

# Campaign Finance Reform as Institutional Choice

## Party Difference in the Vote to Ban Soft Money

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If the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) of 2002 banned the use of soft money—the only source of funds in which Democrats approached parity with Republicans—why did the Republican congressional leadership revile the bill and the Democratic congressional leadership embrace it? We address this puzzle by modeling competing electoral, partisan, and policy motives that guided members' decision making on the vote for final passage of this bill. Our solution lies in the fact that members believed that BCRA would reduce the role of the national parties in congressional elections. Although the parties may behave similarly under a fixed electoral regime, we find that the BCRA vote is consistent with two parties that prefer different sets of electoral rules. Specifically, Democrats appear more sympathetic to changes that enhance the role of candidates and outside groups, whereas Republicans appear to prefer stronger national parties.

**Keywords:** *campaign finance reform; congressional campaigns; party leadership; soft money; political parties; U.S. House of Representatives; Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act*

In the early morning of February 14, 2002, the House of Representatives passed a major reform of the campaign finance regime through the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA). Although BCRA was relatively complex, debate both in Congress and in the public centered on its three key provisions: (a) The legislation banned so-called soft money contributions to the national parties, (b) the legislation placed restrictions on the ability of various groups to broadcast advertisements that clearly refer to candidates for federal office within 30 days of a primary election and 60 days of a general election, and (c) the legislation doubled the limit on the amount that

individuals may contribute to congressional candidates in a single election (from \$1,000 to \$2,000, with the new figure indexed for inflation). The bill passed the House 240 to 189, with 41 Republicans “defecting” to join 199 Democrats in support and 12 Democrats crossing the aisle to join 177 Republicans in opposition (see appendix for a list of party defectors).

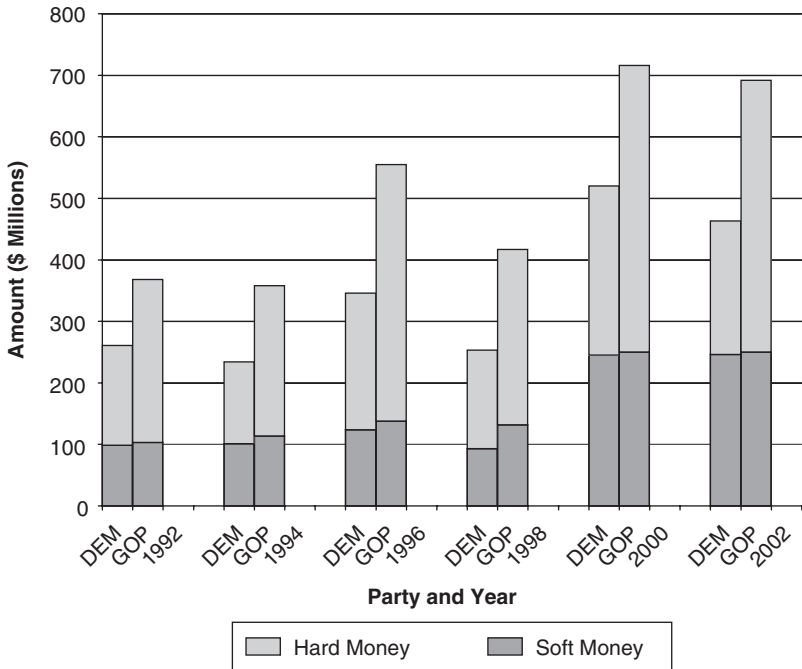
The vote to ban soft money while increasing hard money contribution limits presents analysts and pundits alike with an interesting puzzle. As indicated in Figure 1, Democrats enjoyed rough parity with Republicans in soft money fundraising despite the latter’s overwhelming and long-standing advantage in hard money fundraising. Some dubbed BCRA “The Democratic Party Suicide Bill” (Gitell, 2003) precisely because the legislation would outlaw the funds in which the Democrats had drawn even while raising the limits on the funds in which Republicans enjoyed an almost 2 to 1 advantage (see also Marcus & Balz, 2001). Yet House Republicans—including the entire leadership team—proved to be the most intense opponents of the legislation; Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) described BCRA as “Armageddon . . . a life or death issue for the GOP” (quoted in McGrory, 2002, p. A33). In the end, 177 of the 189 votes against BCRA came from Republicans. Conversely, despite their party’s clear, long-standing disadvantage in hard money fundraising—an advantage some argued at the time would be exacerbated once BCRA became law (e.g., Edsall, 2003)—199 of 211 Democrats voted for BCRA.<sup>1</sup>

One possible explanation for this curious pattern of interparty support centers on ideology. According to this explanation (see Bender, 1988, for a similar interpretation of member behavior on the 1974 Federal Election Campaign Act, FECA), the vote to ban soft money tapped into members’ general orientations toward government regulation, with conservatives preferring less regulation and liberals preferring more. We have little doubt that ideology is a key piece of the puzzle, but we have reason to believe other factors such as the expected impact of this legislation on individual members were also important. Indeed, Figure 2, which presents a density plot of party defection on BCRA, reveals that the moderate Republicans who supported BCRA were more conservative than the moderate Democrats who voted against it.

