rd-117th Congresses

	<i>Senate Retirement</i>	
	Model 1	Model 2
Majority	-0.006 (0.013)	-0.008 (0.013)
Chair	0.012 (0.017)	0.002 (0.016)
Leader	-0.010 (0.016)	-0.005 (0.015)
Power Committee Member	-0.012 (0.012)	-0.004 (0.011)
Race	0.028 (0.025)	0.015 (0.023)
Gender (F)	-0.029* (0.017)	-0.026 (0.016)
Distance from Chamber Median	0.010 (0.030)	-0.008 (0.028)
NOMINATE Score	0.027* (0.014)	0.027** (0.013)
Freshman	0.009 (0.018)	0.019 (0.016)
Seniority	0.009*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)
Prior Vote Share	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)
Up for Reelection	0.170*** (0.010)	0.157*** (0.010)
LES	-0.021*** (0.006)	-0.017*** (0.006)
Constant	0.055 (0.044)	0.046 (0.041)
Observations	2,489	2,489
R ²	0.144	0.145
Adjusted R ²	0.131	0.132
Residual Std. Error	0.240 (df = 2451)	0.223 (df = 2451)
F Statistic	11.125*** (df = 37; 2451)	11.190*** (df = 37; 2451)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

previously been identified by scholarship which has found evidence in votes cast and ideological scores (Rothenberg and Sanders, 2000; Tien, 2001). The rules of the Senate do provide ample opportunities for legislators to accomplish their policy objectives through means other than the passage of their specifically sponsored piece of legislation, such as

offering non-germane amendments to other bills. This makes the null results on bills passed less surprising, especially as unorthodox lawmaking becomes increasingly the norm for passing legislation (Gluck, 2021).

Table 2.2: Alternative Senate Retirement Models with Effectiveness Components

	<i>Retirement with Components of LES</i>	
	Model 3	Model 4
Majority	-0.008 (0.013)	-0.010 (0.012)
Chair	0.006 (0.017)	-0.003 (0.015)
Leader	-0.006 (0.016)	-0.001 (0.015)
Power Committee Member	-0.010 (0.012)	-0.002 (0.011)
Race	0.046* (0.026)	0.031 (0.024)
Gender	-0.028 (0.017)	-0.025 (0.016)
Distance from Chamber Median	0.018 (0.030)	-0.001 (0.028)
NOMINATE	0.016 (0.015)	0.018 (0.014)
Freshman	0.001 (0.018)	0.012 (0.016)
Seniority	0.009*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)
Prior Vote Share	-0.001** (0.001)	-0.001** (0.001)
Up for Reelection	0.173*** (0.011)	0.160*** (0.010)
Bills Sponsored	-0.001*** (0.0002)	-0.001*** (0.0002)
Bills Became Law	-0.002 (0.003)	-0.002 (0.003)
Constant	0.095** (0.045)	0.079* (0.042)
Observations	2,489	2,489
R ²	0.149	0.149
Adjusted R ²	0.136	0.135
Residual Std. Error	0.239 (df = 2450)	0.223 (df = 2450)
F Statistic	11.264*** (df = 38; 2450)	11.259*** (df = 38; 2450)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

2.5 Retirement in the House

Examining the House in Table 2.3 and Figure 2.4 I also find support for my hypothesis regarding legislator effectiveness.⁵ The commonality of legislative productivity in influencing retirement decisions in the House and Senate is a noteworthy similarity that has previously evaded comparisons between the two chambers. Some divergence between the chambers is present in this regard as the successful passage of legislation is a consideration for House members weighing retirement, though not so when factoring out politically ambitious types as seen in Table 2.4. It's harder, though far from impossible, to get policy provisions incorporated into other bills in the House compared to the Senate. That bill passage has null results when factoring out ambitious retirements suggests this result is carried more by members who are genuinely interested in implementing policy and are looking for better opportunities to do so in other offices.

Hierarchical features such as being on a power committee play a far more significant role in the House than in the Senate. Curiously majority-party membership similarly has null results just as in the Senate. As discussed before, the Senate has more features on the positive and negative power front that make being a minority party member less daunting than in the House. However, in addition to the possibility that effectiveness is the primary characteristic of majority party status that interests legislators, representatives recognize that control of the chamber is fleeting and the loathsome conditions of being the minority are temporary (Lee, 2016).

The ideological measures present interesting results, with a negative correlation with general ideological extremity, as measured by distance from the chamber median, and the positive correlation with NOMINATE scores. The positive effect of NOMINATE, meaning more conservative members are more likely to retire, is consistent with earlier findings that Republicans are more prone to voluntary exit than their Democratic colleagues, particularly Murakami (2009) who attributed this greater rate to members' conservative ideology. The effect of ideology on House retirement decisions is a notable asymmetry between member exit behavior in the two chambers, and aligns with existing findings (Ang and Overby, 2008).

⁵ This is also backed up with the comparison with Benchmark LES in the Appendix, see Table 2

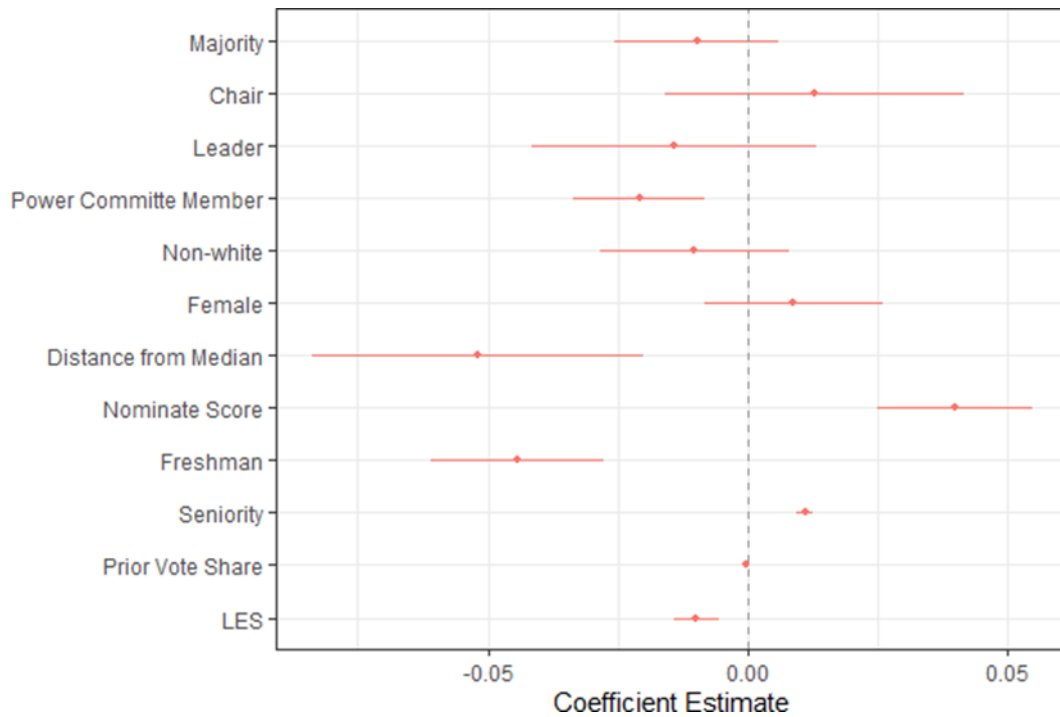
Table 2.3: Retirement from the U.S. House of Representatives in the 93rd -117th Congresses

	<i>House Retirement</i>	
	Model 1	Model 2
Majority	-0.10 (0.008)	-0.007 (0.007)
Chair	0.013 (0.015)	0.008 (0.007)
Leader	-0.014 (0.014)	-0.018 (0.012)
Power Committee Member	-0.021*** (0.006)	-0.016*** (0.005)
Race	-0.010 (0.009)	0.003 (0.008)
Gender	0.009 (0.009)	0.003 (0.007)
Distance from Chamber Median	-0.052*** (0.016)	-0.047*** (0.014)
NOMINATE (1st Dimension) Score	0.040*** (0.008)	0.034*** (0.006)
Freshman	-0.044*** (0.008)	-0.014** (0.007)
Seniority	0.011*** (0.001)	0.013*** (0.001)
Prior Vote Share	-0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.0004*** (0.0002)
LES	-0.010*** (0.002)	-0.008*** (0.002)
Constant	0.108*** (0.020)	0.062*** (0.017)
Observations	10,723	10,721
R ²	0.041	0.053
Adjusted R ²	0.038	0.050
Residual Std. Error	0.276 (df = 10686)	0.231 (df = 10684)
F Statistic	12.782*** (df = 36; 10686)	16.741*** (df = 36; 10684)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 2.4: Alternative House Retirement Models with Effectiveness Components

	<i>Retirement with Components of LES</i>	
	Model 3	Model 4
Majority	-0.013 (0.008)	-0.009 (0.007)
Chair	-0.002 (0.014)	-0.009 (0.012)
Leader	-0.015 (0.014)	-0.021* (0.012)
Power Committee Member	-0.020*** (0.006)	-0.016*** (0.005)
Race	-0.011 (0.009)	-0.004 (0.008)
Gender	0.010 (0.009)	0.005 (0.007)
Distance from Chamber Median	-0.049*** (0.016)	-0.043*** (0.014)
NOMINATE	0.037*** (0.008)	0.031*** (0.006)
Freshman	-0.046*** (0.009)	-0.019*** (0.007)
Seniority	0.011*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)
Prior Vote Share	-0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.0004*** (0.0002)
Bills Sponsored	-0.001*** (0.0002)	-0.001*** (0.0002)
Bills Became Law	-0.005* (0.002)	0.0005 (0.002)
Constant	0.130*** (0.021)	0.093*** (0.018)
Observations	10,723	10,721
R ²	0.041	0.055
Adjusted R ²	0.038	0.052
Residual Std. Error	0.276 (df = 10685)	0.231 (df = 10683)
F Statistic	12.371*** (df = 37; 10685)	16.818*** (df = 37; 10683)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Figure 2.4: House Retirement Coefficient Plot Model 1



2.6 Conclusion

The empirical findings here provide support for both of my hypotheses. Members in both chambers are found to be more likely to retire when they are less effective legislators. The commonality in findings for the LES measure in both chambers suggests that member motivations are not too dissimilar between the two, and fulfilling legislative objectives is important for members to justify continuing their congressional career. Our expectation that less effective legislators are more prone to retire – a key component of this paper’s main theory – is supported and passes several robustness checks when examining multiple measures of effectiveness. In the Senate, being up for reelection at the end of a given term is positively correlated with a senator’s decision to leave the chamber as is predicted by hypothesis 2. This finding is normatively desirable, as it suggests that once elected, senators will generally honor their commitment to a full six-year term. Seniority, as unveiled in previous literature, has a strong positive relationship with congressional retirement in both chambers. Other findings produced by this empirical analysis that were not previously predicted are worthy of further examination, particularly the negative relationship ideological extremity in the House and gender in the Senate have on retirement in those

chambers.

The correlation between ineffectiveness and retirement has many potential consequences on Congress as an institution and for representation. As retirement is the premier form of membership turnover, less effective members opting to leave the institution filters out bad legislators which may benefit their former chamber and their constituents at home who have an opportunity to elect a potentially more productive member. This trend presents related benefits in that the most effective legislators are more likely to stick around which means their clout may be used to further aid their state/district. The normative benefits of the self-filtering out of poor legislators are clear, but it is less clear if the findings in this paper will persist into the future. Congress as a whole continues to become less productive, and there is an apparent class of congresspersons who see this phenomenon as a desirable feature rather than a bug. This is best exemplified by the backing of failed Speaker candidate Jim Jordan (R-OH) whose 16 years in Congress have netted a grand total of 0 pieces of proposed legislation becoming law and a mere 36 bills even proposed, an applause line for some of his supporters when referenced on the floor (Blake, 2023). My findings suggest the majority of members of Congress are still at least nominally interested in using their time in office to produce legislation, but it is worth monitoring whether this remains the case in the future.

CHAPTER 3:

TARGETING THE TWEETS: EXAMINING PRESIDENT TRUMP'S CONGRESSIONAL TARGETS ON TWITTER

In a negative ad released by the Biden campaign in May 2024 entitled "Snapped," a dark recollection of the Trump presidency is painted, focusing in on some of the lowest points of Donald Trump's time in office (Gangitano, 2024). That this ad would open its run-down of the former president by zeroing-in on "the midnight Tweets" speaks to the defining, and at times despised, role Trump's use of the social media platform then known as Twitter played in his presidency. The implicit suggestion of Robert De Niro's narration in this ad is that Trump's tweets were the ravings of a mad man and the window into a self-evidently depraved mind, a sentiment that likely resonates with many in the public (Bowler, Carreras and Merolla, 2023; Nelson, 2017; Thomsen, 2017). Indeed, journalistic (Karl, 2021) and academic (Altheide, 2022; Monahan and Maratea, 2021) observations of the Trump administration frame many facets of his time in office, especially his tweets, as akin to a sequel of his reality show, *The Apprentice*. While there are undisputed examples of Donald Trump using his platform in precisely that manner, this framing undersells that Trump also used it for political communication and, although his combination of medium and rhetoric may have been less than conventional, the overall pattern of engagement is reminiscent of many of his predecessors in the Oval Office.

For the President of the United States, the ability to communicate with and persuade members of Congress is essential to the pursuit of their legislative agenda (Bond and Fleisher, 1990; Fleisher and Bond, 1996; Spitzer, 2012). Various presidents have favored different styles to this approach, but modern presidents have consistently employed some level of public engagement with members in their interactions with Congress as a means of leveraging constituent support (Kernell, 2006). President Donald Trump's constant online presence through social media, particularly on X/Twitter,¹ offered unique insights into the day-to-day musings of the president in a manner never previously on public display at such

¹ Since the platform was branded as Twitter for the entirety of the Trump administration, Twitter will be used to refer to the platform throughout this piece.

a scale. With over 26,000 messages posted during his time in office, all aspects of the Trump presidency were colored in some way by his Twitter use, and his relationship with Congress and its members was no exception.

Although he was not the first president to take advantage of the platform, Trump's utilization of Twitter was a near constant source of intrigue both as a candidate for the White House and as the chief executive. Several tweets, trivial² and consequential alike, came to dominate the news cycle at various points during Trump's political career (Morales, Schultz and Landreville, 2021). Twitter use was a frequent point of contention among campaign and White House staffers. Trump's former social media manager, Justin McConney, recalled the revelation of Trump using his own Twitter account as "comparable to the moment in 'Jurassic Park' when Dr. Grant realized that velociraptors could open doors" - being a major "oh no" moment (Schreckinger, 2018). During the first Trump campaign, staffers worked to plant favorable stories in right wing media outlets in order to sooth the president and dissuade him from tweeting against various media outlets and people (Palmeri, 2017). Ultimately, the staffers attempting to curb this access lost that battle, and White House staff largely gave Trump free reign even if it meant covering for a tweet over the course of a given media cycle (Karni, 2017).

The significance of Trump's Twitter account in defining his presidency is not merely a media creation. During his presidency, the official position of the White House was that the tweets from Trump's personal account were "official statements" (Landers, 2017), a position which was further cemented in court with *Knight First Amendment Inst. at Columbia Univ. v. Trump*, No. 1:17-cv-5205 (S.D.N.Y.), No. 18-1691 (2d Cir.), No. 20-197 (Supreme Court) (2019) which ruled that the account was a "public forum" under the First Amendment. Consequently, Trump's tweets are covered under the Presidential Records Act of 1978 (Treisman, 2019).

While the prolific nature of Trump's Twitter account is undeniable, the actual content of his tweets remain divisive. Trump's candidacy was frequently cast in controversy due to his proclivity to launch personal attacks on his rivals and various other political

² Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: Despite the constant negative press covefe" May 30, 2017, 9:06 PM. <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/8697669948>

figures – attacks that were either echoed or had sometimes originated on his Twitter account (Gross, 2018; Kelly, 2019; Oprysko, 2019). These attacks could stem from policy differences or personal attributes that had earned Trump's disdain, and members of both parties could easily find themselves on the receiving end of a digital tirade. Contrary to the expectations of countless political pundits, this behavior did not subside once Trump reached the Oval Office. Surveys expressed that the content of Trump's tweets in particular were a major factor in shaping their view that he was "unpresidential" (Nelson, 2017; Thomsen, 2017), a view Trump would sardonically appropriate when he tweeted "My use of social media is not Presidential – it's MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL."³ Though his heightened political station may have failed to adjust Trump's character, it did grant increased weight to his political attacks, especially when directed towards members of Congress. His precise public-facing demeanor may have been a departure from prior presidents, but Trump's flamboyant approach to social media interactions with his Washington fellows blends some of the private conflicts of his predecessors with exercise of the bully pulpit.

As extraordinary as Trump's often crass embrace of social media is often framed, it is not entirely dissimilar from how other presidents engaged with inter-branch relations – possibly marking more of an (d)evolution rather than a full deviation. Twitter's role as a "public forum" nests its use within the broader context of the "going public" strategy (Kernell, 2006). Several prior presidents were also known for having a similarly "larger than life" persona such as Theodore Roosevelt who first coined the term "bully pulpit" in reference to the public-facing persuasive power enhanced by the station of the president (Roosevelt and Taft, 1892). Theodore Roosevelt's exercise of this power was constrained by the instruments of his time, taking advantage of public speeches and what passed for mass media in his era, while his successors were able to enhance their reach through the technological innovations of their eras. Franklin D. Roosevelt enjoyed more direct access to the public through improvements in radio technology, most notably through his fire side chats (Kiewe, 2007) and John F. Kennedy embraced further technological evolution with the

³ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: My use of social media is not Presidential - it's MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL. Make America Great Again!" July 1, 2017, 6:41 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/881281755017355264>

use of televised press conferences (Hoover, 1988). Trump's immediate predecessor, Barack Obama, was on the cutting edge in pioneering political usage of many of the same tools and platforms that came to define a significant portion of the Trump presidency (Aharony, 2012). Tonally, Trump in many ways echoes the interpersonal approach of Lyndon Baines Johnson, whose infamous "Johnson treatment" brought his crass and threatening demeanor into the fray to domineer presidential-congressional relations (Beckmann, Chaturvedi and Garcia, 2017; Zelizer, 2015).

3.1 Tweets in Political Context

Trump is far from being the first or sole political actor on Twitter. Many members of Congress utilize the platform for various political communiqué. Republicans and younger members were the most common early adopters of Twitter (Lassen and Brown, 2011; Peterson, 2012), with some already setting the stage for the more polarizing rhetoric that became the norm under Donald Trump, particularly when they were comparatively free from electoral pressure (Ballard et al., 2022). Not all Twitter use by political officials facilitates harsh rhetoric. From the onset, members of Congress have used Twitter for self-promotion and campaigning (Golbeck, Grimes and Rogers, 2010; Hemphill, Otterbacher and Shapiro, 2013; LaMarre and Suzuki-Lambrecht, 2013). This has developed to encompass more policy discussion over time (Hemphill, Russell and Schöpke-Gonzalez, 2021), with usage being predictive of voting patterns (Hemphill, Culotta and Heston, 2013), and has played a role in agenda-setting with the media in some issue areas (Shapiro and Hemphill, 2017).

Donald Trump's active and near constant use of Twitter during his candidacy and presidency caught the eyes of journalists and politicians alike (Wells et al., 2020), and his oftentimes inflammatory rhetoric has been cited by Republicans in Congress as a sign that they have been left behind by the party (Krause and Byers, 2022). Prior presidents have enjoyed the capacity to shift the media narrative through press conferences and the like (Miles, 2014). And, Trump's extension of this into the low-cost tool of social media posts created an impact that extended well beyond the individual tweet itself and ensured even the most social media illiterate were aware of them (Lazarus and Thornton, 2021). With the Trump presidency taking place within an era of increased partisan fervor, the timing was

perfect for his hardened brand of politics (Tucker et al., 2019).