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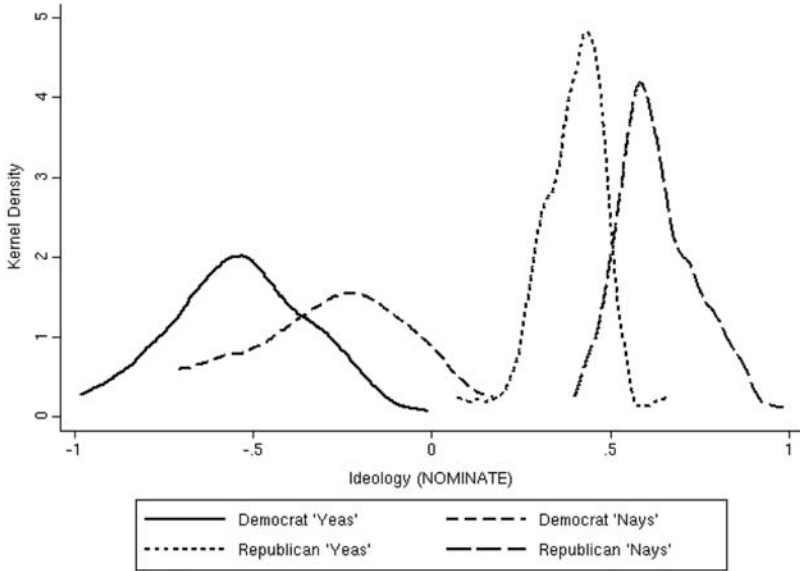
**Figure 1**  
**Fundraising Totals by Party, 1992-2002**



Source: Compiled from data at <http://www.opensecrets.org/bigpicture/ptytots.asp?cycle=2004>.

A second view of BCRA comes from Abrams and Settle, who attribute members' behavior on BCRA (Abrams & Settle, 2004) and other reform legislation (Abrams & Settle, 1978) to estimations of how their parties will fare under the new rules. They argue that Democrats pushed for BCRA in the 107th Congress out of fears that their loss of the White House in 2000 would cause a landslide of soft money toward the Republican National Committee (RNC). However, this explanation cannot be correct, for it was clear that such a soft money debacle would not materialize by the time the vote on BCRA took place. As shown in Figure 1, the Democrats held their own in soft money fundraising during the 2002 election cycle. Furthermore, their party-based explanation, which relies solely on Democrats' desire to

**Figure 2**  
**Ideology by Party and Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act Support**



change existing law, ignores the fact that passage of BCRA—indeed, even the opportunity to debate it on the floor of the House—was possible only in the presence of significant Republican support.

Thus, we find both ideology and the existing partisan explanation of BCRA unsatisfying. We propose an alternative solution built on two distinct, but related, theories. The first relates to the role that parties play in congressional elections. In this case, the BCRA provisions outlawing soft money would weaken parties relative to individual candidates and outside groups—most notably outside groups associated with liberal causes. The second, what we will call the party difference theory, posits that variation in recruitment patterns, bases of support, relationships with outside groups, and other characteristics of the parties lead to different preferences about the nature and operation of the electoral regime, including campaign finance rules. Specifically, the Democrats’ historical aversion to organizational centralization (Freeman, 1986; Klinkner, 1994b; Mayer, 1996) and

party-coordinated campaigns (Jacobson, 1985-1986; Magleby, Monson, & Patterson, 2006) made BCRA's party-weakening provisions more attractive to them than to Republicans. Moreover, this idea of party difference also leads to expectations that intraparty variation in support for this bill should be a function of how comfortable members were with the political structure of their respective parties: Democratic support for the bill should be sensitive to members' individual electoral situations, whereas Republicans' votes should be sensitive to members' team orientations.

## **Campaign Finance, Parties, and BCRA**

### **The Evolving Congressional Election Regime**

The second half of the 20th century witnessed a weakening of the link between partisan identification and choice of congressional candidates (Ferejohn, 1977). In response, members built "personal organizations to replace the party organizations that had supported earlier generations of politicians" (Fiorina, 1989, p. 113), resulting in an era of "candidate-centered" congressional elections in which the national party organizations played only a "peripheral" role (Herrnson, 1988, pp. 18-25). This trend toward candidate-centered congressional elections facilitated a decline in the degree to which voting in Congress was structured by party (Brady, Cooper, & Hurley, 1979; Collie & Brady, 1985), which, in turn, resulted in a decline in the strength of the party leadership operations in Congress (Cooper & Brady, 1981; Rohde, 1991, pp. 34-37; Rohde & Shepsle, 1987). In the eyes of some observers, the 1974 amendments to FECA of 1971 solidified this candidate-centered, candidate-friendly regime (see Mann, 2003, for an overview), a regime characterized by weak national party organizations, weak legislative party leadership, constituency-oriented politics (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1987; Fiorina, 1989; Mayhew, 1974a), and increasingly safe incumbents (Jacobson, 1976, 2001; Mayhew, 1974b).

Despite predictions that the 1974 reforms spelled the end for the national party committees, a loophole in the 1979 amendments to FECA, on the heels of a critical soft money ruling by the Federal Election Commission (FEC) in 1978, provided parties with an opportunity to reassert their role in congressional elections (Herrnson, 2000, p. 15). Responses by the FEC to Supreme Court decisions, coupled with aggressive party fundraising efforts, contributed to a resurgence of party as organization and may have contributed to the corresponding resurgence of legislative parties during the 1980s and 1990s documented by Rohde (1991), Sinclair (1995), and others.<sup>2</sup>

## Partisan Reactions

The two parties responded to this changing landscape in very different ways. Unlike previous RNC chairmen who had downplayed issues and ideology, William Brock, who chaired the RNC from 1977 to 1981, “placed an intense focus on policy development” (Klinkner, 1994a, p. 141), staking out “the differences between the two parties” (p. 144), and centralizing “power and influence within the national committee” (p. 145). In contrast, Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairmen Charles Manatt (1981-1985) and, to an even greater extent, Paul Kirk (1985-1988) pursued the opposite strategy,