Communication can be utilized in numerous ways by the president against members of Congress. Long before the era of social media, presidents such as Lyndon Baines Johnson would directly lobby and coerce members – typically those more moderate and less ideologically committed to his projects – into supporting them (Beckmann, Chaturvedi and Garcia, 2017). Beckmann, Chaturvedi and Garcia (2017)'s exploration of President Johnson's phone records uncovered which members he engaged with the most and found that congressional leaders and chairs occupied most of his attention. Trump's Twitter rants about members may be somewhat akin to the harshness of the fabled "Johnson Treatment" exercised by LBJ against members of Congress in tone (Zelizer, 2015), if not necessarily the same in purpose. The treatment has been described as "an incredible, potent mixture of persuasion, badgering, flattery, threats, reminders of past favors and future advantages" (Coleman, 2018) and has been seen as a hallmark of presidential- congressional coalition building. Johnson's approach worked with the congressional tools and members available, and it is worth examining the extent to which Trump's tweeting behavior resembled LBJ's interactions.

Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama, trailblazed the media tools that played a major role in defining the Trump-era. Through innovation and some level of growing necessity in an evolving media landscape brought about by technological advancement and the economic recession, Obama used the internet to bypass the press and directly engage with voters (Pfeiffer, 2018). Towards the end of his time in office, Obama's communication team launched the @POTUS account which served as an effective and direct tool for Obama to engage with the evolving political conversation. The effort to create this account came after overcoming reservations regarding the security of installing the app on his BlackBerry and general suspicions over the validity of the platform (Pfeiffer, 2018). While dwarfed by the catalog of Trump Tweets, Obama did engage with the platform more frequently than other contemporary heads of state (Aharony, 2012).

Prior scholarship on Trump's Twitter use has focused on a variety of political and economic consequences. It has been argued that his social media presence has normalized right-wing populist discourse (Kreis, 2017; Varis, 2020) and that it has spread misinformation and conspiracies, with noted impacts on vaccine hesitancy during the

COVID-19 pandemic (Hornsey et al., 2020; Ross and Rivers, 2018). This is a departure both in content and tone from his immediate predecessor, Barack Obama (Ott, 2017; Wignell et al., 2021). Others have examined the consequences the Tweets have had on various financial markets in their aftermath (Filippou et al., 2020; Gjerstad et al., 2021; Huynh, 2021; Klaus and Koser, 2021). Trump's Twitter activity has also been identified as a mechanism to influence political change through less-formal channels. The rollback of Obama-era environmental regulations and reorientation of immigration policy are two such examples of this (Sahin, Johnson and Korkut, 2021). Ouyang et al. (2020) broadly examined Trump's Twitter posts from the creation of his account in 2009 through November 27, 2019 and identified many of the core topics Trump discussed through the account while in office. These ranged from offers of support and praises for friends and political allies, commentary on policies and other broad issues, as well as promotion of himself and his properties, merchandise, tweets, books, and other accomplishments. Additionally, there were the verbal attacks he levied against other public figures and groups (Ouyang et al., 2020; Kelly, 2019; Oprysko, 2019).

3.2 Expectations

People paid attention to the president's Twitter account, especially once he was in office, and this granted considerable leverage and influence in many areas (Pérez-Curiel and Limón-Naharro, 2019). This influence was exercised by the former president towards non-incidental political ends. Focusing on Trump's comments on and towards individuals, specifically members of Congress, this paper expands on the literature by cataloging and categorizing who Trump talked about, when, and how. Not all of these messages were attacks – President Trump had allies (some more temporary than others) who received boosting from the president as well – and the level and source of insult could vary tremendously. The focus on Tweets aimed at members allows for a deeper dive into these disparities and more closely observes his attitude towards individual members over the course of his tenure. To evaluate these trends, I examine the following expectations for President Trump's Twitter communications towards members of Congress:

Hypothesis 1: Targeting Leadership. Trump is more likely to tweet about Congressional leaders than rank-and-file.

Working with congressional leaders is essential to pushing and setting a president's agenda in Congress (Beckmann, 2010). Donald Trump's experience as a political outsider may have made him more dependent on these figures than the average president in terms of navigating the particulars of the legislative process, but this strategy would also be consistent with the approach of a seasoned political veteran. Beckmann, Chaturvedi and Garcia (2017)'s analysis of President Johnson's phone records show that leaders were his favorite lobbying targets, and the more public-facing nature of the Trump presidency should make it likely this tradition extended to the more public-facing tweets. Additionally, when both the era of hyper-polarized parties with and the role of negative partisanship in the electorate are taken into consideration, out-party leaders are natural avatars to attack for electoral and political gain (Phipps and Montgomery, 2022).

Hypothesis 2: Partisan/Ideological Hostility. Trump is more likely to negatively tweet about Democrats/Liberals than Republicans/Conservatives.

The president has assumed a role at the head of their political party (Klinghard, 2005; Seligman, 1956), and this role has become increasingly partisan in their approach to politics (Skinner, 2008). These biases associated with the modern presidency, naturally suggest that the highly public tweets from President Trump, should express similar biases. A partisan/ideological disparity in the tone Trump uses to talk about political opponents would also follow established trends in polarization and the former president's role in exacerbating that process (Abramowitz and McCoy, 2019).

Hypothesis 3: Political Timing. Trump is more likely to mention members of Congress during heightened political contexts.

Assuming President Trump's tweets are politically patterned, it would stand to reason that the timing of their usage would vary depending on the political contexts. Prior presidents have used various types of media appearances to help reinforce their agenda (Baum, 2013). In the congressional context, one of the defining events during Trump's time in office was his first impeachment. As this was an event entirely initiated by Congress and Trump's influence over the process would be entirely indirect through his allies, I anticipate he would have engaged with members of Congress at an increased rate during that process. Also, presidents are often active participants in Congressional races to help bolster key allies and attempt to harm political foes (Herrnson, Morris and McTague, 2011), so it should

similarly be expected that Trump would amp up his Twitter engagement with members during election years.

3.3 Data

The analyses of this paper use data collected from all tweets from the former president's Twitter account, @realDonaldTrump as archived by Brown (N.d.), from November 8, 2016 through January 8, 2021, capturing every message posted by Donald Trump as president-elect and President of the United States of America. This choice in time frame reflects the intentions of this paper's focus on presidential-congressional relations, with that early president-elect period being included due to the equivalent influence Trump held rhetorically at that point as he would hold following inauguration. These data include a total of 26621 tweets, including retweets and deleted posts during the observed time period. The tweets were then hand-coded for whether they mentioned members of Congress, groups of members, and the level of endorsement/threat expressed towards them.

Important nuances had to be considered with the identification of different members within Trump's tweets as he was not always as explicit in referring to particular members. Trump was infamous for employing the use of various degrading nicknames for the subjects of his Tweets. Many of these were far from enigmatic such as Head Clown/Cryin' Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Crazy Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Sleazy/Shifty Adam Schiff/Schitt (D-CA), Jeff Flake(y) (R-AZ), Al Frankenstein (D-MN), or Liddle' Bob Corker (R-SC). Others require more awareness of Trump's vernacular or rely on an introductory post for that alias's debut to properly ascertain the referenced individual, such as "Pocahontas" for Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), "Da Nang Dick" for Richard Blumenthal (D-NY), and "King of Baltimore" for Elijah Cummings (D-MD). Other times Trump would allude to a member through their circumstances and state such as his remarks towards Representative Justin Amash (I-MI) after leaving the Republican Party where he celebrated the news while declaring him "one of the dumbest and most disloyal men in Congress."⁴ These cases are taken into account

⁴ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Great news for the Republican Party as one of the dumbest amp, most disloyal men in Congress is "quitting" the Party. No Collusion, No Obstruction! Knew he couldn't get the nomination to run again in the Great State of Michigan. Already being challenged for his seat. A total loser!" July 4, 2019, 9:05 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1146766931573301248>

with the construction of a thesaurus of notable nicknames along with searches of other keywords that may be associated with a given member such as their state, but some may lack enough specificity to take into account.

Some cases are admittedly far too indirect or discreet to properly catalogue as referring to a particular member. A noteworthy incident reflective of this phenomenon occurred early in Trump's presidency where he promoted an episode of Fox News' "Justice With Judge Jeanine"⁵ where the top of the show opened with a scathing rebuke of Speaker Paul Ryan failure in leading the effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act (Wagner, 2017). Both President Trump and Speaker Ryan denied that the tweet promoting the show in-and-of-itself was an attack against the latter, highlighting the challenge of not only identifying these uncharacteristically subtle jabs from the president but also the shield of plausible deniability that makes judgement calls on those messages overly presumptuous.

Key to the analyses in this paper was the creation of hand-coded endorsement/threat scores to evaluate Trump's expressed sentiment towards members of Congress. To develop these scores a five-point (-2 to 2) scale was created which factors in the general tone of the tweet along with a level of commitment to politically support or threaten the member. These scores are recorded at the member-tweet level, with tweets that reference multiple members having individual, sometimes contrasting, scores for each. Retweets were coded in this capacity in the same manner as Trump's original tweets. While there are competing "models" for how users of X/Twitter view their retweets, Trump never indicated that they were not an endorsement of their content, and much of the content of his retweets when it came to member sentiments reflect similar views and positions stated in his original posts.

Starting on the negative spectrum of the scale, a score of "-2" indicates that Trump's tweet had a negative tone and posed electoral and/or political threats against the member(s) discussed in the tweet. Examples of -2 scored tweets include a variety of post genres that are generally aimed at pursuing punitive actions against members of Congress (regardless of the feasibility or sensibility of following through on such a threat), explicitly

⁵ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: Watch @JudgeJeanine on @FoxNews tonight at 9:00 P.M." March 25, 2017, 10:41 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/845646761704243200>

express the desire to electorally oust a member, and/or undermine the political support for a member through stating that they have done a disservice to their constituents, in often less flattering terms. Calls for punitive actions have included the expressed desire to investigate members for alleged wrongdoings such as his counter-Russiagate requests to investigate ties between Democratic leaders Chuck Schumer⁶ and Nancy Pelosi,⁷ and repeated calls to "impeach"⁸ or censure⁹ Adam Schiff for his role in the impeachment process. Several tweets tied to electoral action will deride the candidate and endorse their opponent in one fell swoop such as with Debbie Stabenow and her opponent John James,¹⁰ or in the case of senators not up for reelection during Trump's tenure in office he'd have to play a longer game to threaten their electoral status such as Lisa Murkowski.¹¹ Other lines of attack that fall under this extreme category had Trump directly invoke the member's electorate to highlight their failings such as Thomas Massie¹² and Mitt Romney.¹³

Less severe on the negative spectrum, "-1" scores fail to meet the severity of the prior

⁶ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: We should start an immediate investigation into @Sen-Schumer and his ties to Russia and Putin. A total hypocrite! <https://t.co/lk3yqjHzsA>" March 3, 2017, 12:54 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/837722869106880517>

⁷ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: I hereby demand a second investigation, after Schumer, of Pelosi for her close ties to Russia, and lying about it. <https://t.co/qCDljfF3wN>" March 3, 2017, 4:02 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/837770149767827456>

⁸ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: The only crimes in the Impeachment Hoax were committed by Shifty Adam Schiff, when he totally made up my phone conversation with the Ukrainian President and read it to Congress, together with numerous others on Shifty's side. Schiff should be Impeached, and worse!" October 29, 2019, 11:58 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1189028602052042752>

⁹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Hope all House Republicans, and honest House Democrats, will vote to CENSURE Rep. Adam Schiff tomorrow for his brazen and unlawful act of fabricating (making up) a totally phony conversation with the Ukraine President and U.S. President, me. Most have never seen such a thing!" October 17, 2019, 9:14 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1184638812150009858>

¹⁰ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: John James, running as a Republican for the Senate from Michigan, is a spectacular young star of the future. We should make him a star of the present. A distinguished West Point Grad and Vet, people should Vote Out Schumer Puppet Debbie Stabenow, who does nothing for Michigan!" November 5, 2018, 12:04 AM. <https://x.com/i/web/status/1059310562771984390>

¹¹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Few people know where they'll be in two years from now, but I do, in the Great State of Alaska (which I love) campaigning against Senator Lisa Murkowski. She voted against HealthCare, Justice Kavanaugh, and much else..." June 4, 2020, 7:36 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1268688013791506450>

¹² Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: By empowering the Radical Left Democrats, do nothing Kentucky politician @RepThomasMassie is making their War on the 2nd Amendment more and more difficult to win (But don't worry, we will win anyway!). He is a disaster for America, and for the Great State of Kentucky!" March 27, 2020, 10:13 AM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1243541556424048643>

¹³ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: I'm hearing that the Great People of Utah are considering their vote for their Pompous Senator, Mitt Romney, to be a big mistake. I agree! He is a fool who is playing right into the hands of the Do Nothing Democrats! IMPEACHMITTROMNEY" October 5, 2019, 3:06 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1180559858699030529>

category but still display clear misgivings Trump holds towards the member. The lack of any firm commitments to oppose or threaten the member is the key distinction between a threat score of -2 and -1. Perhaps as a result of this distinction, some of these posts may come across as more petty such as chastising Mitch McConnell over failing to repeal Obamacare,¹⁴ or attacks on Bob Corker for his support, or lack thereof, for given policies.¹⁵ Another common set of messages are ones where President Trump punched down on specific policy proposals or votes such as attacks on Bernie Sander's advocacy for single-payer healthcare¹⁶ or his reaction John McCain's infamous Obamacare vote.¹⁷

The middle of the scale, "0" scores are for posts where Trump is tonally neutral in referring to the member. Many retweets fall into this classification, with them largely serving as announcements of events of political or more personal nature such as a retweet of Rand Paul's COVID diagnosis.¹⁸ Other cases that receive a 0 score are ones where the referenced members are not the real focus of the message such as Trump's prediction that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez being unlikely to support Biden's candidacy.¹⁹ Another category of tweets with 0 scores are ones where Trump advocates for particular members²⁰ to pursue a particular policy objective without any prior context of their existing positions or making a particularly enticing appeal for the members to act.

¹⁴ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: "Can you believe that Mitch McConnell, who has screamed Repeal amp, Replace for 7 years, couldn't get it done. Must Repeal amp, Replace ObamaCare!" August 10, 2017, 6:54 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/895599179522650112?lang=en>

¹⁵ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Bob Corker, who helped President O give us the bad Iran Deal amp, couldn't get elected dog catcher in Tennessee, is now fighting Tax Cuts..." October 24, 2017, 8:31 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/922798321739161600?lang=en>

¹⁶ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Bernie Sanders is pushing hard for a single payer healthcare plan - a curse on the U.S. amp, its people..." September 14, 2017, 3:31 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/908413019050463232>

¹⁷ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: John McCain never had any intention of voting for this Bill, which his Governor loves. He campaigned on Repeal amp, Replace. Let Arizona down!" September 23, 2017, 6:42 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/911541328013676544>

¹⁸ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: RT @RandPaul: Senator Rand Paul has tested positive for COVID-19. He is feeling fine and is in quarantine. He is asymptomatic and was teste. . ." March 23, 2020, 1:36 PM. <https://x.com/RandPaul/status/1241780756617273345>

¹⁹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: "Can't see AOC plus 3 supporting Sleepy Joe!" April 8, 2020, 12:12 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1247920239045681159>

²⁰ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Why does Twitter leave phony pictures like this up, but take down Republican/Conservative pictures and statements that are true? Mitch must fight back and repeal Section 230, immediately. Stop biased Big Tech before they stop you! @HawleyMO @MarshaBlackburn <https://t.co/ah0nMeQdM0>" September 8, 2020, 7:58 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1303301563868479490>

On the positive end of the spectrum, a score of "2" is obviously the opposite extreme from the -2 scored messages, being attributed to tweets where Trump used a positive tone to express direct electoral and/or political support for a member of Congress. Direct endorsements of members are some of the most obvious tweets that fall within this classification, some of which had some rather surprising recipients²¹ when considering the members Trump grew less than fond of over time. Other examples include more classical instances of "going public" with Trump using the platform to promote shared policy objectives such as Rand Pual's theoretical replacement for the Affordable Care Act.²²

Finally, a score of "1," naturally mirrors its negative counterpart as expressing generally positive sentiments without the firm commitments or tonal extremity of a 2 endorsement/threat score. Tweets the fall within this scoring are messages that were used to express gratitude towards members for specific actions such as Richard Burr's oversight of the Senate Intelligence committee's review of Trump's ties to Russia,²³ or the passage of legislation including more regionally specific bills.²⁴ Some tweets in this category also may reflect a twisting of a member's comments to reflect better on himself such as his warping of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's remark that the VA is not broken due to his work.²⁵ Others reflect a mixed sentiment where one member is credited to contrast with another, such as Trump's assessment of Kevin McCarthy's performance compared to his predecessor at the

²¹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: .@MittRomney has announced he is running for the Senate from the wonderful State of Utah. He will make a great Senator and worthy successor to @OrrinHatch, and has my full support and endorsement!" February 20, 2018, 9:21. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/965773283554668544>

²² Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: I feel sure that my friend @RandPaul will come along with the new and great health care program because he knows Obamacare is a disaster!" March 8, 2017, 7:14 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/839268048313929729>

²³ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: "Highly respected Senator Richard Burr, head of Senate Intelligence, said, after interviewing over 200 witnesses and studying over 2 million pages of documents, "WE HAVE FOUND NO COLLUSION BETWEEN THE TRUMP CAMPAIGN AND RUSSIA." The Witch Hunt, so bad for our Country, must end!" February 22, 2019, 9:11 AM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/109999656551439872>

²⁴ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: "Just signed a critical bill to formalize drought contingency plans for the Colorado River. Thanks to @SenMcSallyAZ for getting it done. Big deal for Arizona!" April 16, 2019, 6:39 PM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1118282780633382912>

²⁵ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is correct, the VA is not broken, it is doing great. But that is only because of the Trump Administration. We got Veterans Choice amp, Accountability passed. "President Trump deserves a lot of credit." Dan Caldwell, Concerned Veterans of America" April 19, 2019, 12:54 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1121095181690974208>

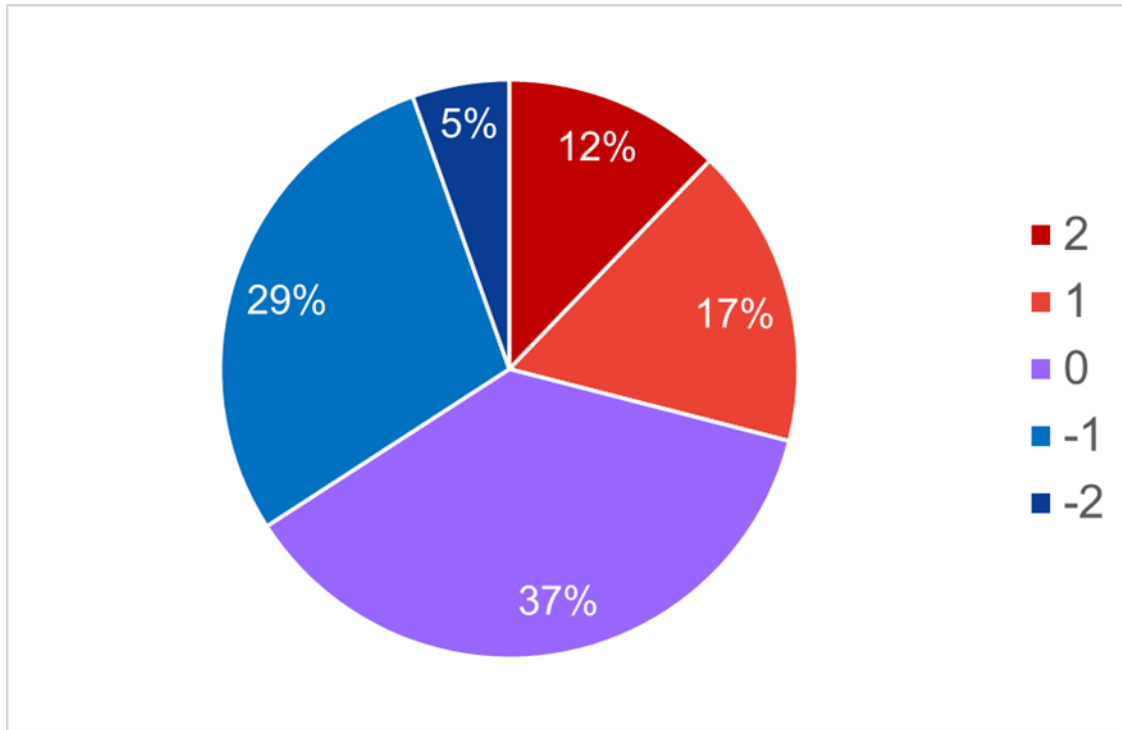
helm of House Republicans, Paul Ryan.²⁶

Beyond the baseline scores at the member-tweet level, aggregate scores were created at the member level to account for the average and collective total of scores they received from Trump across all mentions. The bulk of analysis here explores these composite sentiments towards members as they are more reflective of Trump's general attitudes towards the member and also increased salience those attitudes have for Trump and, by extension, his base.

Trump discussed members of Congress in over 4700 tweets. Figure 4.1 shows the break down of endorsement/threat scores for the primary member discussed within those tweets. The largest category of is the tonally neutral "0" scores. When considering that a significant volume of these are retweets, announcements, and personal musings that are often times more self-serving in highlighting Trump's own thoughts and accomplishments, this perhaps not too shocking. Although the plurality of tweets convey a more neutral attitude, this is generally not reflected in his net views of individual members. While there is divergence on the extreme ends, Trump is overall more negative in addressing individual members than he is positive. Reputationally, this is hardly a surprise, as President Trump's general negativity has been a focus of media and scholarly analysis alike, as discussed before. The more plentiful 2s over -2s is somewhat surprising but it may be explained by the electoral focus that is plentiful across both sets of tweets. For that, I will look at more individual members and their endorsement/threat scores.

²⁶ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy is a far superior leader than was Lame Duck Speaker Paul Ryan. Tougher, smarter and a far better fundraiser, Kevin is already closing in on 44 Million Dollars. Paul's final year numbers were, according to Breitbart, "abysmal." People like." July 13, 2019, 5:19 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1150152760362438657>

Figure 3.1: Composition of Endorsement/Threat Scores Across Members



3.4 Analysis and Discussion

Figure 3.2 shows the volume of Trump's tweets each month, along with the number of tweets which mentioned one or more members of Congress. From the onset of his presidency, Trump's volume of posts – while less impressive than during his candidacy – has been described as "absurd" (Gallucci, 2017). That being said, there is still an apparent radical increase in tweet output year over year. This is especially apparent in Trump's final two years, which peaked with 1,415 tweets posted during October 2020. The explosion of activity leading into the 2020 election is naturally a reflection of his desire for reelection and his electioneering ambitions down the ballot as well. The other major spikes in activity line up with the first Trump impeachment and the summer of 2020, a period marked with the second mass wave of COVID-19 infections,²⁷ primary elections wrapping up, and mass protests in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, among other political occurrences (Lee and Alba, 2020).

Narrowing in on the subset of tweets that mentioned at least one member of

²⁷ The Corona Virus was not only a defining issue in 2020, it was also a major obstacle to holding Trump's signature rallies, frustrating the president and limiting his modes of public engagement.

Congress and evaluating my expectations for the timing of political communications, Figure 3.2 shows Trump's maximal engagement with members perfectly aligns with the first impeachment with comparatively minimal fluctuations during periods where his signature legislation was under consideration. Running a t-test on member mentions with the first impeachment (December 18, 2019 through February 5, 2020) similarly returns significant results in support of hypothesis 3.²⁸ The congressional mention peak in December 2019 encapsulates this well as during his first impeachment, Trump used his platform to rain vitriol on the members pushing the effort forward while retweeting and boosting messages from members who towed his line that the process was nonsense and unfair. During the first congress of his term, Trump mostly discussed members of Congress in the lead up to and during the 35 day government shutdown in 2018/2019. Related tweets primarily cast blame towards Democratic opposition. Considering these were the only years during which Trump held a Republican trifecta in government, this tips the hat to how Trump tended to more often criticize than cajole members of Congress. And, with regard to my expectations concerning mention volume, there are generally increased mentions during election years. This is further reflected in t-test statistics.²⁹

²⁸ $t = 47.008$, $df = 1557$, $p\text{-value} < 2.2e-16$

²⁹ $t = 276.26$, $df = 15803$, $p\text{-value} < 2.2e-16$

Figure 3.2: @RealDonaldTrump Tweets and Member mentions Over Time

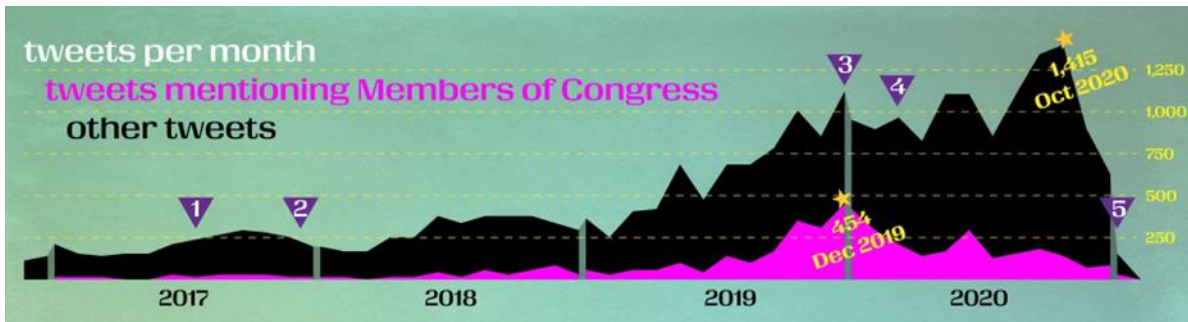


Figure Note: The numbered points on the graph signify the timing of the following significant congressional events: 1) The failed Affordable Care Act repeal attempt in July 2017. 2) Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in November 2017. 3) Start of the first Trump impeachment in December 2019. 4) The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in March 2020. 5) The second Trump impeachment in January 2021.

Unpacking these mentions a bit more for the big four Congressional leaders in Figure 3.4, we can examine this dynamic in greater detail. As these are amongst the most mentioned members in Congress, the scale between the 115th and 116th Congress varies considerably as is expected from the already observed dynamics. Considering their role in shaping the legislative process, some of their mention-rates are fairly surprising. During the 115th Congress, Mitch McConnell is more frequently discussed after the Obamacare/ACA repeal attempt has failed in an effort to deflect blame from Trump. All the leaders – except for the then lame-duck Paul Ryan – are also mentioned fairly frequently during the shutdown in the transition from the 115th into the 116th Congress, though Speaker Nancy Pelosi is the most mentioned. This completely warps the scale of the 116th Congress, especially during impeachment where she accounts for nearly a quarter of all Congressional mentions during the month of December 2019. Besides institutional activities, the months leading up to both election cycles also see considerable bumps in Democratic leadership engagement as Trump often used Pelosi and Chuck Schumer as mascots for general Democratic dissatisfaction. This is consistent with my expectations.

Figure 3.3: Mentions of Congressional Leaders in 115th and 116th Congresses

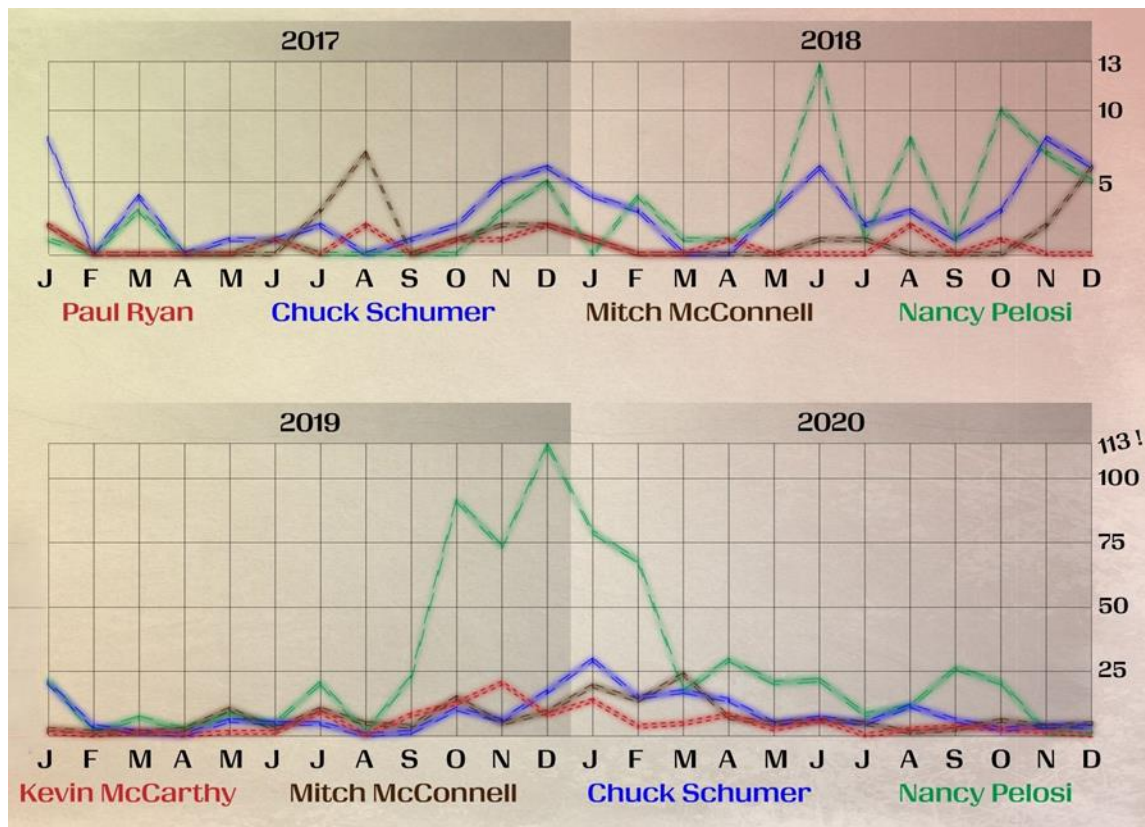


Figure 3.5 shows President Trump's 10 most referenced members of Congress³⁰ – all of whom were a subject of over 100 posts – along with the number of times they were mentioned as the primary subject of a post. Overwhelmingly, the most discussed members were Nancy Pelosi and Adam Schiff, both of whom were the recipients of demonstrably negative attention. In these cases, much of Trump's vitriol was rooted in their actions against him. Democrat chamber leaders Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer (the most discussed Senator by far), were a consistent proxy for Trump's frustration with opposition to his agenda. And, they frequently caught stray attacks aimed at other members that Trump had labelled as "puppets" of either individual. Adam Schiff, too, earned condemnation primarily due to his congressional role as the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee.³¹ In this position, he was not only a key player for investigating collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign in the 2016 election but later the lead

³⁰ Nancy Pelosi, Adam Schiff, Chuck Schumer, Jim Jordan, Mitch McConnell, Lindsey Graham, Bernie Sanders, Mark Meadows, Kevin McCarthy, and Ted Cruz.

³¹ Ranking member during the 115th Congress, then Chair for the 116th.

impeachment manager for Donald Trump. The latter of which was what undoubtedly incited the most animus towards Schiff. By contrast, Jim Jordan was the most referenced Republican in either chamber, and he largely secured his spot through personal loyalty to President Trump. Jordan frequently posted messages of his own that praised Trump and/or attempted to undermine Democratic attacks against him – many of which Trump retweeted. Because of this, Jordan and members like him, have increased notoriety on Trump’s social media because they effectively double as self-promotion for the president.

Figure 3.4: Top 10 Most Referenced Members on @RealDonaldTrump



Table 3.1 displays the total number of times Trump referenced a Republican Senator who served in the 115th and/or 116th Congresses on social media along with two composite measures that convey his expressed attitude towards them through their endorsement/threat scores, listed in order of mentions. Table 3.2 does the same for Democratic (and Independent) Senators with a full list of all mentioned Senators in alphabetical order being included in the Appendix with tables 3 and 4. These tables only include members that Trump mentioned by name, or nickname, at least once on his @RealDonaldTrump Twitter account, and ignores the 17³² that served during Trump’s tenure that were not referenced through this medium. Interestingly, all members of the Senate ignored by Trump on social media are Democrats, meaning that every Republican that served in the Senate received at least one acknowledgement from the former president on the platform. Another broad observation is that President Trump had polarized views of nearly every member he talked about. The only net-neutral member, Pat Toomey, earned a collective 0 score due to tweets where Trump reversed track on his perspective, initially being positive towards him before having a negative post.

Looking at the Republicans in more detail on Table 3.1, the overall sentimentality from Trump is quite positive with only eight members³³ having a negative collective score.

³² See Table 15 for the full list of senators Trump never mentioned.

³³ Mitt Romney, Richard Burr, John Thune, Bob Corker, John McCain, Jeff Flake, Ben Sasse, and Lisa Murkowski

However, this is missing some elements of the whole picture as even the members with the highest positive endorsement/threat scores could and did find themselves on Trump's bad side on an occasion. As can be inferred from the slightly under 1,000 tweet count to collective score disparity. Many of the messages Trump issues towards these members are tonally neutral, many being pseudo-self-promoting retweets similar to what was discussed with Jim Jordan.

Table 3.1: President Trump's Attitudes Towards Republican Senators

Senators and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Senator	Tweet Count	Average Score ¹²	Collective Score
Mitch McConnell (R-KY)	186	0.314	58
Lindsey Graham (R-SC)	170	0.2	34
Ted Cruz (R-TX)	101	0.426	43
Marco Rubio (R-FL)	77	0.41	18
Rand Paul (R-KY)	70	0.253	19
Josh Hawley (R-MO)	55	0.6	33
David Perdue (R-GA)	55	0.909	50
Marsha Blackburn (R-TN)	54	0.333	18
Mitt Romney (R-UT)	52	-0.901	-47
Ron Johnson (R-WI)	50	0.38	19
Chuck Grassley (R-IA)	46	0.543	25
Tom Cotton (R-AR)	42	0.405	17
Kelly Loeffler (R-GA)	42	1.167	49
Joni Ernst (R-IA)	40	0.775	31
John Barrasso (R-WY)	38	0.361	13
Rick Scott (R-FL)	33	0.455	15
Steve Daines (R-MT)	32	1.25	40
Tim Scott (R-SC)	31	0.613	19
Cory Gardner (R-CO)	30	1.067	32
James Inhofe (R-OK)	28	0.607	17
Thom Tillis (R-NC)	28	0.571	16
Martha McSally (R-AZ)	27	0.926	25
Shelley Capito (R-WV)	24	0.833	20
Deb Fischer (R-NE)	21	0.714	15
John Kennedy (R-LA)	21	0.857	18
Luther Strange (R-AL)	21	1.762	37
Richard Burr (R-NC)	20	-0.3	-6
Bill Cassidy (R-LA)	20	0.55	11
Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)	18	1.278	23
John Thune (R-SD)	18	-0.111	-2
Mike Crapo (R-ID)	17	0.882	15
Bob Corker (R-TN)	16	-1	-16
John Cornyn (R-TX)	16	0.688	11
Kevin Cramer (R-ND)	16	0.625	10
John McCain (R-AZ)	16	-0.313	-5
John Boozman (R-AR)	15	0.533	8
James Lankford (R-OK)	15	0.313	5
James Risch (R-ID)	15	0.73	11
Roger Wicker (R-MS)	15	0.533	8
Mike Braun (R-IN)	14	0.929	13
Rob Portman (R-OH)	14	0.786	11
Ben Sasse (R-NE)	14	-0.071	-1
Roy Blunt (R-MO)	13	0.308	4
Jerry Moran (R-KS)	13	0.308	4
Susan Collins (R-ME)	12	0.5	6
Jeff Flake (R-AZ)	10	-1	-10
Mike Lee (R-UT)	10	0.3	3
Richard Shelby (R-AL)	10	0.7	7
Dan Sullivan (R-AK)	10	0.5	5
Lamar Alexander (R-TN)	9	0.889	8
John Hoeven (R-ND)	9	0.333	3
Michael Enzi (R-WY)	8	0.625	5
Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)	8	-0.875	-7
Pat Toomey (R-PA)	7	0	0*
Pat Roberts (R-KS)	6	0.5	3
Todd Young (R-IN)	6	0.5	3
Mike Rounds (R-SD)	5	0.2	1
Dean Heller (R-NV)	4	1.75	7
Orrin Hatch (R-UT)	3	1	3
Johnny Isakson (R-GA)	3	1	3
Thad Cochran (R-MS)	1	1	1
Jon Kyl (R-AZ)	1	2	2
Total (62)	1,781	0.440	784

Other Republican members that received considerable levels of Trump's attention on Twitter demonstrated a mixture of utility Trump derived from engaging with Congress.

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell topped the list. This was both reflective of his status as Trump's go-to member to advance his own agenda through the Senate and as an occasional punching bag when that agenda was stalled or objectives failed. The next four most frequently mentioned members are all former presidential rivals and noted critics-turned-allies: Lindsey Graham, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Rand Paul. The disparity between the tweet count and collective score for each of these members demonstrates both Trump's mixed perspective on these members, and that he often used them – in a similar capacity to Jim Jordan – as a source to farm personal praise through retweets. Lindsey Graham and Ted Cruz, along with other members such as Josh Hawley, David Perdue, and Marsha Blackburn, also demonstrate Trump's efforts to directly endorse and promote loyal members of his party in their (re)election bids.

Compared to his copartisans, Trump discussed specific Democratic Senators far less and far more negatively. As shown in Table 3.2, only a single Democrat barely ekes out a positive score: Angus King. King, who is technically an independent that caucuses with the Democrats was awarded one retweet to praise a bipartisan bill he was a part of.³⁴ Excluding this exception, Trump was overwhelmingly negative towards his Democratic rivals, so much so that the total collective endorsement/threat score slightly exceeds the total tweet count where he referenced Democratic members and nearly mirrors the positive score of their Republican colleagues despite being mentioned far less.

A similar pattern is apparent in terms of which Democratic Senators Trump talked about the most when compared with their Republican counterparts. Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (again, the most mentioned senator as a whole) is Trump's continual source of frustration over Democratic opposition in the Senate. Despite some early praise for his fellow New Yorker,³⁵ Trump quickly transitioned into turning Chuck Schumer into the Democratic boogeyman that was at the heart of every perceived policy failure instituted by the Democrats. He was also a frequent secondary subject when Trump discussed Schumer's

³⁴ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: RT @SteveDaines: Glad to see my bipartisan bill with @SenAngusKing pass the Senate today to increase flexibility for small businesses and w. . . " June 5, 2020, 12:14 PM.

³⁵ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: I have always had a good relationship with Chuck Schumer. He is far smarter than Harry R and has the ability to get things done. Good news!" November 20, 2016, 9:05 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/800339165829283840>

so-called "puppets."³⁶ The next most mentioned Democrats were leading 2020 presidential contenders that served in the Senate: Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and Kamala Harris. The latter also received a lot of attention from Trump on account of her position as Joe Biden's running mate. The focus on these individuals unquestionably reflect Trump's own electoral efforts of beating down potential rivals to improve his odds at remaining in the White House. But, his attacks on Sanders and Warren are also emblematic of the broader Republican strategy of increasing voter perception of a radicalization of the Democratic party.