[shifting] the headquarters away from advancing the Democratic *Party* as the central focus of factional politics, and instead [using] the party headquarters to support Democratic candidates and support a more *campaign*-centered politics, enabling each candidate and campaign organization to proceed however it liked. (Menefee-Libey, 1994, p. 178)

In addition, partly because of resource deficiencies, Democrats began looking to like-minded but independent outside groups to perform many of the political functions (such as get-out-the-vote efforts) normally associated with political parties. As a result, Democrats became, in the words of former John Kerry campaign manager Jim Jordan, “much more reliant on extra-party institutions to do our core political business” (quoted in Edsall, 2006, p. A3). In contrast, “Over the past 30 years, the [RNC] has centralized control and funding of basic political functions such as voter mobilization and message development,” handling such work in-house or contracting it out “to consultants who operate under strict oversight” (Edsall, 2006, p. A3). These different approaches have colored legislative debates and strategies involving the regulation of such groups, both before (Trister, 2000; VandeHei, 2000) and since (Nelson, 2005; O’Connor, 2005) the passage of BCRA, with Republican leaders introducing numerous “proposals to impose sharp limits on spending by tax-exempt, non-party political groups” (Edsall, 2006 p. A3) and Democratic leaders opposing such efforts.

## The Party Difference Theory

Klinkner (1994a) attributes these different responses to differences between the two parties resulting “from a variety of shared influences and experiences,” including ideology, the “memory of critical events, prior solutions to problems, . . . the preexisting cultural traits of an organization’s recruits, and the impact of strong leaders” (pp. 9-10). The most important

source of differences between the two parties is the composition of their memberships: "Each party tends to recruit from a particular section of society" (Klinkner, 1994b, p. 202; see also, Freeman 1986, pp. 349-352). Republicans, as the "party of business," "admire and emulate the efficiency of business organizations" (Klinkner, 1994b, p. 202) and adopt the hierarchical organizational patterns (and the technological tools) of the business community. Similarly, Freeman (1986) argues that the Republican Party, "which is hierarchical, unitary, and in which power flows downward," will be better "able to use more of its resources for attaining its goals and [to] direct them more efficiently" (p. 345). In contrast, she argues that "power flows upward" (p. 328) in the Democratic Party, which makes the efficient allocation of resources more difficult but leaves the party organizationally more comfortable with the conflict and cacophony endemic to traditional coalition parties.

Whether rooted in resource availability, recruitment patterns, or other factors, Freeman and Klinkner show that these differences can be observed along several dimensions of party activity. One is the general response of party members to "dissent and disloyalty" (Freeman, 1986, pp. 345-349) within the partisan team. Freeman (1986) argues that Republicans place much higher value on "being a team player" (p. 348) than do Democrats, who air out their differences more publicly, tolerating—even embracing—conflict and "open confrontation" (p. 342). Indeed, far from the marginalizing effect dissent tends to have within the Republican Party, "refusal to toe the line" often enhances the status of groups or individuals within the Democratic Party because it demonstrates their "clout" (p. 346).

But for our purposes, the most important dimension of party activity along which these differences emerge is preferences toward more or less centralized organizational forms (Freeman, 1986, pp. 338-343). The Democrats' "basic nature as a coalitional, pluralistic party" (p. 329) fosters a preference for decentralized organizational forms. "As a party with neither a common ideology nor a common social base" (pp. 350-351), Democrats, Freeman (1986) argues, tend to be less willing to cede power and authority over decision making to party leaders than Republicans. In contrast, "Republicans trust their . . . leaders to do what they think is right more than Democrats do" (p. 351). Klinkner (1994b) builds on this argument, making the link between recruitment patterns and enduring organizational forms even more explicit:

The Democrats' heterogeneity also limits their ability to carry out organizational reforms as easily as the Republicans. Without the bonds of trust established by a homogeneous membership, it becomes very difficult to institute the centralization and hierarchy necessary for a businesslike organization. Organizational

decisions are scrutinized, not only for their effectiveness, but also for the impact they will have on the representation of the party's constituencies, which often makes those decisions more difficult to implement. (p. 208)

## Partisan Differences and BCRA as Party-Weakening Legislation

Although recent research shows that political circumstances may be driving both parties toward some of the same organizational (Kolodny, 1998; La Raja, 2003, pp. 138-144) and operational (Damore & Hansford, 1999; Heberlig & Larson, 2005) strategies, if the party difference theorists are correct, then latent preferences for organizational centralization (decentralization) and team orientation (group orientation) among Republicans (Democrats) will persist. Long-standing ties between parties and outside groups should not wither overnight, whereas changes in recruitment patterns might take a generation to realize their full effect. Although both parties may behave similarly given the same strategic situation (in this case, the pre-BCRA campaign finance rules), each will express different preferences when an opportunity to change the rules comes along, even in an era of increasingly homogeneous parties.<sup>3</sup>

We contend that the floor vote on final passage of BCRA afforded members of the House of Representatives one such opportunity to express their satisfaction with the pre-BCRA campaign finance regime<sup>4</sup>—a regime characterized by the increasingly programmatic, party-centered elections and increasingly strong and active legislative leadership organizations of the 1992 to 2002 decade. During the debate over the legislation and in subsequent legal proceedings, a number of experts argued that BCRA's ban on soft money would weaken the role of the national party committees in congressional elections (Eilperin, 2002b; Stone, 2002; but see Mann, 2001) while simultaneously enhancing the role of individual candidates and outside groups. In their overview of the legislation immediately prior to final legislative approval, *CQ Weekly* described the post-BCRA world in the following terms:

It would be a world where political power is decentralized and much of the money that now goes to the national parties flows into new channels, according to most independent analysts. . . . Issue-oriented non-profits would rake in more cash, analysts say, [and] nonprofits that focus on specific issues . . . could become the beneficiaries of contributions that no longer can go to the national parties. (Nather, 2002, pp. 569, 574; see also Ota, 2002)



The Republican leadership in the House echoed this interpretation, taking it a step further. Both Speaker Hastert and Majority Leader DeLay expressed concern that groups ideologically aligned with Democrats—most notably labor unions and abortion rights groups—were best situated to enjoy heightened influence in the post-BCRA world (Eilperin & Dewar, 2002).

Thus, understanding the legislative politics of BCRA requires that we incorporate its party-weakening elements into our explanation. In doing so, it is important to note that not all outside groups were perceived as being equally well situated to reap the benefits of any post-BCRA soft money ban dividend that might emerge. Republican leaders and Democratic centrists alike expressed concern that corporate dollars would move to the sidelines in the post-BCRA regime, increasing the influence of liberal, issue-based groups (Eilperin, 2002a). Looking back to Figure 2, the pattern of support we observe is consistent with this interpretation. Moderate Democrats (the lone source of Democratic defections) had no interest in furthering legislation that would enhance the role of such groups within the Democratic Party. The soft money ban would have heightened the influence within the Democratic Party of the groups least aligned with their policy views and reduced the role of the class of outside groups (corporations) most likely to share their policy views.

None of this is to say that members expected passage of BCRA to result in an instant transition to purely nonpartisan elections or that either party was running nationalized campaigns in the Westminster style prior to 2002. Instead, following Jacobson (1985-1986), we simply argue that there is an inherent tension between the interests of individual members of Congress and the collective interests of their parties. After all, any changes in election law that weaken the national parties in a relative sense strengthen the hands of other actors, and vice versa (Moscardelli, Haspel, & Wike, 1998). In this instance, individual members had to weigh the collective costs or benefits of proposed changes for their respective parties against the likely impact of those changes on their own circumstances.

The interplay of the party-weakening and party difference theories outlined above leads us to expect that differences between the two parties' resources, recruitment patterns, and organizational forms would color members' approaches to evaluating proposed changes to the rules that govern the financing of congressional elections. As a traditional coalition party, Democrats will tend to prefer a campaign finance regime in which power is distributed more broadly. In this explanation, Democrats might see strategic advantage in reform that augments the power of individuals and outside

groups at the expense of the national parties. In contrast, the top-down management style generally preferred by Republicans will result in a natural affinity toward a system in which national party committees have the resources to pursue the party's goals most efficiently. However, variation within each party may be sensitive to different factors. Specifically, in terms of individual behavior, the party difference theory yields the expectation that Republicans will factor the impact of such changes on the team into their decision making. In contrast, the more atomistic, decentralized approach preferred by Democrats suggests that variation in Democratic support for the legislation will be sensitive to members' own individual electoral circumstances.

## Hypotheses

Because of its potential party-weakening effect, BCRA provides an ideal case to assess the utility of the party difference theory. In the sections that follow, we develop and test hypotheses that provide leverage on the preceding arguments. Our hypotheses fall into four groups: those that tap into members' estimations of what is in the public interest, those that tap into members' stakes in the pre-BCRA campaign finance regime, those that tap into members' individual electoral incentives, and those that tap into members' collective (in this case partisan) electoral interests.

### Electoral Self-Interest

The fact that members of Congress write the general rules under which they must raise money to finance their campaigns almost certainly works to the advantage of incumbents (Jacobson, 1976). BCRA represents a significant change in the system by which congressional campaigns are financed, and risk-averse members of Congress might have been wary of it. For, in addition to the uncertainty that always surrounds the relationship between the legislation on which members of Congress vote and the social outcomes that result (Arnold, 1990; Krehbiel, 1991), members faced an additional level of uncertainty in this instance because of impending constitutional challenges facing the law. King's (1997) finding that even members in the most secure districts "run scared" suggests that as members become increasingly secure in their incumbency, they may become less willing to cast votes that may upset the system that has contributed so substantially to their electoral success. Along the same lines, Theriault (2005) argues that members from

electorally competitive districts tend to be more supportive of popular reforms because they are acutely vulnerable to charges of “feathering their own nests” rather than enacting their constituents’ wishes” (p. 17). Thus, we hypothesize that the more secure a member’s seat, the less likely he or she will be to vote yes on BCRA.

We measure electoral security as the mean of the member’s share of the two-party vote in the 1998 and 2000 elections. For freshmen, only the 2000 vote is used. Because the party difference theory posits that Democrats’ votes will be more sensitive to variables that tap into their individual electoral circumstances, we interact our electoral security variable with a binary indicator of party in which Democrats receive a value of 1 and Republicans receive a value of 0.

## The Public Interest

In sharpest contrast to the electoral self-interest perspective is the proposition that members voted based simply on whether or not they considered BCRA to be good public policy. As Kingdon (1977) states, “Most legislators have their conception of good public policy, and act partly to carry that conception into being. Their policy attitudes, their ideology (if it can be called that) decidedly affect their behavior” (p. 570; see also Fenno, 1973). Certainly, in 2002 and before, supporters and opponents, both inside and outside of Congress, attempted to sway undecided members by appealing to the goal of making “good public policy” (see Dwyre & Farrar-Myers, 2001, pp. 135, 170-187; Wynn, 2001).<sup>5</sup> Simply stated, BCRA may have tapped into members’ general orientations toward reform or government regulation.