³⁶ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: The last thing we need in Alabama and the U.S. Senate is a Schumer/Pelosi puppet who is WEAK on Crime, WEAK on the Border, Bad for our Military and our great Vets, Bad for our 2nd Amendment, AND WANTS TO RAISES TAXES TO THE SKY. Jones would be a disaster!" November 26, 2017, 8:52 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/934781939088629761?>

Table 3.2: President Trump's Attitudes Towards Democratic Senators

Senators and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Senator	Tweet Count	Average Score	Collective Score
Charles Schumer (D-NY)	262	-0.95	-249
Bernard Sanders (I-VT)	166	-0.813	-135
Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)	87	-0.954	-83
Kamala Harris (D-CA)	80	-0.95	-76
Doug Jones (D-AL)	20	-1.7	-34
Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)	18	-1.333	-24
Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)	16	-2	-32
Joe Manchin (D-WV)	13	-0.69	-9
Cory Booker (D-NJ)	10	-0.9	-9
Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)	9	-0.667	-6
Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)	9	-0.67	-6
Bill Nelson (D-FL)	9	-1	-9
Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ)	9	-1.444	-13
Jon Tester (D-MT)	9	-1.556	-14
Mark Warner (D-VA)	8	-0.875	-7
Claire McCaskill (D-MO)	5	-1.6	-8
Gary Peters (D-MI)	5	-1.4	-7
Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)	5	-1.8	-9
Robert Casey (D-PA)	4	-2	-8
Christopher Murphy (D-CT)	4	-0.5	-2
Tina Smith (D-MN)	4	-2	-8
Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY)	3	-1	-3
Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)	3	-1	-3
Edward Markey (D-MA)	3	-1.668	-5
Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)	3	-1	-3
Michael Bennet (D-CO)	2	-1	-2
Christopher Coons (D-DE)	2	-1	-2
Joe Donnelly (D-IN)	2	-1	-2
Richard Durbin (D-IL)	2	-1	-2
Ron Wyden (D-OR)	2	0	0*
Sherrod Brown (D-OH)	1	-1	-1
Thomas Carper (D-DE)	1	-1	-1
Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)	1	-1	-1
Al Franken (D-MN)	1	-1	-1
Tim Kaine (D-VA)	1	-1	-1
Angus King (I-ME)	1	1	1
Total (36)	773	-1.001	-774

Table 3.3 shows the results of a Poisson count model examining factors associated with Trump's propensity to mention a member and an OLS model to explore explanations for his expressed sentiment towards those members in the Senate. Mentions use a Poisson Count model as it best accounts for the structure of the mentions variable, which is a count of the number of tweets that made reference to a particular member, and the presence of

several cases with 0 mentions. OLS is utilized for the endorsement/threat scores because the scores themselves can take on negative values, thus making the count approach ineligible. These models utilize year fixed effects and are clustered on the individual member to account for repeated member entries. The first model supports the described findings and hypothesis 1 that Trump is more likely to reference Congressional leaders. It also shows that Trump was more focused on Republicans and, similar to Beckmann, Chaturvedi and Garcia (2017)'s findings with LBJ, disinterested in median pivotal members and more focused on ideologically extreme ones. Trump is also more likely to mention committee chairs. As these are powerful copartisans for his tenure in office, they are critical to his agenda so it makes sense he would at least make passing mention of members in that position.

Table 3.3: President Trump's Twitter Engagement with U.S. Senators

	<i>Mentions & Sentiments</i>	
	Mentions	Endorsement/Threat
Leader	2.686*** (0.061)	-17.981*** (5.237)
Chair	0.147** (0.062)	0.376 (2.829)
Party (Dem=1)	-1.450*** (0.059)	-15.454*** (2.703)
Distance from the Median	2.921*** (0.140)	-4.478 (6.121)
Up for Reelection	0.095** (0.046)	4.764** (2.047)
Prior Vote Share	0.004 (0.003)	-0.466*** (0.153)
Constant	-0.863*** (0.205)	32.013*** (9.084)
Observations	397	199 ³⁸
R ²		0.350
Adjusted R ²		0.319
Residual Std. Error		13.932 (df = 189)
F Statistic		11.317*** (df = 9; 189)
Log Likelihood	-1,934.175	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,888.351	
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

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When it comes to the endorsement/threat scores of senators, Trump is more negative towards leaders (carried by Chuck Schumer), and there is support for hypothesis 2 with Trump expressing more negativity towards Democrats. A member's ideological proximity to the median Senator seemingly played little role in Trump's evaluations of them, and this further reinforces the idea that he did not prioritize heavily catering to pivotal

³⁷ The drop off between mentions and endorsement/threats is due to members without mentions not having these scores as they are functionally different from "0"s which represent a collectively neutral sentiment.

voters on the regular. Trump was more positive to members who were up for reelection and demonstrated this with frequent endorsements of Republican allies leading up to their elections. The negative relationship between a member's prior vote share and Trump's sentimentality suggests that Trump was more likely to target safe members with negative tweets rather than pursuing more vulnerable ones. It's unlikely Trump felt these attacks would reasonably sway enough voters against these members to make a difference, but it's possible he felt these attacks against more notable Democrats would have a cascading effect on their copartisans. It is also indicative of Trump perhaps not playing defensive enough with rallying support for marginal Republicans.

When it comes to the House, Trump mentions members more frequently than in the Senate. This comes with little surprise considering the membership scale of the House of Representatives compared to the Senate. However, mentions are far more spread-out on the lower end, and 283 members³⁸ are never brought up on the Twitter timeline. House Republicans, seen in Table 3.4,³⁹ received more positive scores overall but have lower averages on the high-mention end. This is primarily on account of them having a high number of "neutral" endorsements when mentioned on Twitter. As has been previously noted with Jim Jordan, many Republican members show up on Trump's timeline through retweeting glowing praise of the president, which is why many of the upper ranks of mentions consist of firm Trump allies while touting low average endorsements. A key difference between the House and Senate on this front is that the House GOP leaders are discussed far less frequently than Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. This may be a product of the switch between Paul Ryan and Kevin McCarthy for the top position. Furthermore, the lost majority may have spared McCarthy from the tumultuous relationship Trump had with Ryan – characterized by its rapid swings between praise and condemnation in accordance with the trajectory of Republican policy initiatives.

³⁸ See Appendix Tables B3.8, B3.9, B3.10, B3.11, B3.12, B3.13

³⁹ Abridged for space, cutting positive/neutral scoring Republican representatives with less than 6 mentions.

Table 3.4: President Trump's Attitudes Towards Republican Representatives

Representatives and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Senator	Tweet Count	Average Score	Collective Score
Jim Jordan (R-OH)	228	0.167	38
Mark Meadows (R-NC) ³⁹	134	0.112	15
Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)	112	0.25	28
Matt Gaetz (R-FL)	87	0.287	25
Steve Scalise (R-LA)	82	0.280	23
Devin Nunes (R-CA)	77	0.403	31
Lee Zeldin (R-NY)	75	0.2	15
Doug Collins (R-GA)	72	0.167	12
Andy Biggs (R-AZ)	65	0.185	12
Dan Bishop (R-NC)	41	1.537	63
John Ratcliffe (R-TX)	38	0.5	19
Elise Stefanik (R-NY)	35	0.6	21
Jeff Van Drew (D/R-NJ) ⁴⁰	23	1.130	26
Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)	22	0.318	7
Mike Garcia (R-CA)	22	1.545	34
Paul Ryan (R-WI)	22	0	0 ⁴¹
Troy Balderson (R-OH)	20	1.9	38
Ron DeSantis (R-FL)	20	1.9	38
Louie Gohmert (R-TX)	20	0.5	10
Debbie Lesko (R-AZ)	18	0.556	10
Gregory Murphy (R-NC)	18	1.333	24
Tom Tiffany (R-WI)	17	1.765	30
Ralph Abraham (R-LA)	16	2	32
Daniel Crenshaw (R-TX)	16	0.313	5
Trey Gowdy (R-SC)	16	0.5	8
Karen Handel (R-GA)	15	1.933	29
Mike Johnson (R-LA)	15	0.2	3
Mark Green (R-TN)	13	0.231	3
Liz Cheney (R-WY)	12	-0.083	-1
Jody Hice (R-GA)	12	0.083	1
Lance Gooden (R-TX)	10	0.4	4
Pete Stauber (R-MN)	10	1.8	18
Chris Stewart (R-UT)	10	0.8	8
Lou Barletta (R-PA)	9	1.556	14
Paul Gosar (R-AZ)	9	0.444	4
Mike Kelly (R-PA)	9	0.889	8
Pete Olson (R-TX)	9	0	0
Michael Turner (R-OH)	9	1.111	10
Jim Banks (R-IN)	8	0.5	4
Kevin Brady (R-TX)	8	1.25	10
Fred Keller (R-PA)	8	1.75	14
Thomas Massie (R-KY)	8	-0.875	-7
Martha McSally (R-AZ)	8	1.875	15
Mark Sanford (R-SC)	8	-1.125	-9
Lloyd Smucker (R-PA)	8	1.25	10
Jodey Arrington (R-TX)	7	0.571	4
Ted Budd (R-NC)	7	0.857	6
Jim Hagedorn (R-MN)	7	2	14
Keith Rothfus (R-PA)	7	1.714	12
Peter King (R-NY)	6	0.33	2
Tom McClintock (R-CA)	6	0.714	5
Michael Waltz (R-FL)	6	0.667	4
Justin Amash (R-MI)	5	-0.8	-4
Bradley Byrne (R-AL)	5	-0.8	-4
Raul Labrador (R-ID)	3	-1	-3
Total (186)	1853	0.594	1101

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⁴⁰ Mark Meadows goes on to serve as Trump's final Chief of Staff but the vast majority of mentions he has predate his ascension to the position on March 31, 2020. Jeff Van Drew is elected as a Democrat in 2018 but defects to the Republican Party in 2020. Paul Ryan's neutral score is the result of a shift in attitude from

Unlike in the Senate, House members are up for reelection every cycle so electoral status fails to explain any variation in mentions or endorsement. There are some examples such as Dan Bishop (who boasts the highest endorsement score in the House), Troy Balderson, and Mike Garcia where Trump's frequent endorsements of a candidate correlate with their victory in a special election, or Ron DeSantis who successfully ran from the House for Florida governor. Trump identified slightly fewer objectionable co-partisans than in the Senate with five House Republicans earning net negative endorsement/threat scores including Liz Cheney, Mark Sanford, Thomas Massie, Justin Amash, Bradley Byrne, and Raul Labrador.

For Democratic references (as seen in Table 3.5),⁴¹ Trump's tweeting patterns are similar to the Senate – being demonstrably negative and skewed towards leadership. Compared with the Senate, chairs/ranking-members⁴² and popular freshmen members⁴³ take the places of presidential candidates⁴⁴ in the upper ranks. There are two exceptions to the Democratic negativity rule in the form of Jeff Van Drew, who defected to the Republican party in 2020 (his sentiments were already positive before the formal party switch), and Tulsi Gabbard, former presidential candidate turned Democratic pariah following her "present" vote on impeachment and on the Trump 2024 vice presidential shortlist (Hernández and Carman, 2024).

Democratic representatives are the most discussed group in Congress by Trump. This fits with his generally more vindictive style as the House was the one chamber controlled by Democrats during his time in office, and it is consistent with the uptick in Trump Twitter activity during the impeachment proceedings. Reinforcing the vindictiveness is that the collective sentiment for House Democrats is very dense in negativity, especially when compared to the positive score of their Republican counterparts. With 91 more tweets than House Republicans, Democratic scores are so negative that the collective total for the chamber is -994,⁴⁵ a testament to Trump's frustrations with them.

positive to negative, rather than tonally neutral statements.

⁴¹ All members mentioned only a single time have been cut for space

⁴² Adam Schiff, Jerrold Nadler, Maxine Waters, and Elijah Cummings

⁴³ "The Squad," more specifically Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, and Rashida Tlaib.

⁴⁴ Though Beto O'Rourke, Tulsi Gabbard, and Eric Swalwell do have multiple mentions

⁴⁵ See Appendix Table 9

Table 3.5: President Trump's Attitudes Towards Democratic Representatives

Representatives and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Senator	Tweet Count	Average Score	Collective Score
Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)	746	-0.985	-735
Adam Schiff (D-CA)	624	-1.149	-717
Jerrold Nadler (D-NY)	108	-0.991	-107
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY)	51	-0.784	-40
Ilhan Omar (D-MN)	45	-1.178	-53
Maxine Waters (D-CA)	36	-0.944	-34
Elijah Cummings (D-MD)	30	-0.833	-25
Rashida Tlaib (D-MI)	27	-1.111	-30
Jeff Van Drew (D-NJ)	23	1.130	26
Al Green (D-TX)	20	-1	-20
Conor Lamb (D-PA)	18	-1.833	-33
Chris Pappas (D-NH)	11	-2	-22
Beto O'Rourke (D-TX)	10	-1	-10
Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI)	8	0.625	5
Eric Swalwell (D-CA)	8	-1	-8
John Lewis (D-GA)	7	-0.571	-4
Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ)	7	-2	-14
Debbie Dingell (D-MI)	6	-0.667	-4
Lois Frankel (D-FL)	6	-1.333	-8
Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)	6	-1.167	-7
Lucy McBath (D-GA)	6	-2	-12
James Clyburn (D-SC)	5	-1	-5
Angie Craig (D-MN)	5	-2	-10
Pramila Jayapal (D-WA)	5	-1.4	-7
Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY)	5	-1.4	-7
Ted Lieu (D-CA)	5	-1.4	-7
Max Rose (D-NY)	5	-1.5	-8
Tim Ryan (D-OH)	5	-1.4	-7
Joe Cunningham (D-SC)	4	-2	-8
Val Demings (D-FL)	4	0.75	3
Collin Peterson (D-MN)	4	-2	-8
Dean Phillips (D-MN)	4	-2	-8
Adam Smith (D-WA)	4	-0.75	-3
Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)	4	-1	-4
Frederica Wilson (D-FL)	4	-1.25	-5
Karen Bass (D-CA)	3	-1.667	-5
Joaquin Castro (D-TX)	3	-1	-3
David Cicilline (D-RI)	3	-1.333	-4
Peter DeFazio (D-OR)	3	-2	-6
Veronica Escobar (D-TX)	3	-1.667	-5
Steny Hoyer (D-MD)	3	-1	-3
Hank Johnson (D-GA)	3	0	0
Joseph Kennedy (D-MA)	3	-1	-3
Ben McAdams (D-UT)	3	-1.333	-4
Elaine Luria (D-VA)	3	-2	-6
Anthony Brindisi (D-NY)	2	-2	-4
Matt Cartwright (D-PA)	2	-1	-2
Lou Correa (D-CA)	2	-2	-4
Madeleine Dean (D-PA)	2	-2	-4
Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX)	2	-2	-4
Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)	2	-1	-2
Joe Neguse (D-CO)	2	-2	-4
Jared Polis (D-CO)	2	-1.5	-3
Jamie Raskin (D-MD)	2	-2	-4
Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA)	2	-2	-4
Donna Shalala (D-FL)	2	-1	-2
Elissa Slotkin (D-MI)	2	-2	-4
Total (78)	1942	-1.055	-2049

Table 3.6: President Trump's Twitter Engagement with U.S. Representatives

	<i>Mentions & Sentiments</i>	
	Mentions	Endorsement/Threat
Leader	4.801*** (0.043)	-94.209*** (12.025)
Chair	2.340*** (0.048)	-34.154*** (7.463)
Party (Dem=1)	0.451*** (0.049)	-14.518*** (4.713)
Distance from the Median	1.951*** (0.096)	5.852 (7.962)
Prior Vote Share	-0.021*** (0.001)	0.253*** (0.090)
Constant	-1.820*** (0.124)	-4.438 (8.759)
Observations	1,756	402 ⁴⁹
R ²		0.232
Adjusted R ²		0.217
Residual Std. Error		32.904 (df = 393)
F Statistic		14.864*** (df = 8; 393)
Log Likelihood	-6,773.991	
Akaike Inf. Crit.	13,565.980	

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

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Table 3.6 shows the results of Poisson count and OLS models⁴⁷ similar to those used for the Senate but using data from House members instead. These models also support hypothesis 1, with similar effects present for leadership in terms of being mentioned and having negative sentiments (again carried by the Democratic leadership). Chairmanship status is influential in driving the likelihood of mention and negative sentiment in the House as opposed to the Senate where chairmen had null results. This makes sense when

⁴⁶ The drop off between mentions and endorsement/threats is due to members without mentions not having these scores as they are functionally different from "0"s which represent a collectively neutral sentiment.

⁴⁷ These use year fixed-effects and have the data clustered on the member to account for overlaps in membership and maintain the same specifications outside of dropping the functionally meaningless "up for reelection" variable.

considering many of his top Democratic mentions fell into these ranks. Partisanship reflects a Democratic bias in Trump's mentions and negative endorsement/threat scores, thus supporting the expectations for hypothesis 2. Ideologically, Trump is more likely to mention ideologically extreme members but the null results as it pertains to sentiment are likely a product of the shift in control from Republicans to Democrats in the 116th Congress. There are also mixed results for electoral vulnerability in shaping when and how Trump talks about a member, where he is more likely to mention less secure members but has a more positive attitude towards electorally safe members.

3.5 Conclusion

As a whole, Donald Trump's usage of Twitter during his presidency synthesized member and public communication in a manner which provides unique insight into his attitudes towards other elected officials that largely support my expectations regarding their political nature. Leaders in both parties were typically at the forefront of the former president's commentary, though the House was more egalitarian with key allies and enemies outpacing the heads of the Republican caucus in each term. Across Congress as a whole, Trump was generally more negative than positive in his public commentary about members. In no small part was this the result of his heavily negative attitude towards Democrats – with his top targets being major members from the opposition party. The timing of his messages are also reflective of the consideration of political context. The election years and the impeachment process acted as peak seasons for his Twitter activity as is made evident by the volume of his discussion of members at these times.

Examining Republicans more closely unveils a considerable divide in how he talked about members by party. While Republicans received far more attention when combining both chambers, they are referenced much of the time only through their own discussion of and praise for President Trump. Some did, however, receive a bit more direct support through promotion of their policies and upcoming elections. Contrarily, Democrats were talked about far more negatively and intensely, nearly mirroring Republican endorsement/threat scores while having a considerably lower group tweet count. These messages highlighted (and exaggerated) policy contrasts in addition to providing numerous calls to action to mobilize voters against the president's opposition party.

The general pattern of congressional-engagement on Twitter from Trump suggests that he was more focused on agenda setting than persuading members that might be pivotal to the passage of key bills. There are several examples of Trump expressing frustration with members for slow-rolling their support or failing to get legislation across the finish-line.⁴⁸ Just as well, there are attempts to "grease the wheels" with certain members in hopes they vote a certain way.⁴⁹ However, these are fairly low-effort compared to something like the Johnson Treatment. While congressional leaders are frequent targets, other pivotal members – namely centrists – lacked salience for Trump. Trump did not use Twitter to engage with the same level of lobbying that Johnson did, but his choices of more top-loaded engagement are more closely aligned with who Johnson contacted most regularly (Beckmann, Chaturvedi and Garcia, 2017).

Social media was not the exclusive domain of communication from the Trump administration. There were certainly behind-the-scenes meetings and efforts to try to gain support for various administration initiatives. Not to mention, there were abundant political rallies throughout his time in office. These engagements are worthy of further examination but are beyond the scope of this paper. Twitter was a consistent and relatively unfiltered tool in the Trump arsenal that – because of its ease of access – provides a comprehensive collection of the subjects Trump publicly prioritized throughout his administration. This opens the door for using his presidential tweets as a window into a wide array of political subjects outside of Congress as well.

While Twitter's conversion to X and many of the subsequent policies adopted by owner Elon Musk have depreciated several facets of that particular platform (Reed, 2024), social media as a whole shows no sign of vanishing any time soon. And, the degree to which Donald Trump utilized this powerful communication tool remains an available and potentially viable strategy for future presidents. Trump's immediate successor, Joe Biden, is hardly the prolific tweeter that previously occupied the oval office. However, Biden and his

⁴⁸ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: "The Freedom Caucus will hurt the entire Republican agenda if they don't get on the team, amp, fast. We must fight them, amp, Dems, in 2018!" March 30, 2017, 1:07:00 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/847435163143454723>

⁴⁹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: @SenJohnMcCain-Thank you for coming to D.C. for such a vital vote. Congrats to all Rep. We can now deliver grt healthcare to all Americans!" July 25, 2017, 3:24 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/889929412539543552>

reelection campaign are acutely aware of happenings on the social platform (Stokols, 2024; Weigel, 2024) and seem interested in advancing more elements of social media engagement into their strategy (Titcomb, 2024). With Trump himself mounting another presidential bid in 2024 as well as the lifting of his Twitter/X suspension, time will tell if such tactics will again be put to use very soon.

CHAPTER 4:

PUTTING THE "BULLY" IN BULLY PULPIT: PRESIDENT TRUMP'S CONGRESSIONAL PURGE THROUGH TWITTER

At the Faith and Freedom Coalition conference on July 17, 2022, Senator Lindsay Graham (R-SC) pined for the yesteryears of the Trump presidency, stating the following: "You know what I liked about Trump? Everybody was afraid of him. Including me" (Shoaib, 2022). Senator Graham's confession of fearing the former president expresses the power Trump wielded over his fellow Republicans. In Graham's case it has been well documented by journalists and politicians how transformative of an effect his fear of the president was. He went from being one of then-candidate Trump's sharpest and most outspoken critics with noteworthy statements referring to Trump as "a race-baiting, xenophobic religious bigot," to a stalwart ally and sycophant for President Trump, professing that he "deserves the Nobel Peace Prize and then some" (Ring, 2020). Graham is but one example of how President Trump used his influence to remold Congress and the Republican party to fit his personal brand.

It is not difficult to imagine why Senator Graham held some level of fear for the former president. Several cases during the Trump era demonstrate the political costs Republican congressmen endured for crossing the president. Although Trump's feud with John McCain (R-AZ) was one of his most prolific, his animosity towards fellow Arizonan Senator Jeff Flake had perhaps more direct political implications. Unlike McCain who wouldn't live to run for another election during Trump's time in office, Flake had to face a primary challenger who became the vessel of Trump's retribution. Trump quickly endorsed Flake's challenger, Dr. Kelli Ward. He then took to defaming Flake on a number of key issues, referred to him as "toxic" (Brown, N.d.),¹ and would later celebrate his drop from the

¹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: Great to see that Dr. Kelli Ward is running against Flake Jeff Flake, who is WEAK on borders, crime and a non-factor in Senate. He's toxic!" August 17, 2017, 6:56 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/898136462385979392>

race. Trump continued piling disparaging remarks upon Flake throughout the remainder of the latter's term by referring to him as "unelectable... weak and ineffective" (Brown, N.d.).² Would Flake have met this fate had his critiques of the president escaped Trump's notice? Or, was Trump's enumerated disdain for the senator a key factor in shaping his political fortunes? The answer to these questions has important repercussions for the relationship between Congress and the president not only during the Trump era but also beyond.

The president has long been recognized as the predominant leader of their political party (Seligman, 1956), with this role taking shape during the presidencies of Grover Cleveland and William McKinley (Klinghard, 2005). This position at the top of the party hierarchy typically manifests in setting the party's political agenda. But, some presidents have not been fully satisfied in this capacity, especially when they perceive members of their own party as a consistent obstacle to their policy goals. A particularly noteworthy example is Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), who sought to remove disloyal Democrats from Congress when he found his domestic agenda strained (Dunn, 2012). Beyond seeking systemic purges of copartisan apostates, the overarching strategy of "going public," identified by Kernell (2006), is an adversarial tactic that presidents have utilized to place members of Congress directly in the line of fire with their constituents and bypassing traditional bargaining and negotiation lines.

Compared with prior presidents, Trump may have been ideally positioned to instigate and carry out a purge of his copartisans. His campaign as a political outsider firmly identified his candidacy as a rejection of the Republican candidates that preceded him. And, in turn, their rejection of him cemented a clear rift in the party (Burns and Barbaro, 2016). Trump's electoral success where McCain and Romney had failed was lorded over the GOP (especially the individuals³ on those campaigns),⁴ nearly until the end of his presidency. The

² Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: "Jeff Flake(y) doesn't want to protect the Non- Senate confirmed Special Counsel, he wants to protect his future after being unelectable in Arizona for the "crime" of doing a terrible job! A weak and ineffective guy!" November 9, 2018, 12:10 PM.

<https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1060942600994050048>

³ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Paul Ryan, the failed V.P. candidate former Speaker of the House, whose record of achievement was atrocious (except during my first two years as President), ultimately became a long running lame duck failure, leaving his Party in the lurch both as a fundraiser leader " June 11, 2019, 11:10 PM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1149516400341348354>

⁴ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Obama is lucky he ran against @MittRomney, a man with very little talent or political skill, as opposed to someone who knows how to fight and win!" September 10,

battle for the "soul" of the GOP was a struggle throughout Trump's term. Many, including some of Trump's once sharpest critics like Lindsey Graham and Marco Rubio (R-FL), quickly fell in line with the president. Some "never-Trump" Republicans, however, coalesced around a political action committee, the Lincoln Project, to oppose the president. Notably, though, its failure to meaningfully chip away support from the Republican base is a testimony to Trump's role in the party (McLean, N.d.).

President Trump's evergreen utilization of X/Twitter⁵ as a communication tool synthesized personal communication with members and public visibility. And with the high level of media coverage his tweets garnered, many messages of his were significantly amplified. (Lazarus and Thornton, 2021; Wells et al., 2020). From his time as president-elect until his banning from Twitter in the final days of his presidency, Trump posted more than 26,600 tweets. Of those, approximately 18% of them were about one or more members of Congress. While Twitter was hardly the exclusive method Trump used to pursue his bully pulpit, his near-constant engagement with the platform makes his account an excellent catalog of the political issues, individuals, and other subjects that were salient with the president at any given moment in addition to being his "loudest" microphone.

Trump's eventual banning from Twitter in the closing days of his lame-duck presidency came with the tacit acknowledgement that his usage of the platform had considerable and dangerous influence on his followers (X, 2021). The rhetoric on and leading to the January 6th insurrection can be viewed as the maximal discontent Trump expressed towards Congress and a testament to his capacity to use the lever of the public to – in this case quite literally – threaten members of Congress. It should therefore come as little surprise that Trump was able to exercise his position to influence the departure of several members that did not fit his vision for the party.

4.1 Purges, Presidents, and Tweets

From historical perspectives, prior presidents utilized various tools to influence the public on various elements of their political objectives. The presidency of FDR in many

2010. 8:56 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1304040990550958081>

⁵ While the platform has been re-branded as "X" as of 2023, "Twitter," and related vernacular, will be used to identify the website throughout this manuscript as that was the name it carried throughout the entirety of the Trump administration.

aspects revolutionized the office of the president by strengthening and building many of the institutional features that continue to define the presidency to this day (Burke, 2000). One such notable contribution is FDR's efforts to bring the president closer to the public with his Fireside Chat radio addresses. FDR's usage of the mass communication technology of his era has been interpreted as a credit to his leadership, and it helped calm and reassure the public in the throes of the Great Depression (Kiewe, 2007). In the broader scheme of his presidency, the Fireside Chats were used to set expectations and persuade the public of the merits of the administration's various policy initiatives (Brockman, 2014; Pedemonte, 2019). Similar to Trump's use of Twitter, FDR was comfortable shifting this mechanism into an offensive tool to attack obstacles to his administration's agenda.

In a Fireside Chat on June 24th 1938, FDR maligned the "Copperheads" in his party and spoke directly to the public about the upcoming Democratic primaries. He urged listeners to prevent candidates who impeded his objectives in carrying out the "liberal declaration of principles" he had set forth in 1936 from securing Democratic nominations (Roosevelt, 1938). Although Roosevelt's disdain for disloyal Democrats was newly made apparent, divisions in the Democratic coalition had existed for years and intraparty disputes over the New Deal existed from the onset, and the ranks of obstructionist Democratic Senators had expanded before FDR even secured reelection (Dunn, 2012).⁶ FDR did more than simply encourage voters to carefully consider whether Democrats in their primaries were sufficiently committed to the New Deal's liberal ideals; he directly intervened in their primaries and backed liberal challengers (Dunn, 2012). The efforts to exile conservative members of his own party were consistent with Roosevelt's beliefs that the party system in America required a more cohesive conservative/liberal divide (Milkis, 1985), a notion largely taken for granted in far-more-polarized contemporary politics.

FDR's primary moves against members of his own party quickly earned the derisive label of "purge," likening it to more drastic efforts undertaken in the Soviet Union, but the label helped undermine these efforts (Dunn, 2012; Shogan, 2006). One of the purge's

⁶ Dunn (2012) identifies Carter Glass (VA), Harry Byrd (VA), Millard Tydings (MD), Thomas Gore (OK), Josiah Baily (NC), Walter George (GA), Ellison "Cotton Ed" Smith (SC), Robert Bulkley (OH), Bennett Champ Clark (MO), Burton Wheeler (MT), Tom Connally (TX), Pat McCarran (NV), and Guy Gillette (IO) as early members of the Democratic party to oppose the New Deal.

targets, Walter George (GA), electorally slaughtered his Roosevelt-anointed opponent (Telfeyan, 2002) which set a clear tone for the elections of the members FDR targeted, with nine of the ten Democratic members he sought to replace winning reelection. Paired with a high number of electoral defeats for Democrats in both chambers and the bolstering of the Conservative coalition in Congress, FDR's attempted purge is historically viewed as one of the biggest failures of his presidency (Dunn, 2012; Milkis, 2004; Wolf, 2019).

Roosevelt's attempt to forge a party more broadly loyal to him and his agenda is a precursor in many ways for the intraparty dynamics of the Republican party under Donald Trump. A testament to the overall influence Donald Trump and his character on the Republican party is the media narratives frequently positing the former president as a factor for member exit from his party throughout his presidency. The framing of this issue has taken a few forms. Some, including the former president himself, have interpreted Trump-era exits within a broader pattern of Republican retirement, particularly the departure of committee chairmen who have maxed out their time in the position (Reynolds, 2017). Others have framed it as reflecting negative reactions among Republicans to Trump and his brand of politics, suggesting members either willfully departed on their own so as to dissociate from the party or felt forced out due to their criticism of the president being met with retaliation (Bade, 2019; Krause and Byers, 2022). Trump's general impact on the Republican party has given rise to questions over whether or not he has realigned the party's voting base, with pointed losses among suburban voters and shoring up of rural and evangelical voters being characteristic shifts of this potential seventh party system (Vance, 2021). Regardless of whether Trump's role in the Republican party and its overall impact warrant the evaluation of a new American party system, it is clear that his grip on the party has had an important impact on the party's base and – by electoral extension – its congressional branch.

Trump's influence in the party seems to go beyond the traditional role of president by bringing radical elements of the Republican party into the forefront (Baker and Bader, 2022; Espinoza, 2022), tying public perceptions of the party to himself (Jacobson, 2018, 2020), and controlling the RNC (Heersink, 2018). While few presidents have attempted systemic purges of poor team players in the party, the parallels between some of the departures from the Republican party and the Democrats FDR attempted to oust highlight

an effort not so unfamiliar to American politics. Trump, in contrast with his modern Republican predecessors, has tossed aside efforts to broaden the party's voting coalition in favor of doubling down on a devoted base (Galvin, 2020). It is worth more deeply examining Trump's efforts to purge Republicans he did not like from Congress. A concerted effort to electorally purge members is likely conducted through multiple avenues. For Trump, none likely stand as pronounced as his use of social media as a mode of communicating to the party base. Indeed, Trump's mastery of digital communication has been deemed to be something of a spiritual successor to the Fireside Chats of FDR and "The Radio Priest" Charles Coughlin (Oborne and Roberts, 2017). The lack of coherently committed conservative ideology in Trump's policies raised questions over whether his initiatives would see support from his party, but surveys of Republicans have shown a willingness to embrace Trump over their self-identified conservative ideals (Barber and Pope, 2019). This contrasts with the reception of his rhetorical style which was seen as a source of division within the party's ranks (Krause and Byers, 2022) and had mixed reception among voters (Nelson, 2017; Thomsen, 2017).

In utilizing Twitter, Trump melded the harsh interpersonal bargaining posture of Lyndon Baines Johnson's interpersonal communication style (Zelizer, 2015) with highly visible mass communication and kept the electorate in on the conversation – potentially to the detriment of the other party (Kernell, 2006). As a candidate and president, Donald Trump commanded attention in the public sphere (Wells et al., 2020) and was reinforced through the widespread proliferation of his tweets (Pérez-Curiel and Limón-Naharro, 2019). Presidents have long been able to reorient media narratives in a more favorable capacity through press conferences and other events (Miles, 2014), and Trump's immediate predecessor, Barack Obama, pioneered presidential use of the Twitter platform (Aharony, 2012; Pfeiffer, 2018). However, the media was uniquely captivated by Trump and guaranteed that all but the most disengaged citizens were aware of the posts on @realDonaldTrump (Lazarus and Thornton, 2021).

Beyond the potential congressional influence, prior scholarship has identified several consequences that emerged as a result of Trump's tweets. Several tweets have been found to influence financial markets in their immediate aftermath (Filippou et al., 2020; Gjerstad et al., 2021; Huynh, 2021; Klaus and Koser, 2021). It has also been generally used to further

right-wing political projects through the normalization of discourse (Kreis, 2017; Varis, 2020), spread conspiracy theories (Hornsey et al., 2020; Ross and Rivers, 2018), and shift the political discussion surrounding different policy areas (Sahin, Johnson and Korkut, 2021).

4.2 Expectations

People paid attention to the president's Twitter account, especially once he was in office, and this granted considerable leverage and influence in many areas (Pérez-Curiel and Limón-Naharro, 2019). Therefore, it is not far-fetched to speculate that Trump's social media use could mobilize the Republican base to revolt against Republicans Trump regularly lamented in political primaries. Or, it could even be used against Democrats in the general election in a similar though less physically-threatening manner than he had in rallying the efforts to interfere with his failed reelection results (X, 2021). Indeed, the wider-reaching and more-frequent nature of Trump's Twitter feed may have enabled Trump to carry out a far more successful (in terms of departing members) purge than FDR or any other prior presidents.

I examine the following expectations for President Trump's Twitter communications towards congressional Republicans.

Hypothesis 1a: Ideological Preference. Trump is more likely to tweet positively/negatively about members of his own party who are more conservative/liberal.

Even if Trump himself may have lacked an ideological core personally (Barber and Pope, 2019), his presidency still rhetorically supported conservatism (Varis, 2020). These proclivities in the partisan sphere should lead to preferential treatment towards copartisans in-part based on where they fall on the ideological spectrum.

Hypothesis 1b: Disloyalty Dissatisfaction. Trump is more likely to tweet negatively about members of his own party who vote less in line with his policy agenda.

Donald Trump's status as a political outsider may have molded a less-than-typical president (Schier and Eberly, 2017; Worthy and Bennister, 2017), but he should have concrete motivations to go after members of his own party he did not like. The "going public" approach has been used as a vehicle for politicians to get member votes, which should extend toward more negative tweets directed at members who deviated from

Trump's agenda and policy preferences more frequently.

Hypothesis 2: Dissident Purge. Members of the Republican party which received negative attention from Trump were likely to leave or be removed from office.

Political dynamics have shifted tremendously since Franklin Roosevelt attempted to purge conservative southern Democrats from his party. The partisans are far more ideologically cohesive, removing the rift which attributed to the uphill battle FDR faced when trying to oust those members he felt jeopardized his agenda. Donald Trump's ascension to the central figure of his party (Heersink, 2018; Jacobson, 2020) arrived at a time that should have enabled him to more successfully target and remove members who he found objectionable than FDR. Social media is also a far larger and more sweeping tool than what FDR had at his disposal, thus giving Trump the capacity to engage in more relentless rhetoric against purge targets than FDR would have been able to.

4.3 Data

This paper uses data collected from Donald Trump's Twitter account, @realDonaldTrump as archived by Brown (N.d.). As the analyses of this paper are concerned with presidential communication and its influence, the data field is limited to Trump's time as president-elect starting November 8, 2016 through his account's original suspension on January 8, 2021. This time period captures a total of 26621 posts, including retweets and deleted messages posted by Donald Trump during this time frame. Tweets were hand-coded for references to members of Congress, and the level of endorsement/threat Trump posited towards them in those messages.

Trump's proclivities posed some interesting cases which required extra levels of attention to properly code. While his tendency towards giving nicknames for members of Congress was primarily aimed at Democrats, Trump occasionally developed one for his copartisans. Many of these are readily identifiable such as "Little" Ben Sasse (NE) or "Big" Luther Strange (AL). Less specific ones such as "RINO" (used for several members) and "Mitch's Boy" (John Thune (SD)) are helpfully linked with a proper noun reference to the member Trump is referencing. Occasionally some additional awareness of the member's state and political circumstances to correctly identify the member. Cases that were far too indirect are ignored in terms of their implications for members. An infamous example of

such a tweet involved Paul Ryan (WI) where Trump's recommendation to watch Judge Jeanine's show on Fox News⁷ treated viewers with an admonishment of Speaker Ryan as a negligent political shepherd who was actively harming Trump's policy agenda in Congress (Wagner, 2017). Paul Ryan and Donald Trump denied any connection between the tweet and the attack on Jeanine's show, adding plausible deniability to the list of reasons to ignore hundreds of hours of tweet-promoted Fox News content as potentially member-related messaging.

Each tweet with one or more identified members also includes a corresponding endorsement/threat score for each of those members to reflect Trump's expressed attitude towards that member. Endorsement/threat scores are on a five-point (-2 to 2) scale which considers the general tone and level of commitment to politically support or threaten the assigned member. A tweet that references multiple members has a unique score for each, which may be the same or vary depending on the construction of the tweet and how each member is treated in it (i.e. an endorsement of a candidate challenging an incumbent is a positive score for the candidate and a negative one for the incumbent). These scores are also compiled for composite measures at the member level.

Breaking down the scale, the positive spectrum is differentiated between "2" and "1" through the expression of direct electoral and/or political support. Electoral endorsements of members as well as elevating awareness and support of shared policy objectives are typical tweets within the "2" genre, while expressing gratitude, congratulatory messages, and general pleasant remarks about a member fall into the categorization of "1." "0s" reflect tonally neutral expressions towards the member with examples being basic statements of fact, messages where the member is not a primary subject, and most frequently, retweets from a member.

The negative spectrum is of greater focus for this paper and its analyses. "-1s" consist of attacks on members that focus more on specific policy actions or failures and milder attacks without going fully scorched-earth on the recipient. The failure to repeal the Affordable Care Act was a particularly noteworthy theme in these types of tweets,

⁷ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: Watch @JudgeJeanine on @FoxNews tonight at 9:00 P.M." March 25, 2017, 10:41 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/845646761704243200>

particularly taking aim at congressional leaders for their self-inflicted embarrassment.⁸ Some of these can be fairly petty attacks as well, such as a complimenting John Kerry for making a joke at Thomas Massie's (KY) expense⁹ after Trump previously expressed his frustration over his lack of support for COVID relief policies, or kicking the departing Bob Corker (TN) while he was down with several snide remarks about his inelectability.¹⁰ In contrast, "-2s" pose a directed political and/or electoral threat to the receiving member. The most obvious instances of this are Trump promising to campaign against someone, such as he had with Lisa Murkowski, fully aware she would not be up for reelection for another two years.¹¹ Maximal pursuits of "going public" (Kernell, 2006), wherein Trump directly encouraged the member's constituency to reevaluate their member¹² also fall into the -2 classification.

Trump referenced at least one member of Congress in over 4700 tweets. Figure 4.1 shows the breakdown of endorsement/threat scores for all Republicans Trump discussed via tweet during his time in office. On the whole, Trump was very positive towards his copartisans on the platform with a combined 43% of scores being a "2" or "1." Neutral "0" scores make up the largest categorization of member sentiments with negative "-1" and "-2" scores making up 5.5% of the remainder. This breakdown is fairly unsurprising, considering how consolidated Trump has made the Republican party behind him (Espinoza, 2022; Owens, 2021). Taking to Twitter to more frequently prop up Congressional allies in his own party, rather than relentlessly pursuing the perceived "bad seeds," casts Trump as generally more of a team player in this capacity. Trump's endurance of a fairly low level of dissension

⁸ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: The only problem I have with Mitch McConnell is that, after hearing Repeal & Replace for 7 years, he failed! That should NEVER have happened!" August 24, 2017, 9:42 AM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/900714982823821313?lang=bg>

⁹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Never knew John Kerry had such a good sense of humor! Very impressed!" March 27, 2020, 12:16 PM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1243572588200280064>

¹⁰ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Isn't it sad that lightweight Senator Bob Corker, who couldn't get re-elected in the Great State of Tennessee, will now fight Tax Cuts plus!" October 24, 2017, 9:30 AM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/922817539251556353>

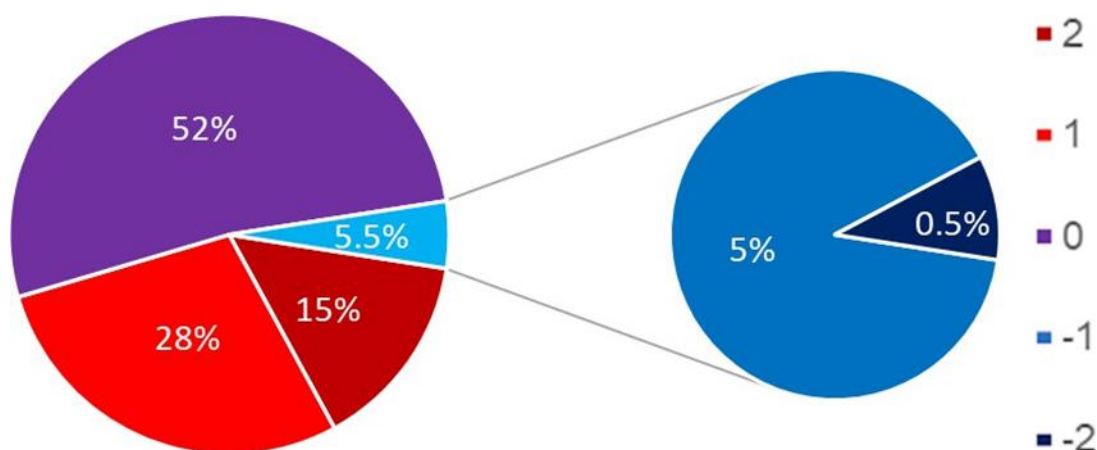
¹¹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Few people know where they'll be in two years from now, but I do, in the Great State of Alaska (which I love) campaigning against Senator Lisa Murkowski. She voted against HealthCare, Justice Kavanaugh, and much else..." June 4, 2020, 7:36 PM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1268688013791506450>

¹² Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: By empowering the Radical Left Democrats, do nothing Kentucky politician @RepThomasMassie is making their War on the 2nd Amendment more and more difficult to win (But don't worry, we will win anyway!). He is a disaster for America, and for the Great State of Kentucky!" March 27, 2020, 10:13 AM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1243541556424048643>

in the ranks translates into a seemingly proportionate level of grievances in response.