To assess the degree to which members held proreform policy views, we computed “Public Citizen support scores” from 17 non-campaign-finance related key votes identified by Public Citizen (2002) that took place during the 107th Congress. However, these support scores correlate at  $-.969$  with first-dimension W-NOMINATE ratings for the 107th Congress (Poole, 2004), suggesting that reform orientation fits neatly into the more general Left-Right ideological dimension that has been shown to structure congressional voting behavior throughout much of American history (Poole & Rosenthal, 1997). In light of this, we hypothesize that the more conservative a member is, the less likely he or she will be to vote yes on BCRA. We measure members’ ideology through the use of first-dimension W-NOMINATE scores (Poole, 2004).<sup>6</sup> Scores were calculated using all roll call votes cast during the 107th Congress.

## Stake in the Pre-BCRA Regime

We also control for a third type of interest that may have driven members' behavior—the degree to which individual members had what we refer to as a stake in the pre-BCRA regime. As proven success as a fundraiser has become an increasingly important résumé item for securing leadership posts within Congress, the ranks of party and committee leaders have become filled with members who are adept at raising funds, not only for themselves but for their colleagues and their party (Bedlington & Malbin, 2003; Bolton, 2000; Heberlig, 2003). Cox and McCubbins (1993) show that those who hold prestigious appointments such as party and committee leadership positions benefit disproportionately from strong parties. We expect those with the largest stake in the pre-BCRA regime (i.e., each party's most successful fundraisers) to be most likely to oppose the bill. Therefore, we hypothesize that the greater a member's fundraising prowess under the pre-BCRA regime, the less likely he or she will be to vote yes on BCRA. More precisely, we believe that those members who achieved the most success as soft money fundraisers will be the least likely to vote to ban soft money.

Because soft money contributions are made directly to the parties, there is no reliable way to link them to individual members of Congress. Therefore, we developed a new indicator of soft money fundraising success. First, we summed total personal campaign committee (PCC) receipts from nonparty political action committees (PACs; the profile of which is similar to the profile of soft money donors)<sup>7</sup> and total leadership PAC receipts from all sources. We include leadership PAC receipts because leadership PAC money and soft money are put to comparable uses. Then, because receipts are, in part, a function of election-specific factors (e.g., closeness of a member's race), we purged our receipts variable of such factors by regressing it on three independent variables known to predict campaign receipts: an indicator of the closeness of the member's two most recent races, Jacobson's (1989) quality challenger variable, and the member's opponent's total receipts. The residuals generated from this model serve as our indicator of a member's soft money fundraising prowess, purged of variation attributable to election-specific factors.<sup>8</sup>

Just as some members likely stood to lose as a result of changes mandated by BCRA, others were well positioned to take advantage of certain specific provisions of the law. BCRA doubled the limit on the amount that individuals may contribute to a candidate for federal office from \$1,000 to \$2,000, indexing the new figure for inflation. Those candidates who already receive a large number of donations at or near the maximum will be the best

positioned to reap the benefits of this change. If member votes are simply a function of financial self-interest, these members may be more likely to support the legislation. Thus, we hypothesize that the more money a member receives from individual donors in the form of gifts at or near the individual contribution limit, the more likely he or she will be to vote yes on BCRA. We operationalize the amount members received in the form of gifts at or near the individual contribution limit as the amount of money, in thousands of dollars, a member received in the form of individual contributions of greater than \$750 during the 2000 election cycle.

### **Team Orientation**

Although building from fundamentally different analytical foundations, Freeman (1986) and Cox and McCubbins (1993) point to the importance of team as a concept in understanding the behavior of partisans. Freeman suggests that Republicans are more team oriented by virtue of recruitment patterns and other factors that contribute to the political culture of the party and that being a loyal member of the team is one key to achieving influence within the party (pp. 345-349). In contrast, she contends, Democrats approach politics from a more individualistic perspective. Similarly, Cox and McCubbins indicate that the collective situation of the party factors prominently into the decisions of rank-and-file members. Members of the majority want to retain majority status and the agenda-setting benefits that go along with it. If team orientation is factored into members' decision making, then the greater one's investment in the team, the less likely one will be to take steps to weaken it. One way of measuring such investments is through finances. We hypothesize that the more money a member contributes to fellow party members and to the party itself, the less likely he or she will be to vote yes on BCRA. We operationalize money given to these entities as the sum of the amount of money a member contributed to candidates of his or her own party and to his or her party's major campaign committees during the 2000 election cycle.<sup>9</sup> The variable includes contributions from both members' PCCs and their leadership PACs. We expect team orientation to predict Republican votes; our theory generates no clear prediction regarding the effect of this variable on Democrats' decision making. To capture this in the model, we interact the team orientation variable with a binary indicator of party in which Democrats receive a value of 1 and Republicans receive a value of 0.

A second dimension of team orientation is the degree to which one shares the policy preferences of one's party leaders. Even in a legislature defined by

high degrees of intraparty homogeneity and interparty polarization, not all party members would appear to have an equal stake in majority status. Some members see their own policy interests (constituency induced or other) as diverging from those of their party, “at least as defined by the legislative party leadership” (Abrams & Settle, 2004, p. 391). When viewed in terms of policy preferences, an extremely conservative representative such as Jeff Flake (R-AZ) has a greater stake in a Republican majority than a more moderate Republican representative such as Jim Leach of Iowa.<sup>10</sup> Thus, our second indicator of Republicans’ team orientation is the degree to which a member falls to the left of the ideological center of gravity within his or her party. We hypothesize that the greater the ideological distance to the left of his or her party’s median voter a Republican falls, the greater the likelihood that he or she will vote yes on BCRA. Using W-NOMINATE scores, we measure the ideological distance between the party median and each Republican left of the median member. This variable is, in effect, an interaction between membership in the left wing of the Republican Party and ideology; it takes on a value of 0 for Democrats and for conservative Republicans.

## Findings

We use logistic regression to estimate a model of members’ votes on final passage of BCRA. The results are presented in Table 1.

The model predicts members’ votes quite well (95.51% correctly predicted, proportional reduction in error [PRE] = 89.7%) and fits the data nicely (pseudo  $R^2 = .7824$ ), and the results reveal the overarching partisan and ideological structure of voting on BCRA. Holding other variables constant, the probability that the median Republican would support BCRA was .722 less than the probability the median Democrat would vote yes. However, the results also indicate that simply attributing the outcome to ideology leaves out several important pieces of the puzzle of BCRA; the model including variables tapping into ideology, self-interest, and partisan advantage motives produces a PRE of 62.77% over the ideology-only model. Consistent with our party-weakening interpretation, party exerted a strong effect on members’ votes. Being a Democrat is associated with a .288 increase in the likelihood that a member would vote yes on BCRA, holding other variables constant.

The model also reveals evidence consistent with the argument that individual self-interest factored into members’ decision making. However, the substantive impact of these self-interest calculations appears to have been

**Table 1**  
**Determinants of Representatives' Votes on the**  
**Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) 2002 (Final Passage)**

Independent Variable	Coefficient	SE	Δ in Predicted Probability <sup>a</sup>
Party (Democrat = 1)	8.361*	4.101	0.2884
Conservative ideology	-6.125*	2.138	0.7222
Ability to capitalize on increased individual contribution limit	0.003*	0.002	0.0098
Stake in Pre-BCRA campaign finance regime	-0.003*	0.001	-0.0219
Electoral security (Republicans)	0.050	0.029	
Electoral security (Democrats)	-0.103*	0.037	-0.2916
Funds given away to party and other candidates (Republicans)	0.017*	0.006	0.1102
Funds given away to party and other candidates (Democrats)	-0.006	0.004	
Distance to left of party median (Republicans only)	36.491*	11.370	0.1506 <sup>b</sup>
Constant	-5.010		
Number of cases	423		
Log likelihood <sub>o</sub>	-63.07		
Correctly predicted (%)	95.51		
PRE (%)	89.7		
Model $\chi^2$ ( $df = 9$ ; $p < .0001$ )	95.26		
Pseudo $R^2$	.7824		

Note: PRE = proportional reduction in error. Dependent variable is a dummy variable coded 1 for representatives who voted in favor of final passage of BCRA 2002 (yes) and 0 otherwise (no). Entries in cells are logistic regression coefficients. Numbers in parentheses are robust standard errors, adjusted for clustering by state.

a. Numbers in this column represent the change in the predicted probability of a yes vote associated with an increase in the independent variable, holding the ideology-based variables at their medians, party at its mode, and all other variables at their means, except when interaction effects determine their values. All variables were increased one standard deviation around their means except party, which we moved from 0 to 1, and conservative ideology, which we moved from the median Democrat to the median Republican. Values only provided for variables statistically significant at  $p < .05$ .

b. Distance from the Republican median varied one standard deviation around the Republican-only mean. This variable was moved in tandem with conservative ideology while holding other variables constant.

\* $p < .05$  (one-tailed tests employed for variables associated with directional hypotheses; two-tailed tests employed otherwise).

limited. The better positioned a member was to take advantage of the doubling of the individual contribution limits, the more likely he or she was to support the bill, controlling for other factors. An increase from \$107,799 to \$286,685 in the form of contributions greater than \$750 was associated with a modest .01 increase in the likelihood that a member would support BCRA. Similarly, the more successful one was as a fundraiser under the pre-BCRA rules (and the greater one's ability to raise cash from the most lucrative sources of soft money), the less likely one was to vote to change those rules.<sup>11</sup> This is consistent with our belief that the best soft money fundraisers probably made up the ranks of the best hard money fundraisers. That is, although examples may exist, we find it unlikely that there were many members of Congress who excelled at raising funds from soft money sources but not from hard money sources, or vice versa. In all probability, good fundraisers are good fundraisers, and under the pre-BCRA campaign finance regime, prolific fundraisers reaped substantial rewards—both reputational and other, both inside and outside of the House—from their efforts. To the degree that BCRA would close off the soft money spigot, these prolific fundraisers would be the most likely to suffer directly.

Consistent with the party difference theory, Table 1 reveals differences in the significant determinants of votes on BCRA among members of the two parties. Members' individual electoral situations were strong and statistically significant predictors of Democrats' votes but not those of Republicans. In keeping with King's (1997) running scared argument and Theriault's (2005) electoral competition hypothesis, an increase of one standard deviation around the mean of the security variable was associated with a .292 decrease in the likelihood that a Democrat would vote to change the rules from which he or she has benefited. In contrast, both of the indicators of team orientation—amount given to other Republican candidates and distance to the left of the Republican median—emerge as strong, statistically significant predictors of Republican votes.<sup>12</sup> Controlling for other factors, the more money a Republican gave to his or her party committee and other Republican candidates, the less likely he or she was to have supported BCRA. An increase from \$18,458 to \$233,687 in such contributions was associated with a .11 decrease in the likelihood that a Republican voted yes. Similarly, the greater a Republican's distance to the left of his or her party median, the greater the likelihood that he or she would support BCRA, even after controlling for ideology.