In addition to the tweet related variables, several control variables related to member biographical data including party, ideological Scores (NOMINATE), Bycoffe (2021) Trump Loyalty Scores, leadership status, committee ranks, gender, and vote shares in their prior elections were also collected to run analyses.

Figure 4.1: Composition of Endorsement/Threat Scores Across Republican Members



4.4 Analysis and Discussion

Table 4.1 displays the results of a Poisson Count model for variables associated with Trump's likelihood of tweeting about a Republican member of Congress with fixed effects for year and standard errors clustered on the individual member to account for repeated member observations. A Poisson Count model is used as it best accounts for the structure of the Twitter mentions variable, which is a count of the number of tweets that contained a member's name, and the presence of several cases with 0 mentions. Trump was far more likely to mention Republican leaders and committee chairs than rank-and-file members. Trump was less likely to discuss those who were less supportive of his agenda¹³ and those who were more electorally secure, as measured by their prior vote share. Gender seemingly played no role in his proclivity to discuss Republicans in Congress. It is somewhat surprising that Trump would be less likely to discuss members who deviate from his agenda on social

¹³ As derived from Trump support scores from Bycoffe (2021), with the <75% support variable referring to 70 out of 1092 member-year observations.

media, considering his vindictive reputation. However, deeper analysis of Trump's endorsement/threat scores and who was discussed will provide some clarity on this front.

Table 4.1: Determinants of Trump's Member-Tweet Count

	<i>Number of Mentions</i>
	Year Total
Leader	2.619*** (0.060)
Chair	0.824*** (0.047)
Gender	0.083 (0.061)
<75% Trump Support Score	-0.576*** (0.092)
Prior Vote Share	-0.004*** (0.001)
Constant	-0.592*** (0.106)
Observations	1,092
Log Likelihood	-5,074.610
Akaike Inf. Crit.	10,167.220
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Figure 4.2 shows the result of an OLS model for the drivers of Trump's endorsement/threat scores for his copartisans. Leadership and ideology, as measured by first dimension nominate scores, are the only statistically significant variable which is positively associated with higher endorsement scores. Trump was more likely to post positively about more conservative members of the caucus, supporting my ideological expectations for his sentiments about copartisans from hypothesis 1a. The lack of significance that decreased loyalty would be associated with more negative tweets against a member fails to support my expectations from hypothesis 1b. There are only eight observations of Republicans with a support score below 75% that have a net negative sentiment across their congressional career: Justin Amash in 2017-2019,¹⁴ Steve King in 2020, Raul Labrador in 2018, Thomas Massie in 2018, John McCain in 2017, and Mark

¹⁴ Ironically, Amash's highest score, 81.2% was in 2020, the year he defected from the Republican party and voted to impeach Trump which consequently was the only year Trump tweeted about him.

Sanford in 2018. The disconnect between loyalty scores and expressed threats against members is perhaps the product of general disinterest from Trump in policy and that only defections on key votes earned a sufficient level of ire to publicly complain about a member. It is also likely that Trump was motivated by more personal animus related to member's statements and critiques of him which was not reflected in their support for his legislative agenda. This will be explored as I more closely examine the members Trump primarily discussed in a negative light.

Table 4.3 shows all Republicans that Trump posted at least one negative tweet about while both were in office, ordered in ascending order from lowest to highest collective sentiments. As previously inferred from Figure 4.1, as Trump was mostly positive and neutral towards his copartisans on Twitter, fairly few Republican members received negative posts, and even fewer (14) received enough for it to reflect Trump's prevailing sentiment of that member. Some of the members Trump expressed the most positive sentiments towards overall were not entirely immune from receiving occasional criticism. Mitch McConnell's position as Senate majority leader – the shepherd of much of Trump's congressional agenda – placed him in the line of fire when Trump's agenda was impeded legislatively¹⁵ or electorally.¹⁶ Even some of Trump's most steadfast allies such as Jim Jordan and future chief of staff Mark Meadows would earn ire when they strayed from his chosen path such as slow-rolling support on key votes.¹⁷

¹⁵ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: The only problem I have with Mitch McConnell is that, after hearing Repeal Replace for 7 years, he failed! That should NEVER have happened!" August 24, 2017, 9:42 AM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/900714982823821313?lang=bg>

¹⁶ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: I hope the Democrats, and even more importantly, the weak and ineffective RINO section of the Republican Party, are looking at the thousands of people pouring into D.C. They won't stand for a landslide election victory to be stolen. @senatemajldr @JohnCornyn @SenJohnThune" January 5, 2021, 5:12 PM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1346580318745206785>

¹⁷ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: If @RepMarkMeadows, @Jim_Jordan and @Raul_Labrador would get on board we would have both great healthcare and massive tax cuts & reform." March 30, 2017, 5:20 PM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/847559239149158401>

Table 4.2: Determinants of Trump's Expressed Sentiments Towards Republicans

	<i>Collective Sentiment:</i>
	Year Level
Leader	7.400*** (2.562)
Chair	0.600 (1.061)
Gender	1.604 (1.131)
NOMINATE	4.902** (2.269)
<75% Trump Support Score	-1.133 (1.442)
Prior Vote Share	-0.040 (0.026)
Constant	0.606 (2.243)
Observations	423
R ²	0.056
Adjusted R ²	0.035
Residual Std. Error	7.098 (df = 413)
F Statistic	2.711*** (df = 9; 413)
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4.3: President Trump's Attitudes Towards Republicans

Breakdown of Members with Negative Tweets				
Member	Positive Tweet Count	Neutral Tweet Count	Negative Tweet Count	Collective Sentiment
Mitt Romney (UT)	0	10	42	-47
Bob Corker (TN)	0	0	16	-16
Jeff Flake (AZ)	0	0	10	-10
Mark Sanford (SC)	0	0	8	-9
Thomas Massie (KY)	0	4	4	-7
Lisa Murkowski (AK)	0	3	5	-7
Justin Amash (MI)	0	0	5	-6
Richard Burr (NC)	4	6	10	-6
John McCain (AZ)	5	1	9	-5
Bradley Byrne (AL)	0	3	2	-4
Raul Labrador (ID)	0	0	3	-3
Liz Cheney (WY)	4	4	4	-1
John Thune (SD)	4	12	3	-1
Ben Sasse (NE)	6	2	6	-1
Paul Ryan (WI)	9	3	10	0
Pat Toomey (PA)	1	5	1	0
Mike Rounds (SD)	2	1	2	1
Susan Collins (ME)	6	5	1	6
Doug Collins (GA)	14	56	2	12
Mark Meadows (NC)	19	111	4	15
James Inhofe (OK)	15	9	4	17
Marco Rubio (FL)	19	24	1	18
Rand Paul (KY)	20	48	2	19
Ron Johnson (WI)	20	29	1	19
Steve Scalise (LA)	21	59	2	23
Lindsey Graham (SC)	38	125	7	34
Jim Jordan (OH)	41	184	3	38
Ted Cruz (TX)	41	59	1	43
Mitch McConnell (KY)	60	118	7	58

Trump's Twitter account was suspended prior to his second impeachment which took place between January 26th and February 13th 2021. Had his account been active he undoubtedly would have had plenty of attacks towards the Republicans who voted against him with the precedents set by Mitt Romney and Justin Amash, the only Republicans¹⁸ who voted in favor of his first impeachment and conviction. As a result, only Liz Cheney of the ten¹⁹ House Republicans that voted in favor of impeachment has any negative mentions going in, and only Bill Cassidy (LA) of the seven²⁰ Senate Republicans who voted to convict him escaped any negative attention.

Exploring the members Trump expressed collectively negative views towards, his success in purging undesirable members of the party can be better accessed. Mitt Romney, who has by far the most negative score, was the subject of one of Trump's most public feuds.

¹⁸ Justin Amash had technically switched his party affiliation to "Independent" prior to casting his vote in favor of impeachment.

¹⁹ The others being: Anthony Gonzalez (OH), Jaime Herrera Beutler (WA), John Katko (NY), Adam Kinzinger (IL), Peter Meijer (MI), Dan Newhouse (WA), Tom Rice (SC), Fred Upton (MI), and David Valadao (CA).

²⁰ The others being: Richard Burr, Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, Mitt Romney, Ben Sasse, and Pat Toomey.

Donald Trump actually endorsed candidate Mitt Romney,²¹ but Trump almost immediately turned on Senator Romney after he won his seat questioning whether he would be "a Flake" (in reference to the former Senator from Arizona).²² Romney remained in Trump's bad graces through his continued public criticism of the president and being the only Republican senator to vote in favor of the first impeachment, an act which Trump pulled a reversal for insisted that Romney should instead be "impeached."²³ Although he survived the Trump years, due to not facing reelection during them, Romney did announce he would not seek reelection in 2024. This is an outcome unquestionably satisfactory for the former president as he announced his explicit intention to rid the party "of the Romneys of the world" (Bates, 2024). Senators Jeff Flake and Bob Corker were early casualties of the Trump era, both up for reelection in the 2018 midterm and opting to retire rather than face voters with their mutual public animosity with their copartisan president. Corker²⁴ and Flake²⁵ opposed Trump in signature policy areas driving further negativity.

Additional Senators Trump singled out to attack endured similar fates. Richard Burr fell into Trump's bad graces when, as head of the Senate Intelligence Committee, he subpoenaed Donald Trump Jr. over potential election interference involvement with Russia (Collins, 2019). Burr would retire when he was next up for reelection in 2022. Ben Sasse saw a turn in Trump's perspective on him following the release of leaked audio of him criticizing the president over various policies, his character, and "rage tweeting" (Axelrod,

²¹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: .@MittRomney has announced he is running for the Senate from the wonderful State of Utah. He will make a great Senator and worthy successor to @OrrinHatch, and has my full support and endorsement!" February 20, 2018, 9:21 AM.

<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/965773283554668544>

²² Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Here we go with Mitt Romney, but so fast! Question will be, is he a Flake? I hope not. Would much prefer that Mitt focus on Border Security and so many other things where he can be helpful. I won big, and he didn't. He should be happy for all Republicans. Be a TEAM player WIN!" January 2, 2019, 7:53 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1080447092882112512>

²³ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: .@MittRomney has announced he is running for the Senate from the wonderful State of Utah. He will make a great Senator and worthy successor to @OrrinHatch, and has my full support and endorsement!" February 20, 2018, 9:21.

<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/965773283554668544>

²⁴ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Bob Corker, who helped President O give us the badIran Deal amp, couldn't get elected dog catcher in Tennessee, is now fighting Tax Cuts..." October 24, 2017,8:31 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/922798321739161600?lang=en>

²⁵ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Great to see that Dr. Kelli Ward is running against Flake Jeff Flake, who is WEAK on borders, crime and a non-factor in Senate. He's toxic!" August 17, 2017, 6:56 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/898136462385979392>

2020). Trump quickly lashed out at the "stupid and obnoxious"²⁶ senator and directly compared him to previously ousted critics Bob Corker and Jeff Flake.²⁷ He further suggested that Sasse should retire or be replaced with a more viable Republican.²⁸ Fortunately for Sasse's immediate political prospects, two weeks from the general election was far too late to be replaced by another Republican. He did ultimately resign from his office prematurely, though, to assume a position as the President of the University of Florida before having the chance to face a GOP primary again. John McCain was a member Trump entered office with hostility towards. These flames were only further fueled through McCain's pivotal vote that killed the attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act²⁹ despite dubious efforts from Trump to grease the wheels for McCain on that vote.³⁰

Two of the eight Senators Trump targeted negatively did manage to survive their next election – a far more successful sweep than that of Franklin Roosevelt's purge which saw all ten of his targets remain. John Thune received retaliation from Trump following his rejection of election denialism during the lame duck session. The president not only made the call for action for Thune to be primaried³¹ but also directly challenged his and others' assertions that the 2020 election was fair.³² Thune held on in a competitive Republican

²⁶ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: ...Nomination to run for a second term. Then he went back to his rather stupid and obnoxious ways. Must feel he can't lose to a Dem. Little Ben is a liability to the Republican Party, and an embarrassment to the Great State of Nebraska. Other than that, he's just a wonderful guy!" October 17, 2020, 9:39 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1317460179223498753>

²⁷ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Senator Little Ben Sasse of the Great State of Nebraska seems to be heading down the same inglorious path as former Senators Lid- dle' Bob Corker, whose approval rating in Tennessee went from 55% to 4%, Jeff "the Flake" Flake, whose approval rating in Arizona went from 56% to...." October 17, 2020, 12:00 PM.

<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1317495722133065728>

²⁸ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump:practically nothing. Both Senators be- came totally unelectable, couldn't come even close to winning their primaries, and decided to drop out of politics and gracefully "RETIRE". @SenSasse could be next, or perhaps the Republicans should find a new and more viable candidate?" October 17, 2020, 12:00 PM.

<https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1317495725786353670>

²⁹ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Democrats are laughingly saying that McCain had a "moment of courage." Tell that to the people of Arizona who were deceived. 116% increase!" September 23, 2017, 6:20 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/91171700422091264>

³⁰ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: So great that John McCain is com- ing back to vote. Brave - American hero! Thank you John." July 25, 2017, 6:44 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/889798407228989441>

³¹ @realDonaldTrump tweet from December 23, 2020: "Republicans in the Senate so quickly forget. Right now they would be down 8 seats without my backing them in the last Election. RINO John Thune, "Mitch's boy", should just let it play out. South Dakota doesn't like weakness. He will be primaried in 2022, political career over!!!"

³² @realDonaldTrump tweet from January 5, 2021: "I hope the Democrats, and even more importantly, the

primary in 2022. Trump followed through on his previous threat to campaign against Lisa Murkowski in 2022 (Ruskin, 2022) due to her repeated defections on marquee votes, but she managed to hold on to her seat in a highly competitive election decided in Round 3 of Alaska's ranked choice voting election.

In the House, Trump was similarly successful in seeing his co-partisan opponents removed from office with only one survivor holding out among the seven who received negative attention. Thomas Massie, the sole survivor, earned considerable hostility on account of his opposition towards COVID relief³³ but would go unpunished by his Conservative constituency. His fellow derided colleagues were not as fortunate. Justin Amash's renouncement of the Republican party in the lead up to his vote in favor of impeaching Donald Trump was met with mockery by the president who was gleeful at the knowledge he was being challenged for his seat,³⁴ though Amash would opt not to seek reelection in 2020. Raul Labrador received relatively mild criticism for slow-rolling support for health care reform with Mark Meadows and Jim Jordan. But, unlike those two, he never received counteracting positive remarks, and he was defeated in a gubernatorial primary in 2018. Mark Sanford was similarly ousted in 2018, though he was the recipient of greater hostility as Trump considered him "unhelpful" to the MAGA agenda.³⁵ Bradley Byrne's negativity is more so the result of collateral damage as he was not Trump's preferred candidate for the GOP primary for the Alabama Senate seat in 2020. Finally, Liz Cheney, well known for her role in the January 6th Committee following Trump's 2020 defeat, earned ridicule from Trump for foreign policy disagreements³⁶ before Trump grew frustrated with

weak and ineffective RINO section of the Republican Party, are looking at the thousands of people pouring into D.C. They won't stand for a landslide election victory to be stolen. @senatemajldr @JohnCornyn @SenJohnThune"

³³ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: ... costly. Workers small businesses need money now in order to survive. Virus wasn't their fault. It is "HELL" dealing with the Dems, had to give up some stupid things in order to get the "big picture" done. 90% GREAT! WIN BACK HOUSE, but throw Massie out of Republican Party!" March 27, 2020, 9:44 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1243534445367492608>

³⁴ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: Great news for the Republican Party as one of the dumbest amp, most disloyal men in Congress is "quitting" the Party. No Collusion, No Obstruction! Knew he couldn't get the nomination to run again in the Great State of Michigan. Already being challenged for his seat. A total loser!" July 4, 2019, 9:05 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1146766931573301248>

³⁵ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Mark Sanford has been very unhelpful to me in my campaign to MAGA. He is MIA and nothing but trouble. He is better off in Argentina. I fully endorse Katie Arrington for Congress in SC, a state I love. She is tough on crime and will continue our fight to lower taxes. VOTE Katie!" June 12, 2018, 4:12 PM. <https://x.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1006630395067039744>

³⁶ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@RealDonaldTrump: Liz Cheney is only upset because I have been actively

her failure to embrace his "stolen victory" narrative. Due to timing, Cheney would face the consequences in the next electoral cycle, losing the Republican primary in 2022.

Table 4.4 shows the full breakdown of the negatively targeted members and when they were "purged" from Congress in the Trump-era. Ben Sasse has the "*" on account of him technically resigning in early 2023, but he aligns most closely with the 2022 cycle despite not being up for reelection during it. John McCain has been excluded on account of his death to brain cancer being divorced from any causality link between Trump's attitude towards him and his departure from Congress. This shows the overall 10/13 success rate Trump had in eliminating less desirable Republicans from the party through identification and chastisement on Twitter. Comparing t-tests for pre-general election departures through retirement or primary election loss (for those with negative scores ($t = 4.2682$, $df = 558.39$, $p\text{-value} = 2.315e-05$) and those with positive scores ($t = -16.304$, $df = 619.93$, $p\text{-value} < 2.2e-16$)) there is further support for my expectations regarding Trump's purge successes and that his influence extends beyond mere coincidence. This is apparent when comparing the same type of exits in the party.

Table 4.4: Negative Republican Departures in the Trump Era

2018	Bob Corker	Jeff Flake	Raul Labrador	Mark Sanford
2020	Justin Amash	Bradley Byrne		
2022	Liz Cheney	Richard Burr	Ben Sasse*	
2024	Mitt Romney			
Survived	John Thune	Lisa Murkowski	Thomas Massie	

Beyond those with a net-negative score, there are other members who Trump changed his attitude towards for the worse. Former Speaker of the House Paul Ryan was generally a recipient of positive endorsements and even praise³⁷ during his tenure. Following his departure from Congress, however, Trump would unleash a flurry of criticism his way.³⁸

getting our great and beautiful Country out of the ridiculous and costly Endless Wars. I am also making our so-called allies pay tens of billions of dollars in delinquent military costs. They must, at least, treat us fairly!!!" July 23, 2020, 7:45 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1286266178789310465>

³⁷ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump: Speaker Paul Ryan is a truly good man, and while he will not be seeking re-election, he will leave a legacy of achievement that nobody can question. We are with you Paul!" April 11, 2018, 9:50 AM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/984066131303583746>

³⁸ Trump, Donald J. "Twitter/@realDonaldTrump:Paul Ryan almost killed the Republican Party. Weak, ineffective stupid are not exactly the qualities that Republicans, or the CITIZENS of our Country, were looking

Trump's online rhetoric, at least towards Paul Ryan, certainly did not play a role in the latter's decision to leave Congress, but his bullying of the former Speaker may have helped keep him politically sidelined for the remainder of the Trump-era.

4.5 Conclusion

The small cohort of Republicans Trump was negative towards in the Senate and House reinforce many of the expectations for the types of members Trump has spoken about removing from the party. This small sample indicates considerable success from the former president on this front. Trump did not make the same concerted effort FDR did in terms of selecting a specific cycle, so his critiques are scattered and – in the case of the Senate – not necessarily immediately actionable. Similar to FDR, he found ideology to be important in reflecting his expressed sentiment towards members. But, he diverges from his distant predecessor in that legislative support for his agenda was not a clear criterion for earning his wrath. Nonetheless, only two³⁹ senators and one representative⁴⁰ Trump opposed on Twitter remain in office after facing reelection and all of the representatives he negatively targeted have retired from Congress or lost primaries. Compared with the single representative, John O'Connor (NY), that FDR was able to knock off of the 11 conservative Democrats he tried to beat, Trump's 10/13⁴¹ record is far more impressive. This even ignores other avenues through which he may have identified members beyond this group for removal. The volume and access of the tweets likely helped Trump succeed where Roosevelt failed. Despite that success, Trump largely landed in the same position post-primary with a reduced Republican coalition in both chambers and middling general electoral performances – even as far as the 2022 midterms among his preferred candidates (Bowman, 2022). This ultimately places the tangible policy outcomes in the same position as Roosevelt's failed purge in spite of Trump's accomplishing more of its immediate objective.

Trump's success in purging members he didn't like from Congress pre-general election (and keeping many of them out of political office since) demonstrates the powerful

for. Right now our spirit is at an all time high, far better than the Radical Left Dems. You'll see next year!" July 13, 2019, 5:19 PM. <https://x.com/realDonaldTrump/status/1150152762044440576>

³⁹ Lisa Murkowski and John Thune

⁴⁰ Thomas Massie

⁴¹ John McCain would elevate this to 11/14 but considering his death presumably had little to do with Trump's opposition to him, he's excluded from this final count.

grip he holds over his party and has important implications for his successors. Compared with many prior occupants of the Oval Office, Trump has remained a political force out of office. He has helped engineer the ousting of other Republicans members of Congress who avoided adverse attention while he was in office. For example, his rescinded endorsement of Mo Brooks in favor of Katie Britt for the Alabama Senate seat in 2022 resulted in the former's defeat (Koplowitz, 2022). Trump's 2024 campaign has made no secret out of his desire to broadly purge disloyal, non-"MAGA," Republicans from the party entirely (Bates, 2024). And, this notion has sweeping implications that extend far beyond just presidential-congressional relations. Even during his time in office he certainly had plenty to say about candidates who never made it into Congress along with down ballot Republicans (Ouyang et al., 2020). Assessing the potential political ramifications of Trump's rhetoric towards politicians outside of Congress is worthy of future examination.

Beyond Trump, the tools to use the presidential bully pulpit to take out perceivably disloyal partisans remain largely intact. All that is required is an executive willing to employ them and less-than-willing targets. Though a radical departure from Trump in temperament, Joe Biden has been similarly presented with copartisans who have served as hindrances to his agenda. Some debate has emerged over whether Biden should consider purging centrist Democrats, such as the since-turned Independents Joe Manchin and Krysten Sinema. However, the fear of reliving FDR's mistake (Rozsa, 2021) and a likely general lack of will has kept this tactic as a theoretical. Nonetheless, Biden has taken to X/Twitter to passive-aggressively chastise Democratic obstructionists with repeated calls for "two more Democratic senators."⁴² It is also possible that the particulars of the Republican base in the modern political climate, paired with X/Twitter's right-wing pivot under Elon Musk's ownership (Anderson, 2023) and absence of a consensus alternative platform, may limit the viability of these tactics to future Republican presidents.

⁴² Biden, Joseph R. "X/@JoeBiden: If you give me two more Democratic senators, and Democrats keep the House, I promise you we will codify Roe v. Wade. We will once again make Roe the law of the land. We will once again protect a woman's right to choose." September 23, 2022, 1:18 PM. <https://x.com/JoeBiden/status/1573361187491921920>

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

Technological innovations have added a new veneer to the dynamics between political actors in Congress and beyond, yet beneath the surface we still find commonalities between these individuals and those who served before them. Much of our understandings about what motivates members of Congress (Fenno, 1978; Mayhew, 1974a) are still true, but the costs and benefits of serving have to be considered more broadly than simply seeking reelection for job security's sake. Many key members, from committee chairs to chamber leaders, have left office in recent years which is indicative of broader motivations tied to the utility of their seats that are not being satisfied in the present political context. If these figures are reevaluating what they are getting out of remaining in Congress, rank-in-file members undoubtedly question if the probability of achieving their political ambitions within Congress is worth running for another term or not.

The relationship between Congress, its members, and the President of the United States is also of paramount importance to the functioning of our institutions and the behaviors of individuals therein. The advent of social media, and a president willing to engage with one such platform to its fullest, has opened a new realm through which the chief executive may fuse public and personal engagements with members of Congress. During Donald Trump's presidency, his use of Twitter was on the cutting edge and granted him arguably the loudest megaphone of any American President to spread his message, especially when paired with the proliferation of his tweets as leading news stories (Wells et al., 2020). Despite the radical evolution Twitter use was over prior forms of political communication, and the former president's divergence in tone compared to his predecessors, Trump's engagement with members of Congress on the platform followed general patterns that resembled communication strategies from many prior presidents.

Even Donald Trump's copartisan feuds and efforts to reshape the Republican party were not without precedent. While Franklin Roosevelt could scarcely imagine the scale and reach of Twitter, he too identified a number of copartisan Democratic congressmen who he tried, and failed, to remove from office. Greater partisan-ideological cohesion and the

further reaching tools at his literal fingertips likely gave Trump an edge that made him more successful than FDR in this regard, as several targeted Republicans lost primaries or saw the writing on the wall and retired. Trump's stated objectives since the end of his administration demonstrate a desire to continue purging partisan dissidents making the understanding of his nascent efforts all the more important for the future of American politics.

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APPENDIX A:

CHAPTER 2 APPENDIX

Table A2.1: Alternative Senate Models

<i>Retirement with Below, Meets, and Above Benchmark LES</i>		
	Model 1	Model 2
Majority	-0.015 (0.013)	-0.016 (0.012)
Chair	-0.009 (0.016)	-0.016 (0.015)
Leader	-0.009 (0.016)	-0.004 (0.015)
Power Committee Member	-0.013 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.011)
Race	0.030 (0.025)	0.017 (0.023)
Gender	-0.028 (0.017)	-0.025 (0.016)
Distance from Chamber Median	0.005 (0.030)	-0.012 (0.028)
NOMINATE	0.028** (0.014)	0.029** (0.013)
Freshman	0.008 (0.018)	0.019 (0.016)
Seniority	0.009*** (0.001)	0.009*** (0.001)
Prior Vote Share	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)
Up for Reelection	0.170*** (0.010)	0.157*** (0.010)
LES vs. Benchmark LES	-0.027*** (0.007)	-0.021*** (0.007)
Constant	0.098** (0.046)	0.080* (0.043)
Observations	2,489	2,489
R ²	0.144	0.145
Adjusted R ²	0.131	0.132
Residual Std. Error	0.240 (df = 2451)	0.223 (df = 2451)
F Statistic	11.178*** (df = 37; 2451)	11.212*** (df = 37; 2451)
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

Table A2.2: Alternative House Models

<i>Retirement with Below, Meets, and Above Benchmark LES</i>		
	Model 1	Model 2
Majority	-0.019** (0.008)	-0.014* (0.008)
Chair	-0.012 (0.013)	-0.011 (0.013)
Leader	-0.014 (0.014)	-0.019 (0.014)
Power Committee Member	-0.020*** (0.006)	-0.016** (0.006)
Race	-0.010 (0.009)	-0.003 (0.009)
Gender	0.009 (0.009)	0.004 (0.009)
Distance from Chamber Median	-0.054*** (0.016)	-0.049*** (0.016)
NOMINATE	0.038*** (0.008)	0.033*** (0.008)
Freshman	-0.044*** (0.008)	-0.014* (0.008)
Seniority	0.010*** (0.001)	0.012*** (0.001)
Prior Vote Share	-0.0003 (0.0002)	-0.0004** (0.0002)
LES vs. Benchmark LES	-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.012*** (0.004)
Constant	0.136*** (0.022)	0.085*** (0.022)
Observations	10,723	10,721
R ²	0.041	0.053
Adjusted R ²	0.038	0.050
Residual Std. Error	0.276 (df = 10686)	0.231 (df = 10684)
F Statistic	12.693*** (df = 36; 10686)	16.722*** (df = 36; 10684)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

APPENDIX B:
CHAPTER 3 APPENDIX

Table B3.1: President Trump's Attitudes Towards U.S. Senators (A-KI)

Senators and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Senator	Tweet Count	Average Score*	Collective Score
Lamar Alexander (R-TN)	9	0.889	8
John Barrasso (R-WY)	38	0.361	13
Michael Bennet (D-CO)	2	-1	-2
Marsha Blackburn (R-TN)	54	0.333	18
Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)	18	-1.333	-24
Roy Blunt (R-MO)	13	0.308	4
Cory Booker (D-NJ)	10	-0.9	-9
John Boozman (R-AR)	15	0.533	8
Mike Braun (R-IN)	14	0.929	13
Sherrod Brown (D-OH)	1	-1	-1
Richard Burr (R-NC)	20	-0.3	-6
Shelley Capito (R-WV)	24	0.833	20
Thomas Carper (D-DE)	1	-1	-1
Robert Casey (D-PA)	4	-2	-8
Bill Cassidy (R-LA)	20	0.55	11
Thad Cochran (R-MS)	1	1	1
Susan Collins (R-ME)	12	0.5	6
Christopher Coons (D-DE)	2	-1	-2
Bob Corker (R-TN)	16	-1	-16
John Cornyn (R-TX)	16	0.688	11
Tom Cotton (R-AR)	42	0.405	17
Kevin Cramer (R-ND)	16	0.625	10
Mike Crapo (R-ID)	17	0.882	15
Ted Cruz (R-TX)	101	0.426	43
Steve Daines (R-MT)	32	1.25	40
Joe Donnelly (D-IN)	2	-1	-2
Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)	1	-1	-1
Richard Durbin (D-IL)	2	-1	-2
Michael Enzi (R-WY)	8	0.625	5
Joni Ernst (R-IA)	40	0.775	31
Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)	9	-0.667	-6
Deb Fischer (R-NE)	21	0.714	15
Jeff Flake (R-AZ)	10	-1	-10
Al Franken (D-MN)	1	-1	-1
Cory Gardner (R-CO)	30	1.067	32
Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY)	3	-1	-3
Lindsey Graham (R-SC)	170	0.2	34
Chuck Grassley (R-IA)	46	0.543	25
Kamala Harris (D-CA)	80	-0.95	-76
Orrin Hatch (R-UT)	3	1	3
Josh Hawley (R-MO)	55	0.6	33
Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)	3	-1	-3
Dean Heller (R-NV)	4	1.75	7
John Hoeven (R-ND)	9	0.333	3
Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)	18	1.278	23
James Inhofe (R-OK)	28	0.607	17
Johnny Isakson (R-GA)	3	1	3
Ron Johnson (R-WI)	50	0.38	19
Doug Jones (D-AL)	20	-1.7	-34
Tim Kaine (D-VA)	1	-1	-1
John Kennedy (R-LA)	21	0.857	18
Angus King (I-ME)	1	1	1
Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)	9	-0.67	-6

Table B3.2: President Trump's Attitudes Towards U.S. Senators (Ky-Y)

Senators and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Senator	Tweet Count	Average Score*	Collective Score
Jon Kyl (R-AZ)	1	2	2
James Lankford (R-OK)	15	0.313	5
Mike Lee (R-UT)	10	0.3	3
Kelly Loeffler (R-GA)	42	1.167	49
Joe Manchin (D-WV)	13	-0.69	-9
Edward Markey (D-MA)	3	-1.668	-5
John McCain (R-AZ)	16	-0.313	-5
Claire McCaskill (D-MO)	5	-1.6	-8
Mitch McConnell (R-KY)	186	0.314	58
Martha McSally (R-AZ)	27	0.926	25
Jerry Moran (R-KS)	13	0.308	4
Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)	8	-0.875	-7
Christopher Murphy (D-CT)	4	-0.5	-2
Bill Nelson (D-FL)	9	-1	-9
Rand Paul (R-KY)	70	0.253	19
David Perdue (R-GA)	55	0.909	50
Gary Peters (D-MI)	5	-1.4	-7
Rob Portman (R-OH)	14	0.786	11
James Risch (R-ID)	15	0.73	11
Pat Roberts (R-KS)	6	0.5	3
Mitt Romney (R-UT)	52	-0.901	-47
Mike Rounds (R-SD)	5	0.2	1
Marco Rubio (R-FL)	77	0.41	18
Bernard Sanders (I-VT)	166	-0.813	-135
Ben Sasse (R-NE)	14	-0.071	-1
Charles Schumer (D-NY)	262	-0.95	-249
Tim Scott (R-SC)	31	0.613	19
Rick Scott (R-FL)	33	0.455	15
Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)	16	-2	-32
Richard Shelby (R-AL)	10	0.7	7
Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ)	9	-1.444	-13
Tina Smith (D-MN)	4	-2	-8
Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)	5	-1.8	-9
Luther Strange (R-AL)	21	1.762	37
Dan Sullivan (R-AK)	10	0.5	5
Jon Tester (D-MT)	9	-1.556	-14
John Thune (R-SD)	18	-0.056	-1
Thom Tillis (R-NC)	28	0.571	16
Pat Toomey (R-PA)	7	0	0*
Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)	3	-1	-3
Mark Warner (D-VA)	8	-0.875	-7
Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)	87	-0.954	-83
Roger Wicker (R-MS)	15	0.533	8
Ron Wyden (D-OR)	2	0	0
Todd Young (R-IN)	6	0.5	3
Total (98)	2,554	0.004	10

Table B3.3: President Trump's Attitudes Towards U.S. Representatives A-C

Representatives and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Representative	Tweet Count	Average Score*	Collective Score
Ralph Abraham (R-LA)	16	2	32
Robert Aderholt (R-AL)	1	0	0
Rick Allen (R-GA)	3	0.333	1
Justin Amash (R-MI)	5	-0.8	-4
Mark Amodei (R-NV)	1	2	2
Kelly Armstrong (R-ND)	4	0.25	1
Jodey Arrington (R-TX)	7	0.571	4
Cindy Axne (D-IA)	1	-2	-2
Brian Babin (R-TX)	4	1.25	5
Don Bacon (R-NE)	2	2	4
Troy Balderson (R-OH)	20	1.9	38
Jim Banks (R-IN)	8	0.5	4
Lou Barletta (R-PA)	9	1.556	14
Andy Barr (R-KY)	3	1.556	4
Karen Bass (D-CA)	3	-1.667	-5
Andy Biggs (R-AZ)	65	0.185	12
Dan Bishop (R-NC)	41	1.537	63
Rob Bishop (R-UT)	1	2	2
Diane Black (R-TN)	1	1	1
Marsha Blackburn (R-TN)	5	1.6	8
Rod Blum (R-IA)	2	1.5	3
Kevin Brady (R-TX)	8	1.25	10
Dave Brat (R-VA)	3	2	6
Anthony Brindisi (D-NY)	2	-2	-4
Mo Brooks (R-AL)	5	1.2	6
Ken Buck (R-CO)	5	0.8	4
Ted Budd (R-NC)	7	0.857	6
Tim Burchett (R-TN)	2	0	0
Michael Burgess (R-TX)	2	2	4
Cheri Bustos (D-IL)	1	-2	-2
Bradley Byrne (R-AL)	5	-0.8	-4
Ken Calvert (R-CA)	4	0	0
Buddy Carter (R-GA)	2	2	4
John Carter (R-TX)	2	2	4
Matt Cartwright (D-PA)	2	-1	-2
Joaquin Castro (D-TX)	3	-1	-3
Steve Chabot (R-OH)	3	0	0
Jason Chaffetz (R-UT)	22	0.318	7
Liz Cheney (R-WY)	12	-0.083	-1
David Cicilline (D-RI)	3	-1.333	-4
Ben Cline (R-VA)	1	1	1
James Clyburn (D-SC)	5	-1	-5
Steve Cohen (D-TN)	1	-2	-2
Tom Cole (R-OK)	2	2	4
Chris Collins (R-NY)	1	1	1
Doug Collins (R-GA)	72	0.167	12
James Comer (R-KY)	3	1	3
Paul Cook (R-CA)	1	2	2
Lou Correa (D-CA)	2	-2	-4
Angie Craig (D-MN)	5	-2	-10
Kevin Cramer (R-ND)	5	1.4	7
Eric Crawford (R-AR)	1	0	0
Daniel Crenshaw (R-TX)	16	0.313	5
Charlie Crist (D-FL)	1	-2	-2
Joseph Crowley (D-NY)	1	-1	-1
Elijah Cummings (D-MD)	30	-0.833	-25
Joe Cunningham (D-SC)	4	-2	-8
John Curtis (R-UT)	2	1.5	3

Table B3.4: President Trump's Attitudes Towards U.S. Representatives D-Je

Representatives and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Representative	Tweet Count	Average Score*	Collective Score
Warren Davidson (R-OH)	2	1	2
Rodney Davis (R-IL)	1	1	1
Madeleine Dean (D-PA)	2	-2	-4
Peter DeFazio (D-OR)	3	-2	-6
Antonio Delgado (D-NY)	1	-1	-1
Val Demings (D-FL)	4	0.75	3
Ron DeSantis (R-FL)	20	1.9	38
Scott Desjarlais (R-TN)	3	1.333	4
Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL)	1	0	0
Debbie Dingell (D-MI)	6	-0.667	-4
Daniel Donovan (R-NY)	3	1.667	5
Sean Duffy (R-WI)	2	0	0
Jeff Duncan (R-SC)	4	0.75	3
Neal Dunn (R-FL)	1	2	2
Keith Ellison (D-MN)	1	0	0
Tom Emmer (R-MN)	2	2	4
Veronica Escobar (D-TX)	3	-1.667	-5
Ron Estes (R-KS)	2	2	4
John Faso (R-NY)	3	2	6
Abby Finkenauer (D-IA)	1	-2	-2
Charles Fleischmann (R-TN)	4	0	0
Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX)	2	-2	-4
Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE)	1	2	2
Virginia Foxx (R-NC)	2	0.5	1
Lois Frankel (D-FL)	6	-1.333	-8
Marcia Fudge (D-OH)	1	-1	-1
Russ Fulcher (R-ID)	2	1.5	3
Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI)	8	0.625	5
Matt Gaetz (R-FL)	87	0.287	25
Mike Garcia (R-CA)	22	1.545	34
Greg Gianforte (R-MT)	3	2	6
Louie Gohmert (R-TX)	20	0.5	10
Jared Golden (D-ME)	1	-2	-2
Lance Gooden (R-TX)	10	0.4	4
Paul Gosar (R-AZ)	9	0.444	4
Trey Gowdy (R-SC)	16	0.5	8
Kay Granger (R-TX)	2	2	4
Sam Graves (R-MO)	1	2	2
Al Green (D-TX)	20	-1	-20
Mark Green (R-TN)	13	0.231	3
Michael Guest (R-MS)	2	2	4
Brett Guthrie (R-KY)	1	2	2
Jim Hagedorn (R-MN)	7	2	14
Karen Handel (R-GA)	15	1.933	29
Andy Harris (R-MD)	1	2	2
Vicky Hartzler (R-MO)	2	1.5	3
Jeb Hensarling (R-TX)	1	1	1
Kevin Hern (R-OK)	1	2	2
Jody Hice (R-GA)	12	0.083	1
Clay Higgins (R-LA)	2	2	4
Steny Hoyer (D-MD)	3	-1	-3
Richard Hudson (R-NC)	1	2	2
Randy Hultgren (R-IL)	1	2	2
Duncan Hunter (R-CA)	1	1	1
Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX)	6	-1.167	-7
Christopher Jacobs (R-NY)	4	2	8
Pramila Jayapal (D-WA)	5	-1.4	-7
Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY)	5	-1.4	-7