## Conclusion

Through modeling the vote on final passage of BCRA, we investigate the extent to which competing motives may have guided members' decision making. We find that both party and ideology were major forces behind the behavior of both Democrats and Republicans on BCRA. Furthermore, our results corroborate the charge that a member's self-interested calculations of how he or she would fare under the new rules factored into members' decision making on this legislation, although the magnitude of these effects suggests their role was quite limited.

Our most important finding is related to party difference theory. Although evaluations of how the party collective would fare under the new rules appear to have factored heavily into members' decision making on BCRA, we find that Democrats and Republicans made these calculations in ways consistent with the ideal articulated by Freeman (1986) and Klinkner (1994b). Variation in Democrats' votes was highly sensitive to their individual electoral situations, and the pattern of party conflict was consistent with the expectation that Democrats will tend to prefer a campaign finance regime that enhances the power of individual candidates and outside groups and comparatively weakens the national parties. In contrast, and consistent with the team-first culture that infuses the Republican Party, Republicans opposed this party-weakening legislation, and the stronger one's team orientation—indicated by both one's financial investment in the team and one's policy distance from the party median—the greater the likelihood one voted against BCRA. So although the two parties' electoral behaviors may converge under a fixed set of strategic circumstances, they expressed divergent preferences when given the chance to alter the rules of the game.

We believe that these results shed light on the puzzling nature of interparty support for BCRA within Congress and may inform our understanding of the legislative fate of campaign finance reform proposals more generally. When viewed from the perspective of risk-averse, victory-oriented parties, the positions taken by the legislative parties on BCRA appear puzzling. When viewed through the lens of party difference, however, the behavior of the legislative parties comes into focus. House Republicans, whose recent successes have coincided with the advent of soft money, perceived BCRA as a real threat to their ability to continue to distribute resources efficiently. Indeed, at the same meeting where Speaker Hastert described BCRA as Armageddon, he is also quoted as remarking, "Six people wouldn't be here right now if it weren't for

soft money” (Eilperin & Dewar, 2002, p. A01).<sup>13</sup> As he had in previous years, the speaker used virtually every procedural tool available to him to thwart the efforts of reformers (Dwyre & Farrar-Myers, 2001; see also Sinclair, 2000). Congressional Democrats, on the other hand, as members of the perennially less centralized party (Mayer, 1996) whose collective fortunes suffered most during the soft money era, overwhelmingly supported the party-weakening reforms codified in BCRA.

In sum, we find that Republican representatives appear more comfortable with a campaign finance regime that encourages and facilitates elections in which the party label is a key factor in defining them in the eyes of their constituents. At the same time, long-standing cleavages among Democrats have rendered them unwilling to grant extraordinary power to their legislative leaders (Rohde, 1991) and unable to achieve the same level of organizational centralization as Republicans (Klinkner, 1994b; Mayer, 1996). The limited scholarship on party difference suggests that such a relationship has existed for some time (Freeman, 1986; Green, 1994; Klinkner, 1994a, 1994b; Mayer, 1996; Menefee-Libey, 1994; Polsby, 1983; Wilson, 1962). However, evidence exists that the dictates of the pre-BCRA campaign finance regime were forcing Democrats to become more organizationally centralized both inside (Sinclair, 1995) and outside (Kolodny, 1998; La Raja, 2003, pp. 138-144) of the legislature—in essence, to become organizationally more like the Republicans. But when given the choice between lucrative soft money contributions and a more decentralized campaign finance regime, the Democrats chose reforms that would better match their preferred structural forms and modes of behavior.

## Appendix

### Party Defectors on the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 (Final Passage)

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#### Democrats Voting No (12)

Barcia, James A. (D-MI)  
 Boucher, Rick (D-VA)  
 Hall, Ralph M. (D-TX)  
 Hilliard, Earl F. (D-AL)  
 Lipinski, William O. (D-IL)  
 Mollohan, Alan B. (D-WV)  
 Murtha, John P. (D-PA)  
 Peterson, Collin C. (D-MN)

#### Republicans Voting Yea (41)

Bass, Charles F. (R-NH)  
 Bereuter, Doug (R-NE)  
 Boehlert, Sherwood L. (R-NY)  
 Bono, Mary (R-CA)  
 Capito, Shelley Moore (R-WV)  
 Castle, Michael N. (R-DE)  
 Ferguson, Mike (R-NJ)  
 Foley, Mark (R-FL)

Rahall, Nick J. II (D-WV)	Frelinghuysen, Rodney P. (R-NJ)
Scott, Robert C. (D-VA)	Ganske, Greg (R-IA)
Shows, Ronnie (D-MS)	Gilchrest, Wayne T. (R-MD)
Thompson, Bennie G. (D-MS)	Gilman, Benjamin A. (R-NY)
	Graham, Lindsey O. (R-SC)
	Greenwood, James C. (R-PA)
	Grucci, Felix J. Jr. (R-NY)
	Horn, Stephen (R-CA)
	Houghton, Amo (R-NY)
	Johnson, Nancy L. (R-CT)
	Johnson, Timothy V. (R-IL)
	Kirk, Mark Steven (R-IL)
	LaTourette, Steven C. (R-OH)
	Leach, James A. (R-IA)
	LoBiondo, Frank A. (R-NJ)
	McHugh, John M. (R-NY)
	Morella, Constance A. (R-MD)
	Osborne, Tom (R-NE)
	Ose, Doug (R-CA)
	Petri, Thomas E. (R-WI)
	Platts, Todd Russell (R-PA)
	Quinn, Jack (R-NY)
	Ramstad, Jim (R-MN)
	Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana (R-FL)
	Shays, Christopher (R-CT)
	Simmons, Rob (R-CT)
	Smith, Nick (R-MI)
	Thune, John R. (R-SD)
	Upton, Fred (R-MI)
	Walsh, James T. (R-NY)
	Wamp, Zach (R-TN)
	Weldon, Curt (R-PA)
	Wolf, Frank R. (R-VA)

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Note: Final vote: 240 yeas, 189 nays.