Table B3.5: President Trump's Attitudes Towards U.S. Representatives Jo-N

Representatives and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Representative	Tweet Count	Average Score*	Collective Score
Dusty Johnson (R-SD)	1	2	2
Hank Johnson (D-GA)	3	0	0
Mike Johnson (R-LA)	15	0.2	3
Jim Jordan (R-OH)	228	0.167	38
David Joyce (R-OH)	1	2	2
John Joyce (R-PA)	4	1	4
Fred Keller (R-PA)	8	1.75	14
Mike Kelly (R-PA)	9	0.889	8
Trent Kelly (R-MS)	1	0	0
Joseph Kennedy (D-MA)	3	-1	-3
Peter King (R-NY)	6	0.33	2
David Kustoff (R-TN)	5	1	5
Raul Labrador (R-ID)	3	-1	-3
Darin LaHood (R-IL)	3	1	3
Doug LaMalfa (R-CA)	5	0	0
Conor Lamb (D-PA)	18	-1.833	-33
Doug Lamborn (R-CO)	2	0	0
Susie Lee (D-NV)	1	-2	-2
Debbie Lesko (R-AZ)	18	0.556	10
Jason Lewis (R-MN)	4	2	8
John Lewis (D-GA)	7	-0.571	-4
Ted Lieu (D-CA)	5	-1.4	-7
Zoe Lofgren (D-CA)	2	-1	-2
Billy Long (R-MO)	2	1	2
Nita Lowey (D-NY)	1	-1	-1
Frank Lucas (R-OK)	1	2	2
Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-MO)	1	2	2
Elaine Luria (D-VA)	3	-2	-6
Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)	1	-1	-1
Tom Marino (R-PA)	1	1	1
Roger Marshall (R-KS)	4	1	1
Thomas Massie (R-KY)	8	-0.875	-7
Ben McAdams (D-UT)	3	-1.333	-4
Lucy McBath (D-GA)	6	-2	-12
Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)	112	0.25	28
Tom McClintock (R-CA)	6	0.714	5
Patrick McHenry (R-NC)	3	1.333	4
Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)	3	1.666	5
Martha McSally (R-AZ)	8	1.875	15
Mark Meadows (R-NC)	134	0.112	15
Dan Meuser (R-PA)	3	1	3
Carol Miller (R-WV)	1	2	2
John Moolenaar (R-MI)	2	0	0
Alex Mooney (R-WV)	2	1	2
Seth Moulton (D-MA)	1	-1	-1
Debbie Mucarsel-Powell (D-FL)	1	-2	-2
Markwayne Mullin (R-OK)	4	1.5	6
Gregory Murphy (R-NC)	18	1.333	24
Jerrold Nadler (D-NY)	108	-0.991	-107
Joe Neguse (D-CO)	2	-2	-4
Dan Newhouse (R-WA)	1	2	2
Kristi Noem (R-SD)	2	1	2
Ralph Norman (R-SC)	5	1.2	6
Devin Nunes (R-CA)	77	0.403	31

Table B3.6: President Trump's Attitudes Towards U.S. Representatives O-Steu

Representatives and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Representative	Tweet Count	Average Score*	Collective Score
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY)	51	-0.784	-40
Pete Olson (R-TX)	9	0	0
Ilhan Omar (D-MN)	45	-1.178	-53
Beto O'Rourke (D-TX)	10	-1	-10
Steven Palazzo (R-MS)	2	2	4
Chris Pappas (D-NH)	11	-2	-22
Erik Paulsen (R-MN)	2	2	4
Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)	746	-0.985	-735
Greg Pence (R-IN)	2	1	2
Scott Perry (R-PA)	4	1.5	6
Collin Peterson (D-MN)	4	-2	-8
Dean Phillips (D-MN)	4	-2	-8
Bruce Poliquin (R-ME)	1	2	2
Jared Polis (D-CO)	2	-1.5	-3
Bill Posey (R-IN)	1	2	2
Jamie Raskin (D-MD)	2	-2	-4
John Ratcliffe (R-TX)	38	0.5	19
Tom Reed (R-NY)	4	1	4
James Renacci (R-OH)	2	2	4
Guy Reschenthaler (R-PA)	4	0.75	3
Cedric Richmond (D-LA)	1	-1	-1
Denver Riggleman (R-VA)	4	1.75	7
Martha Roby (R-AL)	2	2	4
Phil Roe (R-TN)	2	0	0
Mike Rogers (R-AL)	2	0.5	1
Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA)	2	1.5	3
John Rose (R-TN)	2	0	0
Max Rose (D-NY)	5	-1.5	-8
Keith Rothfus (R-PA)	7	1.714	12
David Rouzer (R-NC)	3	0.333	1
Chip Roy (R-TX)	2	0.5	1
Paul Ryan (R-WI)	22	0	0*
Tim Ryan (D-OH)	5	-1.4	-7
Mark Sanford (R-SC)	8	-1.125	-9
Steve Scalise (R-LA)	82	0.280	23
Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA)	2	-2	-4
Adam Schiff (D-CA)	624	-1.149	-717
David Schweikert (R-AZ)	1	1	1
Austin Scott (R-GA)	1	2	2
Frank Sensenbrenner (R-WI)	2	0.5	1
Pete Sessions (R-TX)	2	2	4
Donna Shalala (D-FL)	2	-1	-2
Michael Simpson (R-ID)	1	2	2
Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ)	7	-2	-14
Elissa Slotkin (D-MI)	2	-2	-4
Adam Smith (D-WA)	4	-0.75	-3
Adrian Smith (R-NE)	1	2	2
Christopher Smith (R-NJ)	4	0.75	3
Jason Smith (R-MO)	1	2	2
Lloyd Smucker (R-PA)	8	1.25	10
Abigail Spanberger (D-VA)	1	-2	-2
Ross Spano (R-FL)	2	0.5	1
Pete Stauber (R-MN)	10	1.8	18
Elise Stefanik (R-NY)	35	0.6	21
Bryan Steil (R-WI)	3	2	6
Greg Steube (R-FL)	4	0.25	1

Table B3.7: President Trump's Attitudes Towards U.S. Representatives Stev-Z

Representatives and Endorsement/Threat Scores			
Representative	Tweet Count	Average Score*	Collective Score
Halley Stevens (D-MI)	1	-2	-2
Chris Stewart (R-UT)	10	0.8	8
Steve Stivers (R-OH)	2	2	4
Eric Swalwell (D-CA)	8	-1	-8
Scott Taylor (R-VA)	2	2	4
Claudia Tenney (R-NY)	4	2	8
Bennie Thompson (D-MS)	1	-1	-1
Glenn Thompson (R-PA)	1	2	2
Mac Thornberry (R-TX)	2	1.5	3
Tom Tiffany (R-WI)	17	1.765	30
Scott Tipton (R-CO)	4	1	4
Rashida Tlaib (D-MI)	27	-1.111	-30
Xochitl Torres Small (D-NM)	1	-2	-2
Michael Turner (R-OH)	9	1.111	10
Jeff Van Drew (D/R-NJ)*	23	1.130	26
Ann Wagner (R-MO)	2	0.5	1
Tim Walberg (R-MI)	2	0.5	1
Greg Walden (R-OR)	3	0.667	2
Mark Walker (R-NC)	1	0	0
Jackie Walorski (R-IN)	3	1.333	4
Michael Waltz (R-FL)	6	0.667	4
Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)	4	-1	-4
Maxine Waters (D-CA)	36	-0.944	-34
Steve Watkins (R-KS)	2	0	0
Randy Weber (R-TX)	3	1.333	4
Peter Welch (D-VT)	1	-1	-1
Brad Wenstrup (R-OH)	3	1.333	4
Susan Wild (D-PA)	1	-2	-2
Roger Williams (R-TX)	2	2	4
Frederica Wilson (D-FL)	4	-1.25	-5
Joe Wilson (R-SC)	1	2	2
Ronald Wright (R-TX)	3	0	0
Kevin Yoder (R-KS)	3	2	6
Ted Yoho (R-FL)	1	2	2
David Young (R-IA)	1	2	2
Don Young (R-AK)	2	1	2
Lee Zeldin (R-NY)	75	0.2	15
Total (263/546)	3792	-0.262	-994

Table B3.8: Members Trump Never Mentioned On Twitter (A-C)

Unmentioned Members	
Member	Chamber
Alma Adams (D-NC)	House
Pete Aguilar (D-CA)	House
Colin Allred (D-TX)	House
James Baird (R-IN)	House
Nanette Barragan (D-CA)	House
Joe Barton (R-TX)	House
Joyce Beatty (D-OH)	House
Ami Bera (D-CA)	House
Jack Bergman (R-MI)	House
Don Beyer (D-VA)	House
Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)	House
Mike Bishop (R-MI)	House
Sanford Bishop (D-GA)	House
Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)	House
Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE)	House
Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR)	House
Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU)	House
Mike Bost (R-IL)	House
Brendan Boyle (D-PA)	House
Robert Brady (D-PA)	House
Jim Bridenstine (R-OK)	House
Susan Brooks (R-IN)	House
Anthony Brown (D-MD)	House
Julia Brownley (D-CA)	House
Vern Buchanan (R-FL)	House
Larry Bucshon (R-IN)	House
G.K. Butterfield (D-NC)	House
Michael Capuano (D-MA)	House
Salud Carbajal (D-CA)	House
Tony Cardenas (D-CA)	House
Andre Carson (D-IN)	House
Ed Case (D-HI)	House
Sean Casten (D-IL)	House
Kathy Castor (D-FL)	House
Judy Chu (D-CA)	House
Gilbert Ray Cisneros (D-CA)	House
Katherine Clark (D-MA)	House
Yvette Clark (D-NY)	House
William Lacy Clay (D-MO)	House
Emanuel Cleaver (D-MO)	House
Michael Cloud (R-TX)	House
Mike Coffman (R-CO)	House
Barbara Comstock (R-VA)	House
Michael Conaway (R-TX)	House
Gerald Connolly (D-VA)	House
John Conyers (D-MI)	House
Jim Cooper (D-TN)	House
Jim Costa (D-CA)	House
Ryan Costello (R-PA)	House
Joe Courtney (D-CT)	House
TJ Cox (D-CA)	House
Jason Crow (D-CO)	House
Henry Cuellar (D-TX)	House
John Culberson (R-TX)	House
Carlos Curbelo (R-FL)	House

Table B3.9: Members Trump Never Mentioned On Twitter (D-He)

Unmentioned Members	
Member	Chamber
Sharice Davids (D-KS)	House
Danny Davis (D-IL)	House
Susan Davis (D-CA)	House
Diana DeGette (D-CO)	House
John Delaney (D-MD)	House
Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)	House
Suzan DelBene (D-WA)	House
Jeff Denham (R-CA)	House
Charles Dent (R-PA)	House
Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA)	House
Theodore Deutch (D-FL)	House
Lloyd Doggett (D-TX)	House
Michael Doyle (D-PA)	House
John Duncan (R-TN)	House
Eliot Engel (D-NY)	House
Anna Eshoo (D-CA)	House
Adriano Espaillat (D-NY)	House
Elizabeth Esty (D-CT)	House
Dwight Evans (D-PA)	House
Blake Farenthold (R-TX)	House
Drew Ferguson (R-GA)	House
Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)	House
Bill Flores (R-TX)	House
Bill Foster (D-IL)	House
Trent Franks (R-AZ)	House
Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ)	House
Mike Gallagher (R-WI)	House
Ruben Gallego (D-AZ)	House
John Garamendi (D-CA)	House
Jesus Garcia (D-IL)	House
Sylvia Garcia (D-TX)	House
Thomas Garrett (R-VA)	House
Bob Gibbs (R-OH)	House
Jimmy Gomez (D-CA)	House
Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH)	House
Vicente Gonzalez (D-TX)	House
Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon (R-PR)	House
Bob Goodlatte (R-VA)	House
Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ)	House
Garret Graves (R-LA)	House
Tom Graves (R-GA)	House
Gene Green (D-TX)	House
H. Morgan Griffith (R-VA)	House
Raul Grijalva (D-AZ)	House
Glenn Grothman (R-WI)	House
Luis Gutierrez (D-IL)	House
Debra Haaland (D-NM)	House
Kwanza Hall (D-GA)	House
Colleen Hanabusa (D-HI)	House
Josh Harder (D-CA)	House
Gregg Harper (R-MS)	House
Alcee Hastings (D-FL)	House
Jahana Hayes (D-CT)	House
Denny Heck (D-WA)	House
Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA)	House

Table B3.10: Members Trump Never Mentioned On Twitter (Hi-L)

Unmentioned Members	
Member	Chamber
Brian Higgins (D-NY)	House
French Hill (R-AR)	House
Katie Hill (D-CA)	House
James Himes (D-CT)	House
George Holding (R-NC)	House
Trey Hollingsworth (R-IN)	House
Kendra Horn (D-OK)	House
Steven Horsford (D-NV)	House
Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA)	House
Jared Huffman (D-CA)	House
Bill Huizenga (R-MI)	House
William Hurd (R-TX)	House
Darrell Issa (R-CA)	House
Evan Jenkins (R-WV)	House
Lynn Jenkins (R-KS)	House
Bill Johnson (R-OH)	House
Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)	House
Sam Johnson (R-TX)	House
Brenda Jones (D-MI)	House
Walter Jones (R-NC)	House
Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)	House
John Katko (R-NY)	House
William Keating (D-MA)	House
Robin Kelly (D-IL)	House
Ro Khanna (D-CA)	House
Ruben Kihuen (D-NV)	House
Daniel Kildee (D-MI)	House
Derek Kilmer (D-WA)	House
Andrew Kim (D-NJ)	House
Ron Kind (D-WI)	House
Steve King (R-IA)	House
Adam Kinzinger (R-IL)	House
Ann Kirkpatrick (D-AZ)	House
Steve Knight (R-CA)	House
Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL)	House
Ann Kuster (D-NH)	House
Leonard Lance (R-NJ)	House
James Langevin (D-RI)	House
Rick Larsen (D-WA)	House
John Larson (D-CT)	House
Robert Latta (R-OH)	House
Brenda Lawrence (D-MI)	House
Al Lawson (D-FL)	House
Barbara Lee (D-CA)	House
Andy Levin (D-MI)	House
Mike Levin (D-CA)	House
Sander Levin (D-MI)	House
Daniel Lipinski (D-IL)	House
Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ)	House
David Loebsack (D-IA)	House
Barry Loudermilk (R-GA)	House
Mia Love (R-UT)	House
Alan Lowenthal (D-CA)	House
Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM)	House
Ben Lujan (D-NM)	House
Stephen Lynch (D-MA)	House

Table B3.11: Members Trump Never Mentioned On Twitter (M-Ros)

Unmentioned Members	
Member	Chamber
Thomas MacArthur (R-NJ)	House
Tom Malinowski (D-NJ)	House
Sean Maloney (D-NY)	House
Kenny Marchant (R-TX)	House
Brian Mast (R-FL)	House
Doris Matsui (D-CA)	House
Michael McCaul (R-TX)	House
Betty McCollum (D-MN)	House
Donald McEachin (D-VA)	House
James McGovern (D-MA)	House
David McKinley (R-WV)	House
Jerry McNerney (D-CA)	House
Patrick Meehan (R-PA)	House
Gregory Meeks (D-NY)	House
Grace Meng (D-NY)	House
Luke Messer (R-IN)	House
Paul Mitchell (R-MI)	House
Gwen Moore (D-WI)	House
Joseph Morelle (D-NY)	House
Stephanie Murphy (D-FL)	House
Tim Murphy (R-PA)	House
Grace Napolitano (D-CA)	House
Richard Neal (D-MA)	House
Richard Nolan (D-MN)	House
Donald Norcross (D-NJ)	House
Eleanor Norton (D-DC)	House
Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ)	House
Frank Pallone (D-NJ)	House
Gary Palmer (R-AL)	House
Jimmy Panetta (D-CA)	House
Bill Pascrell (D-NJ)	House
Donald Payne (D-NJ)	House
Stevan Pearce (R-NM)	House
Ed Perlmutter (D-CO)	House
Scott Peters (D-CA)	House
Chellie Pingree (D-ME)	House
Robert Pittenger (R-NC)	House
Stacey Plaskett (D-VI)	House
Mark Pocan (D-WI)	House
Ted Poe (R-TX)	House
Katie Porter (D-CA)	House
Ayanna Pressley (D-MA)	House
David Price (D-NC)	House
Mike Quigley (D-IL)	House
Aumua Radewagen (R-AS)	House
David Reichert (R-WA)	House
Kathleen Rice (D-NY)	House
Tom Rice (R-SC)	House
Harold Rogers (R-KY)	House
Todd Rokita (R-IN)	House
Francis Rooney (R-FL)	House
Thomas Rooney (R-FL)	House
Jacky Rosen (D-NV)	House
Peter Roskam (R-IL)	House
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)	House
Dennis Ross (R-FL)	House

Table B3.12: Members Trump Never Mentioned On Twitter (Rou-Web)

Unmentioned Members	
Member	Chamber
Harley Rouda (D-CA)	House
Lucille Roubat -Allard (D-CA)	House
Edward Royce (R-CA)	House
Raul Ruiz (D-CA)	House
Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD)	House
Bobby Rush (D-IL)	House
Steve Russell (R-OK)	House
John Rutherford (R-FL)	House
Gregorio Sablan (D-MP)	House
Michael San Nicolas (D-GU)	House
Linda Sanchez (D-CA)	House
John Sarbanes (D-MD)	House
Janice Schakowsky (D-IL)	House
Bradley Schneider (D-IL)	House
Kurt Schrader (D-OR)	House
Kim Schrier (D-WA)	House
Bobby Scott (D-VA)	House
David Scott (D-GA)	House
Jose Serrano (D-NY)	House
Terri Sewell (D-AL)	House
Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH)	House
Brad Sherman (D-CA)	House
Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ)	House
John Shimkus (R-IL)	House
Bill Shuster (R-PA)	House
Albio Sires (D-NJ)	House
Louise Slaughter (D-NY)	House
Lamar Smith (R-TX)	House
Darren Soto (D-FL)	House
Jackie Speier (D-CA)	House
Greg Stanton (D-AZ)	House
Tom Suozzi (D-NY)	House
Mark Takano (D-CA)	House
Van Taylor (R-TX)	House
Mike Thompson (D-CA)	House
Patrick Tiberi (R-OH)	House
William Timmons (R-SC)	House
Dina Titus (D-NV)	House
Paul Tonko (D-NY)	House
Norma Torres (D-CA)	House
Lori Trahan (D-MA)	House
David Trone (D-MD)	House
Dave Trott (R-MI)	House
Niki Tsongas (D-MA)	House
Lauren Underwood (D-IL)	House
Fred Upton (R-MI)	House
David Valadao (R-CA)	House
Juan Vargas (D-CA)	House
Marc Veasey (D-TX)	House
Filemon Vela (D-TX)	House
Nydia Velazquez (D-NY)	House
Peter Visclosky (D-IN)	House
Mimi Walters (R-CA)	House
Timothy Walz (D-MN)	House
Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ)	House
Daniel Webster (R-FL)	House

Table B3.13: Members Trump Never Mentioned On Twitter (Wes-Y + Senate)

Unmentioned Members	
Member	Chamber
Bruce Westerman (R-AR)	House
Jennifer Wexton (D-VA)	House
Robert Wittman (R-VA)	House
Steve Womack (R-AR)	House
Rob Woodall (R-GA)	House
John Yarmuth (D-KY)	House
Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)	Senate
Maria Cantwell (D-WA)	Senate
Benjamin Cardin (D-MD)	Senate
Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV)	Senate
Margaret Hassan (D-NH)	Senate
Martin Heinrich (D-NM)	Senate
Mazie Hirono (D-HI)	Senate
Patrick Leahy (D-VT)	Senate
Robert Menendez (D-NJ)	Senate
Jeff Merkley (D-OR)	Senate
Patty Murray (D-WA)	Senate
Jack Reed (D-RI)	Senate
Jacky Rosen (D-NV)	Senate
Brian Schatz (D-HI)	Senate
Tom Udall (D-NM)	Senate
Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)	Senate
Total (299)	H:283/S:16