## Notes

1. In the above description and the analysis that follows, Bernard Sanders (I-VT) and Virgil Goode (I-VA) are treated as members of the Democratic and Republican caucuses, respectively.

2. The causal link between these trends remains a subject of debate in the literature. Jacobson (2001) proposes a direct causal relationship between stronger, more electorally active party organizations and the resurgence of party voting on the floor. He argues that members “elected as part of a team, using common campaign themes and issues, and with considerable help from party committees should be more disposed to cooperate on legislative matters” and may be “more susceptible to persuasion by leaders who influence the distribution of the party’s funds” (p. 244; see also Leyden & Borrelli, 1990). In contrast, Cantor and

Hernson (1997) find little evidence that party campaign funds buy party support on the floor. Instead, finding that assistance with campaign communications predicted Democratic Party unity on key votes in 1984 and 1992, they conclude that “Democratic candidates who receive significant party communication assistance probably felt inclined to support party policy positions because they communicated those positions while running for Congress and recognized that they could be held responsible if their party failed to enact them” (p. 412).

3. Although their analysis applies to a very different institutional and historical context, Aldrich and Grant’s (1993) analysis of the role of antiparty sentiment among Jeffersonian Republicans in shaping that party’s strategic response to the rapidly organizing Federalists highlights the distinction between preferences toward organizational centralization on one hand and responses to a given strategic situation on the other.

4. Although there were actually 16 total votes on the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA) in the House, the vote on final passage represented the first time the House voted on this legislation after Senate action. So in contrast to past years when members had to vote on campaign reform legislation, House members knew that this time their vote would count. The other votes on BCRA involved efforts by the opposition to “poison” the bill; an exploratory factor analysis confirms the existence of a single factor underlying these votes.

5. On appeals to the “good public policy” goal by legislative leaders during the coalition building process, see Strahan (1989).

6. This operationalization is also consistent with the argument that the vote tapped into members’ general orientations toward government regulation, with conservatives preferring less regulation and liberals preferring more (see Bender, 1988, for a similar treatment).

7. During the 1999–2000 election cycle, 97% of all soft money contributions to parties and candidates came from business, labor, and ideological groups. Such groups supplied 99% of all political action committee (PAC) contributions to parties and candidates in that election cycle (computed by authors from data at <http://www.opensecrets.org/bigpicture>).

8. Although other variables such as ideology, institutional position, or committee assignment may also predict a member’s nonparty PAC receipts and leadership PAC receipts, these are not a function of the idiosyncrasies of one’s race for reelection. Therefore, any variation in our fundraising prowess indicator that might be attributable to these factors should remain in the variable because they are key to the concept—fundraising prowess—in which we are interested. Because the relationship between these variables and our indicator of soft money fundraising success was different for Republicans and Democrats, we estimated two separate party-specific equations, saved the residuals from each, and combined them to generate the variable used here.

9. This list includes the national committees (Republican National Committee and Democratic National Committee) and the national legislative campaign committees (Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee). Factor analysis of these contributions indicates that gifts to state and local parties tap into a different dimension than do gifts to the national parties, so we exclude contributions to state and local parties from this variable. Our results, however, are not sensitive to the inclusion or exclusion of gifts to state and local party organizations.

10. See Aldrich and Rohde (2001, pp. 275–276) for an elaboration on this argument.

11. We also estimated the model presented in Table 1 with an interaction term for fundraising prowess and Democratic Party membership. Although the interaction term was not statistically significant at traditionally accepted levels, it too was negative, consistent with the hypothesis that the strongest fundraisers—in both parties—were less likely to vote for BCRA after controlling for other factors. Inclusion of the interaction term actually reduces the

number of cases the model predicts correctly, further increasing our confidence that the variables tapping into a member's fundraising prowess under the pre-BCRA regime should not be interacted with party.

12. Although our theory generates no a priori expectation that Democratic support for BCRA will be sensitive to distance to the right of the Democratic median independent of ideology, we also estimated the model presented here with distance to the right of the Democratic median included (indicating a statistically significant and negative relationship with support for BCRA). In this model, although the sign associated with the ideology variable is still in the correct direction, it fails to achieve statistical significance, almost certainly because of the fact that the two distance variables capture almost all of the variation in votes within each party caucus. Other parameter estimates and their associated standard errors remain unchanged. Furthermore, if distance to the right of the Democratic median is included and interpreted as an indicator of Democrats' team orientation, consistent with our argument, its marginal effect is approximately one fourth that of distance to the left of the Republican median, holding other variables constant.

13. Hastert's spokesperson, John Feehery, confirmed the Speaker's concerns about the impact of the bill on his political party, stating that Hastert "believes this is an important issue for parties . . . . [The legislation] puts us at a great disadvantage" (Eilperin, 2002a, p. A01).

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